Pfizer Teamwork Pays Off

On an absolutely gorgeous spring day in May, approximately 40 volunteers from Pfizer came to the gardens and made a major difference in the amount of work that our normal platoon of volunteers would have tried to do. On May 10, all areas of the gardens got attention from weeding and cutting around the front, side and rear portions of the mansion, the driveway entrance to the house and the walled garden.

The real cream project, though, was the installation of a new fence around Grace’s Garden*. Postholes were drilled with a “dingo” machine that was really slick. While this was happening, other volunteers dismantled the old fence and posts, set the new posts and installed 90% of the new fence before they had to leave. The perimeter was moved out at least three feet to accommodate the maturing trees and shrubs. WOW ... it was actually done! Now Steve Fogle is strengthening the corner posts so that this fencing will last well into the future.

The board and volunteers truly thank the Morris Land Conservancy for organizing and coordinating with the Park Service to bring these Pfizer volunteers, whom we heartily thank for their energy, willingness and laughter, to make all of these improvements a real gift to the public. We look forward to seeing them again next year.

— Stephen Palmer

*Grace's Garden (located to the right of the meadow) is dedicated to Grace Steneck who volunteered for many years until she was well into her late 80s.
Volunteer Luncheon

We have had another spectacular gardening season this past summer thanks to the regular volunteers who come every week to work in the gardens.

The NJHGF Board appreciates all of the time and effort that goes into this project. As a “thank you,” we are inviting all of the volunteers to our annual luncheon to be held in the library at the Cross Estate on Wednesday, December 6 at 12 p.m. It’s our chance to get together and recognize what has been accomplished in 2006. Please put the date on your calendar. We promise you a good time!

Please RSVP by November 29 to Joan Ryder at 973-376-0348.

As always, we invite anyone interested in gardening to join the volunteers. Please call Ruth Dittmann at 908-876-4297 for more details.

Save the Dates

The plant sale in June was a great success, in spite of heavy rain. Weather conditions apparently don’t keep interested gardeners away, so we were happy to have a fairly large group of people come to buy plants. We are planning to sponsor another plant sale on Saturday, June 2, 2007.

We are also planning to have a 30th Anniversary Celebration on Sunday, September 23, 2007 from 1-5 p.m. featuring a silent auction of plants and garden ornaments; an artists’ competition of paintings and photographs of the gardens at the Cross Estate; tours of the gardens; live music; and light refreshments. It’s hard to believe 30 years have gone by since Jean Pope started the garden restoration, and it’s a credit to all of the volunteers who have continued the work she started.

In 2007, we also celebrate the 20th Anniversary of the New Jersey Historical Garden Foundation founded by Jim Spiniello. That is an accomplishment worth celebrating, as well, because your contribution as a member of the NJHGF has made a lot of garden projects and improvements at the Cross Estate Gardens possible.

We rely on your continued financial support. Please renew your membership today and ask a friend to join, too. Membership categories and more information on how to join are provided on page 4.

A Special Volunteer

Without exception, the members of the NJHGF Board and the volunteers who work at the Cross Estate Gardens want to express a special note of appreciation to Helen Mageau, who serves as our Horticultural Advisor. She has extensive knowledge of gardens and garden culture, which she willingly shares with everyone.

In addition to working in the garden herself, she supervises our intern; has scheduled garden tours for members and the public; continues to expand the plant sale; referenced old photos of the garden in order to replant the central beds in the upper walled garden; is always patient with questions; and offers good advice on the many jobs that have to be done. Her generous spirit affects everyone as the group continues to work together every week.

Her credentials are impressive. She received a horticulture degree at SUNY Farmingdale and worked in the Education Department at the New York Botanical Garden for nine years developing programs and teaching adults and children. She also worked in outreach programs for the Brooklyn Botanical Garden and was the Education Coordinator at Frelinghuysen Arboretum for 19 years, where she was responsible for programming at Frelinghuysen Arboretum, Bamboo Brook and Willowwood.

Her gardening skills are wonderful, and her people skills are wonderful, too. It’s exceptional to find both in one special volunteer. Thank you Helen!
Notes from the Garden

There is never enough time to accomplish everything we would like to do, but this year we have made progress in several areas. Weeds in the brick paths have plagued us for years. White vinegar proved to be a successful weed killer without harming the plants in the flower beds. Even after heavy rains, the main walks have remained weed free.

There are two important “works in progress.” Fifty plant labels have been placed in the garden and 50 more are in the works. Labels will aid both visitors and the volunteers in appreciating the variety of plants in the garden.

The second project began last year with the removal of the tired lambs ear in the upper terrace beds. They are being replanted with some of the perennials we discovered in old photographs. Although now a little sparse, the beds will be more colorful with plants in bloom each season of the year.

Overabundance is one of the problems created by our almost animal free and irrigated gardens. Crowding out of choice plants by the aggressive ones such as the daylily has become a problem. All of the fall sedums were buried. We cut the daylilies back to the ground after blooming. Like amsonia and globe thistle, they re-sprout from the base and are more manageable. Globe thistle will often re-bloom on the new growth.

Color in the garden during this season is being supplied by boltonia, Russian asters and fall anemones. As an unexpected surprise, the franklinia in the native garden produced a flower. It has been nursed along after severe dieback. A mild winter may set it on its feet.

Next year, we hope to tackle the native meadow garden, which has spread out of control. We plan to cut a path through the meadow, which will help solve the problem.

— Helen Mageau, Horticultural Advisor

Friends of the Park

On Saturday, September 30, 10 volunteers from the MNHP offered several hours of help to our regular garden volunteers. The projects included the removal of old, dying boxwoods in the driveway circle and on each side of the front door of the mansion and planting eight Pieris Japonica shrubs and 15 Heller’s Japanese hollies in the foundation area. These shrubs were funded by a gift from Steve Palmer’s former Methodist Church in Flanders.

— Gregory Smith
Chief Ranger MNHP

Grant Money Put to Work

The grant from Somerset Hills Garden Club went toward plant labels in the walled garden and the native garden. It is good to see this plant identification project become a reality and actually see the first labels appear as the season begins to wind down.

The Morristown Garden Club grant went toward paying our intern Letitia Clark, who helped at the end of the season in 2005 and returned to us again this year. She has been a valuable addition to our group who labor with joy in the flowerbeds.

The Foundation is truly thankful for these generous gifts, which help us make these gardens a real treasure.

The New Jersey Committee of the Garden Club of America gave us a grant to update and improve our website. Ann Campbell re-developed the site and made several improvements. You may want to visit www.crossestategardens.org to enjoy seeing what she has done.

— Stephen Palmer, Grants Chairman

Advice From a Tree

Embrace with joy the changing seasons
The energy and birth of Spring
The growth and contentment of Summer
The wisdom to let go like leaves in the Fall
The rest and quiet renewal of Winter

— Ilan Shamir
Conservation Corps

A diverse group of students from Morristown High School and a sixth student from Union County comprised this year’s Youth Conservation Corps crew.

The members were younger than in previous years, but their age was no impediment to their dedication to work. They understood their role and the importance of the work they did in serving the park to improve the appearance and enhancing the beauty of the Cross Estate Gardens.

The YCC is a National Park Service Program that provides labor assistance to parks and their partners during the summer. Funds are provided by fees paid by the public when they visit the park.

Working each Wednesday for six weeks under the supervision of the Park Service seasonal staff, the crew members contributed approximately 100 hours assisting NJHGF projects at the Cross Estate. Once again, they fulfilled their responsibilities admirably, and we thank them for their help.

— Glenn Kendall, Management Support Advisor

Become a Member

As you know, no garden is ever finished—it is an ongoing process of maintenance and changes. The Cross Estate Gardens need constant attention. If you haven’t renewed your membership, please take the time to do so today. Your contribution is our only monetary support. And we thank you for that.

Membership Categories
Senior Citizen ....................... $15.00
Individual .......................... $20.00
Family ............................... $40.00
Supporter ......................... $75.00
Sponsor ............................. $100.00
Life Member ....................... $500.00
Other Donations ................. $____.00

Please send your check to:
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Bernardsville, NJ 07924-0712

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