



The Cross Estate Gardens

New Jersey Historical Garden Foundation

NEWSLETTER

Fall 2013

The New Jersey Historical Garden Foundation was established under the auspices of Mr. James Spiniello. Its board is composed of volunteers interested in the preservation, maintenance, and development of public, historical gardens. The Foundation is working with, but not funded by, the National Park Service, U. S. Department of Interior, to preserve the Cross Estate Gardens.

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(1928-2013)

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Fall 'Talk & Tea'



Please join us on **Thursday, October 24, from 11 a.m. to 1 p.m.** in the Cross Estate Mansion for our annual Fall 'Talk & Tea'. We are honored to have NJHGF board member and avid gardener/writer/speaker **Marta McDowell** talk to us on 'The Gardens of **Beatrix Potter**.'

Think of Beatrix Potter and you might picture blue-jacketed bunnies and other fuzzy fauna. But Miss Potter was also quite interested in flora. Plants and gardens informed her work and enriched her life. Come join us for an entertaining exploration

of Beatrix Potter's gardening life: her botanical art, the plants and gardens in her "little books," and her own gardens in England's Lake District.

Marta McDowell lives, gardens and writes in Chatham, New Jersey. She teaches landscape history and gardening at the New York Botanical Garden, where she studied landscape design, and Drew University. Her book, *Emily Dickinson's Gardens*, was published by McGraw-Hill in 2005, and she was an advisor for the New York Botanical Garden's 2010 show. Her new book on *Beatrix Potter's Gardening Life* is due out from Timber Press in October 2013 – we are doing our best to get advance copies to sell at the Fall 'Talk and Tea.' Her husband, Kirke Bent, summarizes her biography as "I am, therefore I dig."



Janet Di Mauro, NJHGF board member and also avid gardener/former caterer will again organize the wonderful tea served in the dining room after Marta's talk. Sweet and savory hors d'oeuvres, finger sandwiches, desserts, and tea will be served by Janet and the volunteers of NJHGF.



Admission is \$25 for NJHGF members and \$30 for non-members. Reservations are requested. Please send your check, payable to NJHGF, to New Jersey Historical Garden Foundation, Box 712, Bernardsville, NJ 07924.

What's Happening in the Gardens?



Volunteer **Steve Fogle** has once again shown his mastery of carpentry by designing and building a new and greatly improved display case for the brochures, flyers and other literature of the Cross Estate Gardens. This extremely attractive and functional new display case replaces the old case at the entrance to the Cross Estate Gardens. Thank you Steve for another job well done!



Volunteer sisters **Nancy Bernosky** and **Karen Moore** hard at work weeding and planting around a planter in the patio area next to the Cross Estate Mansion. The many areas comprising the Cross Estate Gardens require the constant care of our 30 volunteers to look their best. Good job ladies!



Eleven **Student Conservation Association (SCA)** volunteers did a super job at the Cross Estate Gardens for several Wednesdays in July. The very willing students, from a variety of states across the country, helped us terrifically by weeding many areas, mulching the foundation plantings and other beds, cutting down barberry around the historic water tower, and spreading wood chips where needed. Thanks to all!



Our Plant Sale 2013 was a great success! The weather on May 4 was perfect, bringing a steady stream of buyers to the Cross Estate Gardens. Our profit was almost \$5,000, which was up 10% over our 2012 Plant Sale. A sincere 'Thank You' to all of our plant donors, especially Pam Wilson, Eileen Ferrer, Hall's Garden Center and Four Seasons Nursery, and to all of our volunteers who labored for weeks getting ready for the event.



Volunteers **Fred Aufschlager**, **Ethan Hogan** and **Ron Bailey** hard at work replacing the fifty deer fencing posts surrounding the Native Garden. This deer fencing and the fencing surrounding the rhododendron walk are at least 20-25 years old and have deteriorated during the harsh winters, especially during 2011 and 2012. The original cedar posts are all being replaced by sturdier wood posts.



Volunteers **Hollace Bowers** and **Marta McDowell** busy weeding in the historic Mountain Laurel Allée. Wood chips are put down to help suppress the rampant garlic mustard and stilt grass. The mountain laurels were planted by Julia Cross in the 1930s. As the area is not protected by deer fencing, local deer over the years have eaten the lower foliage, forming a perfect allée.

Jim Spiniello, 1928-2013

V. James (Jim) Spiniello founded the NJ Historical Garden Foundation in 1987, which gave financial structure to the Cross Estate Gardens and enabled the volunteers, organized by Jean Pope in 1977, to treat donations as charitable, tax-free gifts. In addition Jim, who owned the Spiniello Construction Company, made many absolutely necessary additions to the garden structure. Sadly, Jim passed away on April 29, 2013, at the age of 85. The following are some of Jean Pope's memories of Jim's monumental effect on the Cross Estate Gardens.

V. James Spiniello (04/12/1928-04/29/2013) was the founder of the NJ Historical Garden Foundation. Jim was the owner and CEO of the Spiniello Construction Co., a family business established in Morristown, NJ, in 1922.

Naturally enough, as an engineer Jim's primary interest in the Cross Estate was the feasibility of restoring the old water tower on the property. One day in the summer of 1986, Jim was strolling through the Cross Estate and happened on our group of volunteers who had been working since 1977 to restore the original gardens. We were just about ready to give up on our project because it was proving impossible to cope with the damage done by deer. Jim sensed our frustration.



Jim Spiniello with Jeanne Will in the early 1990s

He said he would see what he could do about our situation as soon as he got back from open heart surgery in Texas. True to his word, within a few weeks he was meeting with us and the Park Superintendent, asking for permission to install fencing. He was only able to put in about half of what he had hoped to do, but the fencing was soon finished, complete with cedar fence posts and new gates approved by the Park. Jim paid for it all.

Jim felt that the volunteer project was such an asset to the Park and the community-at-large, so we should be formally organized. This was the origin of the Foundation. In 1988, he met with a lawyer to set it up, again at his expense. Later, he saw to clearing, grading and fencing the grounds we now know as the native plant area, and helped with the installation of an irrigation system for the gardens, again at his expense. In 1988, the volunteers were given permission to have a fund-raiser called A Celebration of a Country Garden. Plans included plant societies selling plants, garden club members making flower arrangements for the mansion,



Jim Spiniello in early 2012

garden theme vendors and local artists who had been painting in the garden. There was also to be a tea to recognize those who had saved the Cross Estate from development and for the Cross family. The garden volunteers prepared the food for each of the luncheons. Jim paid for the tent rentals and liability insurance. He also bought several paintings intended as gifts. More than 2000 people attended the two-day event. The event was a tremendous success.

There were three more Celebrations but after 1994, Park regulations prohibited further events of this sort.

Jim loved people and loved to entertain. He always hosted an end-of-season luncheon at his home for the volunteers. Once his sister cooked a wonderful Italian dinner for some of us. At another party his brother-in-law, who had sung at the Met, serenaded Jim on his 60th birthday. The volunteers, who have been getting together every Wednesday during the gardening season since 1977, are like a family. Jim was a big part of that family. He probably attended more meetings of the Foundation than he might have wished, but he was often in the gardens with us down through the years. His wife, Judy, continues to serve on the Foundation Board.

Jim had hoped to be able to eventually get back to his original interest in the Cross Estate, restoration of the water tower. He had located an artisan in California who would be able to fabricate a windmill. However, failing health and bureaucratic interference prevented him from further pursuing his hope. Perhaps someone else like Jim will materialize magically some day to carry on in his stead.

Jim will always be remembered as a man who gave freely from his heart. If he had not shown up in 1986 and offered his help, the volunteers very probably would have drifted away and the Cross Estate would be a very different place today.



DOORWAY to the Cross Estate in Bernardsville, which will welcome visitors to its Fourth Celebration of a Country Garden this weekend, with unusual plant and flower booths, refreshments, crafts and paintings. From left, Janet Seagle of Mendham, garden volunteer, Jim Spiniello of Bernardsville, event chairman and benefactor of the historic garden foundation, and Mary Sambrook of New Vernon, member of the historic garden foundation, ready the garden for the event.

This was the fourth Celebration of a Country Garden in 1994. Jim Spiniello with Janet Seagle, left, and Mary Sambrook.

Visit Us Online

Be sure to check out the Cross Estate Gardens website at www.CrossEstateGardens.org.

You can also visit us on **Facebook**— search for Cross Estate Gardens or go to www.facebook.com/pages/Cross-Estate-Gardens/146692902063110.



Become a Member

The NJHGF is always looking for new members to support its all-volunteer work in the Cross Estate Gardens. Every dollar donated goes into the gardens. Please become a member today, if you're not already a supporter. Membership rates are as follows:

Individual	\$25	Family	\$40
Friend	\$100	Sponsor	\$250
Patron	\$500		

Please mail your check, payable to NJHGF, to NJ Historical Garden Foundation, PO Box 712, Bernardsville, NJ 07924-0712. Thank you.

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