



THE GARDEN GATE

Issue No. 8 Newsletter of the Beatrix Farrand Garden Association

Fall 2010

Patrick Chassé Featured Speaker at The Fifth Annual Bellefield Design Lecture



Renowned landscape architect Patrick Chassé gave a fascinating and delightful talk entitled *The Maine Work of Beatrix Farrand* in which he painted a vivid portrait of Farrand's life and work on Mt. Desert Island sharing with us images and stories of the landscapes she created for both grand estates and intimate settings. Chassé also provided a window into the life she led at her seaside summer home at Reef Point

describing its extensive gardens and the landscape study center she eventually created there and vividly depicted how in her 80's, she designed her final home at Garland Farm.

Mr. Chassé has been a leader in the extensive restoration that has taken place at Garland Farm in the last decade and he recounted the intricate restoration process used to recreate Farrand's last garden and the Beatrix Farrand Society's important work revitalizing Farrand's Reef Point educational goals by providing landscape historians and Farrand enthusiasts an east coast center for study which recreates her incomparable garden library and develops a further archive relating to horticulture and garden design.

Through more than 35 years of work researching Farrand's designs, Mr. Chassé knows intimately the structures, plant palette and subtleties of her extensive body of work. In his inspiring lecture, not only was he able to impart this kind of knowledge, but allowed us an emotional and vibrant glimpse of what she might have been like, not only as a designer and a plantswoman, but as a person.



Harriet Zbikowski, long time friend of the garden, Allelu Kurten BFGA Board President and Cynthia Polistena Witman, BFGA Board Member enjoy cake



Guests brave the rain to see the garden and buy plants

The lecture was followed by our annual garden party and plant sale benefiting the garden that once again featured an elegant garden boutique offered by the Roosevelt-Vanderbilt Historical Association. Guests sipped iced tea, nibbled watercress sandwiches and braved a couple of torrential downpours (not to mention an earlier tornado watch for the area) to view the garden and buy plants. But in the end, partygoers had the chance to see the sun streaming across the garden and setting everything aglow with afternoon light.



A photographer captures the last light.



Helen Page, Doris Adams and Luise Seelbach cut the cake in honor of Beatrix Farrand's June Birthday.

Photos by Ellin Kristofik

President's Report

This will be the shortest of short reports so as to leave more space for the many exciting garden happenings in 2010, but I hope that my brief outline will assure you that we are moving forward with confidence. Our accomplishments include restructuring and expanding the board and creating clear budgeting and financial reporting, an improved website which includes a slide show (try it: beatrixfarrandgarden.org — it exciting!), and a complete re-ordering of our archives (now stored in the National Park Service's new archival building, available for research on Beatrix Farrand and her garden).

Our greatest challenge is to continue to raise income during this current financial crunch by seeking new avenues of support for our important work.

Our joys include having Patrick Chassé, a great expert on Beatrix Farrand's work, give the 5th Annual Bellefield Design Lecture, and the fact that our long-awaited deer fence is about to be installed in partnership with the National Park Service. We are thrilled that Martha Kazelunas, Landscape Design student at Columbia, will be joining us for an internship this fall to help us research the wild garden that Farrand designed for the area surrounding the formal garden at Bellefield. Norbert Freisitzer will be renovating the Bellefield garden gates over the winter season and we are indebted to him for taking on this big project.

Tour groups interested in Beatrix Farrand and in the pioneering roles of women in America are coming more and more often to see our Bellefield garden, which is one of her few remaining private commissions.

Being part of a historic garden which will be 100 years old in 2012 is both challenging and great fun. Come to visit and take pride in what you have helped to support.

Respectfully Submitted,
Allelu Kurten, *President*, BFGA

Iris foetidissima, The Stinking Iris

By Anne Cleves Symmes, *Director*, BFGA



Iris foetidissima

This unusual iris (sometimes even called the roast beef iris) is one of those interesting plants that attracts pollinators by disguising itself as fetid meat. The odor is rarely detected by human olfaction, and can only really be noted when the leaves are crushed, nonetheless it is not the first plant one would necessarily imagine to be a garden asset. But as we have seen in many examples, Farrand was bold in her plant choices and included this small iris in plans for the mauve and purple border. Its outer petals are a dull, steely purple, and mauve is a perfect way to describe the center of its bloom, in fact its mauve color may have been the very reason she chose it for this particular planting scheme.

Another of its delightful features is that its June blossoms give way to brown seed pods which then open to vivid rows of bright orange berries in fall persisting into winter, and surely make an interesting statement as other garden plants are waning. One of only two irises native to England, this iris grows naturally there in woodlands and even along seacoast cliffs, a testimonial to toughness and versatility in a number of garden settings. Getting this low growing iris established at Bellefield has taken a few years, but it has been well worth the wait, and we do prize it, despite its rather unappealing nomenclature.



SAVE THE DATE!

Sunday, June 5, 2011

6th Annual Bellefield
Design Lecture featuring
*Gardens of the Hudson
Valley* by Nancy Berner
and Susan Lowry based
on their upcoming book.

The revised edition of their acclaimed *Garden Guide: New York City* is out in bookstores now!

susanlowrynancyberner.com

Jefferson's Iris Return Home

By Anne Cleves Symmes, *Director*, BFGA

Iris germanica 'Black Prince' is certainly one of the most beautiful iris in Farrand's planting plans, but by no means is it easy to find. During our early searches for iris, we received great help from Anner Whitehead of the Historic Iris Preservation Society who put us in touch with the Thomas Jefferson Center for Historic Plants at Monticello as a possible source for us to purchase 'Black Prince'. Curator of Plants at Monticello, Peggy Cornett let us know that while this iris was not listed in their catalog of plants for sale, she did have some growing in the collection and would gladly dig us up a few rhizomes to get us started.

Over the last few years it has grown and bloomed beautifully in the garden and so when Peggy emailed me this spring to say that they had lost all their stock of this special iris and wondered if we had managed to keep ours going, I was happy to be able to pull up a hunk from our flourishing Bellefield patch and repatriate 'Black Prince' (via US mail) back home to Monticello. We have high hopes that it will thrive there once again and are ever grateful for the good karma.

BFGA Makes a Pilgrimage to Maine

By Anne Cleves Symmes, *Director, BFGA*

Members of the BFGA were joined by gardeners from the Beatrix Farrand garden at Hill-Stead in Farmington, Connecticut and Gail Griffin, Director of Gardens at Dumbarton Oaks (and member of the BFGA Board of Advisors) for a tour of gardens in Mt. Desert Island, Maine, a place where Farrand spent her summers and is home to a great body of her work. The group of 18 gathered on a Thursday morning to tour the Abby Aldrich Rockefeller Garden in Seal Harbor, which was originally designed by Beatrix Farrand. The central feature of this garden is a grand rectangular perennial garden surrounded by wooded walks lined in moss and dotted with magnificent Asian sculpture. The garden was originally designed as a sculpture garden and side-by-side cutting garden for the John Jr. and Abby Rockefeller's large summer house and has evolved as it has passed down through the generations. It is open to the public on Thursday mornings by appointment only for a few precious weeks in the summer and provides an



BFGA Board Members, Debby Glynn, Doris Adams and Carol Vinnall tour Thuya Garden, Northeast Harbor

important window into Farrand's work in Maine. The quiet and contemplative woodland walks create a stunning contrast to the riotous colors of the cutting garden in their midst. We were inspired by the sheer scale of the perennial borders and were especially intrigued to look across the angles of this geometric multi-levelled layout. Some of our group remarked that the long drive into the garden with its massive trees and thick layer of moss was worth the trip. We learned an important trick gardeners there employ: all that lush moss is deliciously encouraged by applications from a backpack sprayer full of buttermilk.

Friday, the second day of our three-day whirlwind, was a visit with the Beatrix Farrand Society at Garland Farm. Here is where we felt we could approach an almost mystical connection to Farrand — her life and work. To see the magnificent front door which Farrand had brought with her from Reef Point, her beloved lifetime seaside home, and to enjoy a demonstration of her colorful French watering can with its ingenious finger stopper and imagine her watering window boxes there at Garland Farm in her eighties, was to have glimpse of the beauty she surrounded herself with throughout her life. For us a visit to her library was akin to a trip to Mecca as our group spent time engrossed in the titles of the collection of her morning room books which is being recreated by the BFS and examining the many drawings and plans of her gardens that are displayed there. Even the lovely bookplates, which Farrand carefully inserted into her vast collection, revealed her keen aesthetic. The garden restoration now underway is wonderfully thorough and complex as they map, label and preserve original plants from the garden and their process serves as a model for anyone interested in garden

preservation. Jim Fuchs, President of the Board and his wife Emily, Head Docent led us on an informative tour and told a multitude of rich stories from Farrand's life at Garland Farm as well as descriptions of the extensive restoration work that is being undertaken there. We are so grateful to the BFS for developing this East Coast center of study for all of us passionate about Beatrix Farrand and garden design in general. For more info visit beatrixfarrandsociety.org



BFGA group in Southwest Harbor

Our final day we were off and running on an Open Day garden tour sponsored by the Garden Club of Mt. Desert. (gcmdgardenday.com) There were 6 gardens to see and getting around the full circuit proved a challenge, as we wanted to linger at each one. Kenarden in Bar Harbour was a special treat especially having seen the plan that Farrand drew of the estate at Garland Farm the day before. The sunken garden there is an element that is perhaps most unchanged from the original layout and it is beautifully planted with an updated and striking planting scheme. The current owners are devoted gardeners which became quite clear as we walked by the quarters built for their handsome yellow Lab and noticed that even he had elegant cascading window boxes on either side of his doghouse.



Garland Farm: L to R: Michaelleen Ward, Docent; Dick Crawford, Vice-President; Betty Crawford, Docent; Jim Fuchs, President; Emily Fuchs, Docent Chair welcome BFGA to Garland Farm

A number of us made a stop at the site where Farrand's Reef Point stood which was not only her lifelong seaside home but became her center for the study of landscape gardening with its extensive gardens, prize azalea collection and distinctive native plants. The house and gardens are no longer there, but a peek through the original stone piers at the entrance

allows a glimpse of what was once her lovely wooded driveway and a public path alongside the property makes it possible for visitors to walk down the shore and take a look at Farrand's view of the sea.

A few intrepid garden archeologists among us tracked down the remnants of a sunken garden that she designed for an estate now part of the College of the Atlantic in Bar Harbor. And a number of us strolled at leisure through the beautiful Asticou Azalea Garden and Thuya Gardens in Northeast Harbor both of which are home now to Farrand's Reef Point plant collections. What a delicious way for all of us gardeners to saturate ourselves in Farrand's masterful work and soak up her marvelous legacy. We highly recommend a visit to this hallowed ground.



**Beatrix Farrand
Garden Association**

PO Box 315
Hyde Park, NY 12538

Non Profit Org.
U.S. Postage Paid
Newburgh, NY 12550
Permit No. 8604

Visit Our Website

beatrixfarrandgarden.org

Printed on 30% Post Consumer paper

BFGA Celebrates Two 80th Birthdays in 2010!

Allelu Kurten, BFGA Board President and Luise Seelbach, BFGA Board Member both celebrated important birthdays in the garden this year.



Allelu Kuten and Luise Seelbach



Allelu blows out candles



Luise blows out candles

Happy 80th!