



The Cross Estate Gardens

New Jersey Historical Garden Foundation

www.crossestategardens.org

NEWSLETTER

Spring 2026

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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From our Gardens to Yours

~

22nd Annual

Cross Estate Gardens

Plant Sale

Saturday, May 2, 2026

9-10am, Members only

10am-1pm, All guests!

Cash or check only

61C Jockey Hollow Road

Bernardsville, NJ

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, Cross Estate Gardens and the New Jersey Historical Garden Foundation (NJHGF)

How can you help? Join. Donate. Volunteer.

Excerpt from Membership Chair Rita Alzamora's 2026 appeal

"With the coming of spring, I am calm again." ~ Gustav Mahler



This winter has delivered record low temperatures and some significant snow fall that has stayed around to date. It's been perfect weather for hibernation, being cozy indoors and perhaps going a little stir crazy.

There is also much to embrace for those fortunate to have a view from a window or the ability to get out and about. For me, it is the light in winter, long shadows, the occasional bird cry that is more piercing in the stillness and the stunning contrasts of red-bellied woodpeckers against gray, white and black tree trunks and crisp blue skies.

The NJHGF volunteers are back for a very busy year of routine tasks such as inspection for winter damage, planting, pruning, weeding, and maintenance of pathways and gates and other hardscape.

Also, two major projects we hope to tackle this year:

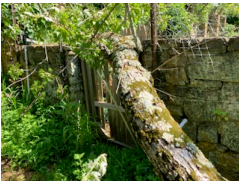
- With the support of our donors, the renovation of the mountain laurel allée.
- In partnership with the NPS, repair to the wisteria pergola which was heavily damaged by the fall of the old silver maple last year.

So much to do but so great are the rewards!

Please consider renewing your membership or becoming a new member or volunteer. Membership or donations can be made by completing and mailing the form on page 4 or via PayPal at www.crossestategardens.org.

What's Happening in the Pergola?

By Joan Ryder, NJHGF President



Last July, the 90-year-old massive Silver Maple, adjacent to the historic wisteria-covered pergola, split near its base causing its two trunks to come crashing down onto the pergola in both the westerly and easterly directions. Luckily no one was injured. Many stone support pillars in the western third of the 200-foot long pergola were severely damaged by the fallen tree.

The Morristown National Historical Park (MNHP), to which the Cross Estate Gardens belongs, has removed the two tree trunks and most of the branches. MNHP has placed a "Do Not Enter" sign blocking that part of the pergola as well as the main entrance to the historic and very popular Walled Garden, which can be entered through the adjacent Wild Garden.



The NJ Historical Garden Foundation (NJHGF) is in the process of contracting with a local stone mason to restore the damaged stone pillars. MNHP is overseeing the restoration process making sure it complies with treatment of historic structures within the National Park Service. We at NJHGF, with the generous support of grantors and donors, will pay for the restoration project.



After the pillars are restored, the wooden planks have to be laid on top of the pillars. We will have lost some of the wisteria plants, but they will regrow eventually. Our goal is to have the pergola restored and fully open by late spring.

The perfect remembrance or gift:

A donation in someone's honor to NJHGF!

Each fall, we'll share these tributes in this Newsletter.

 **Call for Volunteers**

The NJHGF Cross Estate Gardens Volunteers always welcomes more helpers Wednesday mornings from April through mid-November.

Join our fabulous group of Volunteers today!

Contact:
info@crossestategardens.org

Alley Cat Redbud, *Cercis canadensis* 'Alley Cat'

A Plant Profile by Marta McDowell

Some people suggest that native plants are boring. Alley Cat redbud is positive proof that this is not the case. Like the standard Eastern redbuds one finds growing prolifically at Cross Estate Gardens, its magenta blooms open in clusters right along the bare branches before the leaves emerge. Botanically, this flowering habit, known as cauliflory, is more common in trees of the tropics. It is an adaptation to attract early pollinators such as bees.

Alley Cat has an additional attraction compared to the straight species *Cercis canadensis*. Once it leafs out, its green, heart shaped foliage is copiously splashed with white. This variegation draws the eye, adding spice to any garden scene. That is what made it stand out when it drew the attention of horticulturist Alan Bush. Bush is a well-known plantsman from Kentucky who found this unusual redbud mutation along an alley in Louisville. Thus, its unusual name.

Like many new cultivated varieties or, as this is a native plant, "nativars," Alley Cat is a patented plant. In production, it is grafted to ensure the maximum amount of variegation. While its seed does produce variegated offspring, it is not stable. But a good nursery should be able to source a tree for you.

This season, take a walk along the bluestone path to the gardens surrounding the historic water tower. Among the interesting mix of native trees, shrubs and perennials, you will be able to enjoy the show put on by the two Alley Cat Redbuds.

Come to the plant sale on May 2nd and buy one of our Eastern redbud seedlings. It won't be variegated like Alley Cat, but it will bring you delightful blooms each spring and lovely green leaves that turn bright yellow in the fall. And, your purchase will help support our preservation efforts at the lovely Cross Estate Gardens.



Save the Date!



NJHG Cross Estate Gardens Talk & Tea

Featuring: Marta McDowell discussing

Beatrix Potter's Botanical: The Art of Flowers and Fungi



From the publisher's website. <https://www.hachettebookgroup.com>

"A rare collection of Beatrix Potter's own botanical art, and an exploration of the role these plants played in her personal and literary life.

"*Beatrix Potter's Botanical* collects and showcases 65 plants and fungi that Beatrix Potter made special study of in her often-overlooked career as a botanical artist. For each species we see Potter's original pencil and watercolor renderings, learn about the specimen's role in her various beloved gardens, and hear the stories of how it inspired or appeared in her literary work. The result is a new look at the celebrated illustrator as a pioneering botanical artist and budding scientist. Beatrix Potter is a beloved author and illustrator and this gorgeous exploration of her work will appeal to a wide array of fans."

Marta McDowell shares her love of horticulture and garden history through the written and spoken word. More at martamcdowell.com.



The Cross Estate Gardens

New Jersey Historical Garden Foundation
Post Office Box 712, Bernardsville, NJ 07924
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.