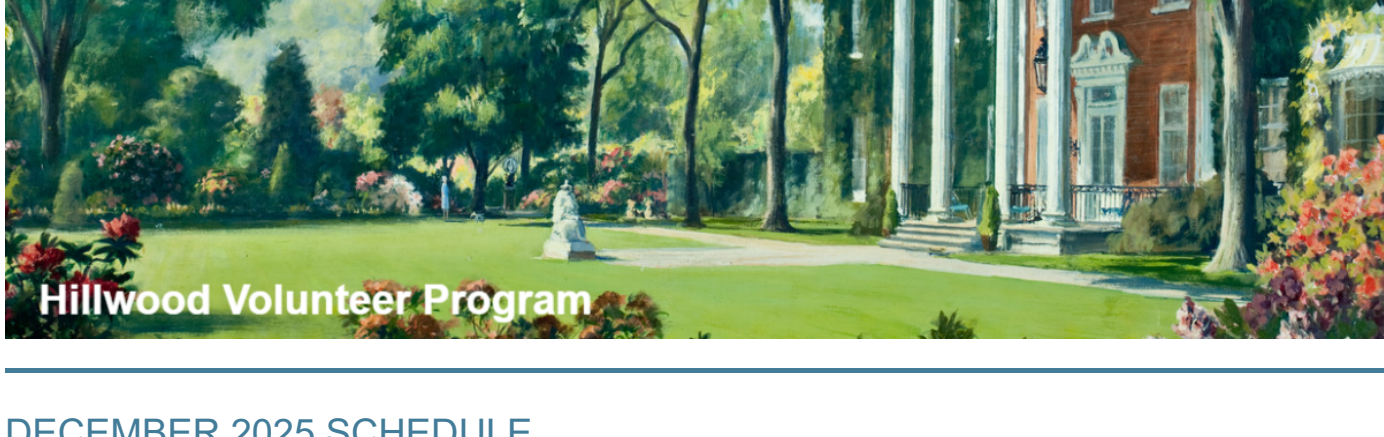




DECEMBER 2025 SCHEDULE

The December 2025 schedule is now open to all interpretation volunteers in Volgistics, complete with private tours and special events. Please log in to your [Volgistics account](#) to schedule your shifts. If you have any changes or questions regarding the volunteer schedule, please continue to contact volunteers@hillwoodmuseum.org or 202.686.8528. Thank you.

[Log into Volgistics](#)

THANK YOU FOR YOUR FEEDBACK – AND A QUICK FOLLOW-UP SURVEY

Thank you to everyone who took the time to share your thoughts in Hillwood's 2025 annual volunteer survey. Your feedback is invaluable and plays a vital role in shaping the future of the volunteer experience at Hillwood.

Each year, this survey helps us better understand how we can support you and enhance your time as a volunteer. This year, we focused especially on how Hillwood's communication channels are serving you and how we can continue to strengthen the ways we connect, collaborate, and support your work. Your voices guide our efforts, and we're deeply grateful for your continued engagement and insight.

2025 Volunteer Survey Highlights

Although participation declined by 30% (121 respondents in 2025 compared to 173 in 2024), the feedback we received was overwhelmingly positive:

- **Engagement & Connection:** 97% of volunteers feel connected or very connected to Hillwood.
- **Respect & Value:** 99% say they feel valued and respected by staff.
- **Sense of Belonging:** Average rating of 4.5 out of 5.
- **Emotional Benefits:** 80% of volunteers feel connected to others, and 60% describe their involvement as fulfilling – an 8-point increase from 2024.
- **Support Systems:** 85% are very satisfied with staff responsiveness (a 7-point increase from 2024), and 95% note sufficient face-to-face interaction.

[Click here to review the full 2025 volunteer survey summary.](#)

Follow Up Survey: Accessibility and Families at Hillwood

We'd love your input on a brief follow-up survey focused on two important areas shaping Hillwood's future: accessibility and our growing family audience.

Accessibility is central to every visitor's experience. As we work to make Hillwood more inclusive, your feedback will help us identify and prioritize potential 2026 projects that lay the groundwork for lasting progress.

We're also welcoming more families and youth than ever. To support this growth, we want every staff member and volunteer to feel confident engaging with them. Your insights on what's working – and what could be improved – will inform new training materials launching in early 2026.

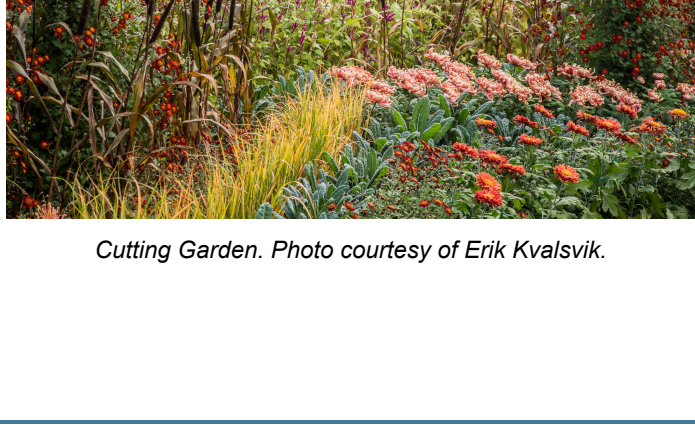
[Please take a few minutes to complete the follow-up survey here.](#) The survey will remain open through Sunday, November 16.

By taking this survey, you'll help us strengthen Hillwood's accessibility, inclusivity, and family engagement for all.

FALL GARDEN TOURING SEASON EXTENDED

Thanks to strong visitation this fall—driven by beautiful weather, limited museum options in the region, and free admission for federal employees—we're extending the garden touring season by two weeks, from November 18-30. During this time, an additional 12:30 p.m. garden tour will be offered Tuesday–Sunday.

We're pleased to offer guests additional opportunities to enjoy garden tours this fall. Thank you to our garden docents for adjusting their schedules to provide coverage through late November and for helping make Hillwood's gardens such a special experience for our visitors.

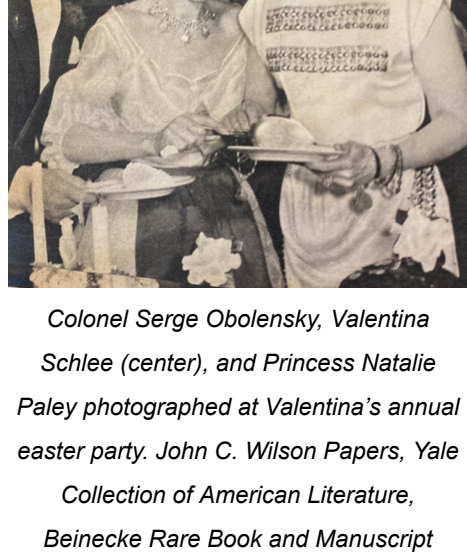


Cutting Garden. Photo courtesy of Erik Kvalsvik.

OUR MUTUAL FRIENDS: CONNECTING MARJORIE MERRIWEATHER POST TO PRINCESS NATALIE PALEY

Although they were born nearly a generation apart, Hillwood's founder, Marjorie Merriweather Post (1887–1973) and Princess Natalie Paley (1905–1981), subject of the current special exhibition, *From Exile to Avant-Garde: The Life of Princess Natalie Paley*, shared much more than a penchant for 1920s fancy dress balls and an appreciation for fine jewelry.

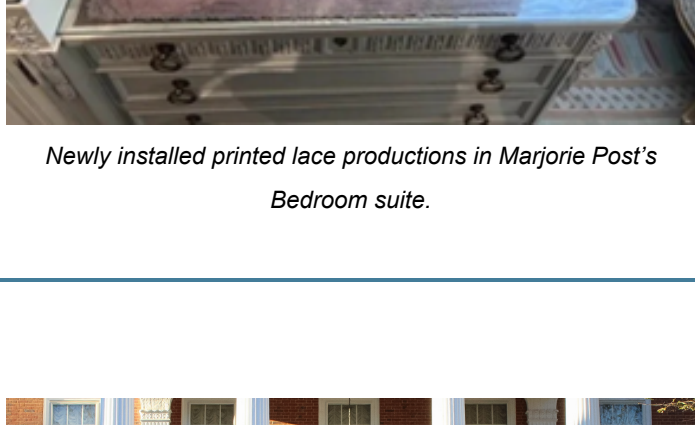
[Learn more in this article by Megan Martinelli, curator of textiles, apparel, jewelry, and accessories.](#)



Colonel Serge Obolensky, Valentina Schlee (center), and Princess Natalie Paley photographed at Valentina's annual easter party. John C. Wilson Papers, Yale Collection of American Literature, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library.

COLLECTIONS AND CURATORIAL UPDATE

On Monday, October 20, 2025, the Collections and Curatorial teams installed printed lace reproductions in the Marjorie Merriweather Post bedroom suite. This project spanned multiple years and was achieved with assistance from the entire division. The original lace pieces that sat beneath glass on tables and dressers were moved to collections for preservation. The new reproductions, which were photographed in house before being sent out for print and lamination, will allow visitors to see the designs and placements of the originals while ensuring their safety.



Newly installed printed lace productions in Marjorie Post's Bedroom suite.

SPOOKY POOCH HOWL-O-WEEN

Hillwood had another successful Spooky Pooch celebration this year with almost 200 guests and countless creative costumes, canine and human alike!

[Read on to see highlights of some of the best outfits of the night \(including the Top Dog award winner!\)](#) in this article by Audra Kelly, director of interpretation.

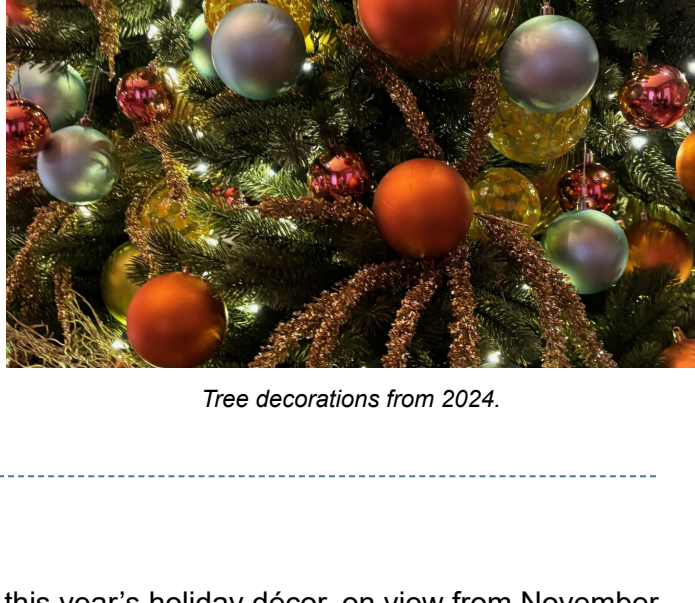


A family dressed as superheroes poses on stage during Spooky Pooch 2025.

HOLIDAYS AT HILLWOOD 2025

It is that time of year for the Horticulture staff to pull out the holiday decorations. This year's theme is inspired by *From Exile to Avant-Garde: The Life of Princess Natalie Paley*. Some amazing pieces have been chosen that will add the pizzazz you need for the holiday season.

[Find out what to expect in this article by Ami Wilber, floral and event décor designer.](#)



Tree decorations from 2024.

Glamorous Greetings Holiday Tree Rotation

Learn more about the theme and inspiration behind this year's holiday décor, on view from November 25, 2025 through January 5, 2026, in the volunteer resource [Glamorous Greetings Label Text](#).

This document can also be found on the [2025 Exhibition Information & Mansion Display Updates](#) page on the volunteer website.

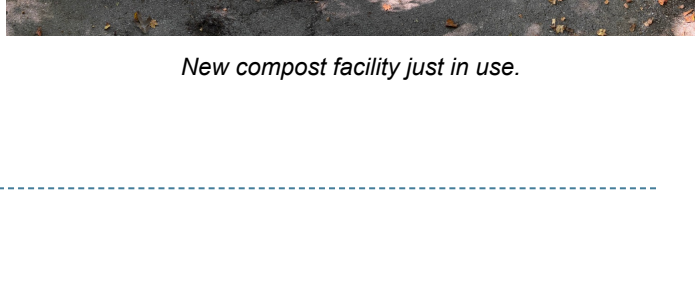
GARDEN UPDATES

A lot is happening in Hillwood's gardens this season! Learn more about garden updates around campus.

The New Compost Facility

Composting garden waste has been practiced for a long time at Hillwood, but it just got an upgrade. Starting with a simple asphalt pad, Hillwood has invested in a high functioning system that includes bays with pipes for aeration.

[Check out the construction of this amazing new facility and what to expect next in this article by Jessica Bonilla, director of horticulture.](#)



New compost facility just in use.

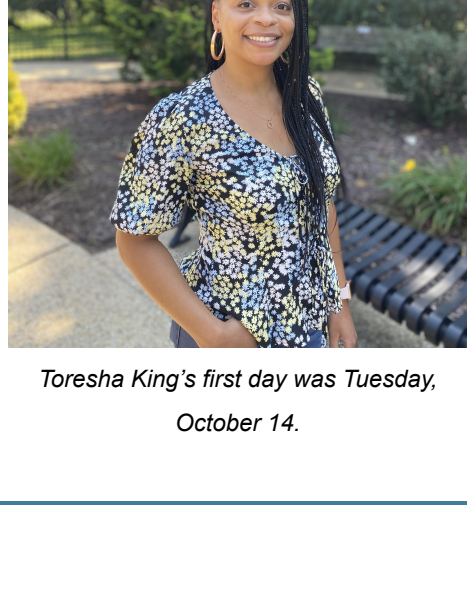
Conservation Work in the French Parterre

One of the urns (the second from the right on the stone railing near the Swan Fountain, when facing the mansion) has been temporarily removed for conservation. We will notify volunteers once it is ready to be returned to its place in the French parterre.

WELCOME TORESHA KING, SPECIAL EVENTS MANAGER

We are happy to introduce Toresha King, who joined Hillwood on Tuesday, October 14, as the new Special Events Manager. Toresha brings extensive experience in event planning, alumni engagement, and fundraising from her time at Old Dominion University, the Virginia Symphony Orchestra, and Food & Friends. She has a proven ability to design events that not only inspire participation but also strengthen donor relationships, strategically leveraging fundraising tools and creative programming to build lasting support.

Please join us in welcoming Toresha to the team. She is eager to meet everyone and begin planning memorable experiences at Hillwood!



Toresha King's first day was Tuesday, October 14.

UPCOMING VOLUNTEER EDUCATION

Mark your calendars for these upcoming volunteer educational sessions:

Volunteer Holiday Display Tour

December 9-12 (Tuesday-Friday), 10:15-10:45 a.m.

Get an intimate look at Hillwood's holiday decor on this tour of the mansion and grounds hosted by Ami Wilber, floral and event décor designer. Tours are limited to 15 volunteers and depart from the horticulture breakroom. Please use the links below to sign up for a workshop:

- [December 9 Holiday Display Tour](#)
- [December 10 Holiday Display Tour](#)
- [December 11 Holiday Display Tour](#)
- [December 12 Holiday Display Tour](#)

Volunteer Holiday Wreath Workshop

December 10 and 11 (Wednesday and Thursday), 11 a.m.-1 p.m.

Be inspired and create your own unique holiday wreath of wintery greens under the guidance of gardener Matt Boyle. Space is limited to 16 volunteers per workshop. Workshop takes place in the Dina Merrill Pavilion. Cost is \$10. Please use the links below to sign up for a workshop:

- [December 10 Holiday Wreath Workshop](#)
- [December 11 Holiday Wreath Workshop](#)

STAFF HELP AND RESOURCES

Thank you for being a part of the Hillwood community! Our doors are always open. Feel free to reach us at volunteers@hillwoodmuseum.org.

-The Volunteer Support Team

Erin Allen, Holly Scanlon, Matt Boyle, and Lisa Leyh

Explore Hillwood Online

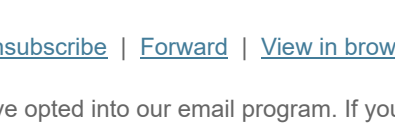
Stay connected with Hillwood anytime through our website! Discover treasures in the collection database, see what's blooming in the gardens, and sign up for upcoming programs. Planning a visit? Head to our [Plan Your Visit](#) page for the latest offerings and to book your next visit.

[Explore >](#)

Visit the Volunteer Website

Stay informed and inspired by visiting Hillwood's volunteer website. Revisit past newsletters and updates, watch recordings of volunteer programs, and review the latest guidelines. Dive deeper into your Hillwood journey with a wide array of educational resources designed just for volunteers.

[Learn >](#)



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