



# The Cross Estate Gardens

New Jersey Historical Garden Foundation

[www.crossestategardens.org](http://www.crossestategardens.org)

## NEWSLETTER

Spring 2024

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.

### *The New Jersey Historical Garden Foundation Board of Trustees*

#### **Founder of Volunteers**

Jean Pope (1931-2017)

#### **NJHGF Founder**

V. James Spiniello (1928 - 2013)

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#### **Recording Secretary**

Ethan Hogan

#### **Treasurer**

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Membership: Rita Alzamora/David DePodwin

Newsletter: Linda O'Gorman

Publicity: (vacant)

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#### **Non-Board Chairs**

Website: Letitia Clark

Facebook: Kay Compton

**20<sup>th</sup> Annual NJHGF  
Cross Estate  
Gardens  
Plant Sale**

**Saturday, May 4, 2024**  
**9-10am Members only**  
**10am-12 noon All guests!**

**Inviting, right? The plant  
selection at our 20<sup>th</sup> Annual  
Plant Sale can help you add  
inviting plants to your  
garden as well.**

**Come for the selection of  
native and non-native  
perennials, trees and shrubs;  
stay for a visit to our  
beautiful gardens.**

**PLEASE NOTE:** The Cross Estate Gardens is part of the Morristown National Historical Park (MNHP) of the National Park Service (NPS).

Before visiting, please check the NPS website for current park status and alerts:

<https://www.nps.gov/morr/index.htm>



# News and reminders from Morristown National Historical Park (MNHP) Cross Estate Gardens

## Time to renew your membership or join for the first time.

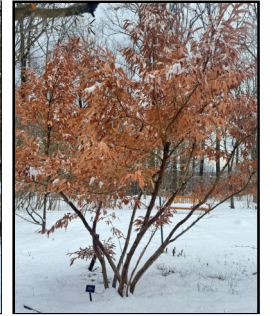
“Oh, yes,” you say, “How do I do that?”

Its very easy:

- You can complete and mail in the convenient “Become a Member” form on the back of this Newsletter.
- You can join online by following the directions on the “Membership” page of the CEG website [crossestategardens.org](http://crossestategardens.org).

## What did you miss over the winter?

If you didn’t have a chance to come visit after the snow in February, you missed some beautiful sights. Here are a few:



## Another fabulous path!

And, why are pathways important in landscape design?

by Linda O’Gorman

Can you have too many pathways through a garden? Maybe, but I don’t think I’ve hit my limit yet for the magnolia section of the Wild Garden. Janet Loughrey describes it eloquently in her essay for Garden Design magazine, “Designing Garden Pathways: Tips, Ideas & Inspiration” published at [gardendesign.com](http://gardendesign.com).

“These avenues can be used to connect or divide garden rooms, provide a way to get to different parts of the yard, and allow access to garden beds for maintenance chores.”

To that I’d add, where there’s a path, there’s a bit less garden to maintain, since paths help keep the weeds down and don’t require pruning or division.

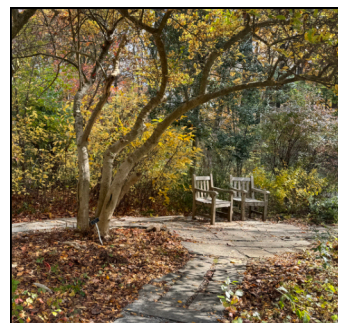
In the Fall 2023 issue of this Newsletter, we told you about the bluestone walkway project in the Upper Garden that was made possible with a 2022 grant from the Garden Club of Somerset Hills and funds from the NJHGF capital improvement budget.

Thanks to some leftover bluestones and a lot of hard work by CEG Volunteers, including David DePodwin (designer), Ethan Hogan, Ron Herold, Bill Stusnick, and Chetan Sanghvi, the Star magnolia *Magnolia stellata* in the Wild Garden (likely planted by Julia Cross in the 1930s or 40s) is now hugged by bluestone paths.

**Before...**



**After!**



## **Call for Volunteers**

The NJHGF Cross Estate Gardens Volunteers will always welcome more helpers.

Besides weeding, planting, and pruning in the various gardens, there are planned invasive plant remediation, carpentry and hardscaping projects.

Volunteers Steve Fogle and Mike Kurek painted the shed behind Grace’s Garden at the end of last year’s volunteer season.



Join our fabulous group of Volunteers today!

**Contact:**  
[info@crossestategardens.org](mailto:info@crossestategardens.org)

# The Franklin Tree, *Franklinia alatamaha*

by Marta McDowell



The two small Franklin trees at the Cross Estate are examples of *ex situ*—off site—conservation at work. The last known specimens in the wild vanished in the early 1800s. That the species exists at all is thanks to the efforts of collectors and public gardens during the past 250 years.

The Franklin tree seems especially appropriate for planting within the Morristown National Historical Park, given its story. Philadelphia nurseryman John Bartram first described it in a 1765 journal entry of his travels to the southern colonies. His son William returned to the location along Georgia’s Altamaha River (he spelled it Alatomaha) in 1776 and collected seeds.

The Bartrams named the plant in honor of their friend Benjamin Franklin. Their nursery-botanic garden near Philadelphia was well known on both sides of the Atlantic. Soon Franklin trees were growing in gardens in England and in the soon-to-be-independent United States.

George Washington received a shipment from Bartram’s Nursery at Mount Vernon in March 1792 that included one *Franklinia alatamaha* among its one hundred-plus varieties of trees and shrubs. The two Cross Estate Franklin trees, like those at Mount Vernon and in gardens worldwide, are descendants of William Bartram’s batch of seeds.

A North American member of the tea family (Theaceae), the Franklin tree is related to the beverage we serve each fall at the annual Cross Estate Talk & Tea (see “**Save the Date**” below), the camellias that bloom in the walled garden, and the lovely stewartia in the upper garden. The Franklin tree is small in stature, with gray bark and oblong green leaves that blush to burgundy in autumn. Its creamy white five-petaled flowers have showy yellow centers the color of egg yolks. They provide nectar and pollen to many species of bees. While the last known natural habitat was in zone 8, the Franklin tree is hardy as far north as zone 5, including Boston’s Arnold Arboretum.

The Cross Estate has no record of Julia Newbold Cross growing a Franklin tree, but she was an avid plant collector as well as sometime president of The Garden Club of Morristown, the Garden Club of Somerset Hills, and the Horticultural Society of New York. The two specimens at Cross Estate Gardens are both in the wild garden in the area alongside the pergola and next to the original walled garden. Mrs. Cross used this space for other unusual trees and as nursery beds.

So come to the Cross Estate Gardens soon. Seeing a Franklin Tree is the plant equivalent of encountering a woolly mammoth at a local zoo. Or bumping into one of the eighteenth-century American soldiers at Jockey Hollow’s encampment. It is a bit of living history.

## Save the Date!

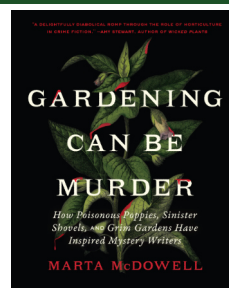


## NJHG Cross Estate Gardens Talk & Tea

Featuring:

**Marta McDowell**  
discussing her latest gem  
***Gardening Can Be Murder***

Published by Timber Press



Join us at the Cross Estate mansion on Thursday, September 19, 2024, from 1-3 pm, for tea, coffee, and savory and sweet treats prepared by the wonderful CEG Volunteers followed by a thrilling tour of gardening sleuths and garden-savvy murderers with their botanical weapons. You’ll also have the opportunity to buy a signed copy of the book, with its amazing illustrations by Yolanda V. Fundora. It’s a must have for fans of the murder mystery genre, whether or not they wield a trowel.

**Marta McDowell** shares her love of horticulture and garden history through the written and spoken word. More at [martamcdowell.com](http://martamcdowell.com).



Illustration by  
Yolanda V. Fundora



## The Cross Estate Gardens

New Jersey Historical Garden Foundation  
Post Office Box 712, Bernardsville, NJ 07924  
[www.crossestategardens.org](http://www.crossestategardens.org)



Search for Cross Estate Gardens

### Become a Member

The Cross Estate Gardens, one of this area's treasures, receives volunteer help but no funding from the National Park Service (who manages the property). We rely upon membership support to pay for the plants and materials for the gardens. Please consider supporting the NJHGF's efforts by joining. Every dollar donated goes into the gardens.

To become a member:

1. Cut this form and send it in with your tax-deductible check, payable to NJHGF (New Jersey Historical Garden Foundation), PO Box 712, Bernardsville, New Jersey 07924. Or
2. Go to the Membership page on our website (<https://www.crossestategardens.org/join/>) and pay via PayPal.

Choose your Membership Category:

- Individual \$25
- Family \$50
- Friend \$100
- Sponsor \$250
- Patron \$500

Tell us about your preferences:

- I prefer to read this Newsletter online
- I like receiving a print copy of the Newsletter in the mail

Would you like to volunteer:

- I'd like to help with the gardening on a regular basis
- I'd like to help with a specific project in the gardens

Tell us who you are:

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City/State/Zip: \_\_\_\_\_

email: \_\_\_\_\_

*The NJHGF is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization.*