



**Beatrix Farrand
Garden Association**

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Visit Our Website
beatrixfarrandgarden.org

Printed on 30% PC paper



*Joan Jewett (left) and Allelu Kurten,
BFGA President, took time out from their
Vassar College Reunion to attend the
Bellefield Design Lecture.*



Doug Nieters, Jonathan Smith, and Anne Dexter at the Plant Sale.

Meet Us in the Garden

If you are interested in volunteering for the Beatrix Farrand Garden Association at Bellefield, there are a number of fun and exciting ways to join us. We need people to work on special events, fundraising, publicity, and publications for the garden. If you would prefer to get your hands in the dirt, volunteers meet in the garden every Tuesday morning during the growing season from 9:00 am to 11:00. Our professional horticulturist, Anne Symmes directs the gardening activities and trains volunteers in the finer points of maintaining over 3000 square feet of perennial borders. Garden volunteers have a great time working together and watching the garden grow and change week to week. All volunteers are welcome to join us in field trips we take to see other historic gardens. If you would like more information or would like to sign up to volunteer, please email us at info@beatrixfarrandgarden.org.



THE GARDEN GATE

Issue No. 5 Newsletter of the Beatrix Farrand Garden Association Fall 2007



President's Report

It was a good year for the garden with our loyal volunteers and Director Anne Symmes working on a variety of projects. We have made significant progress in several areas, many having to do with our partnership with the National Park Service (hereafter referred to as NPS). The first development to mention is our near victory over the woodchucks. Though the population is numerous and persistent, David Hayes of the NPS has taken on the trapping duties and the stalwart woodchucks that succeed in digging under the wall have found traps waiting for them so that by the end of the season this year asters and dahlias that have never heretofore stood a chance, are in full bloom.

This past year we were chosen to represent the Great Estates Consortium at the Dutchess County Fair where we re-created our Beatrix Farrand garden at Bellefield, complete with a gate, gravel path, and garden bed, (even simulating our hemlock hedge with tall arborvitae lent by Adams Nursery) for the Fair's horticultural display titled, "The Secret Garden". We won a rainbow ribbon and much attention!

In addition, we have been invited by the NPS to take part in discussions on long-range, specific planning for the Roosevelt-Vanderbilt National Historic Sites. Among the goals discussed are partnering to provide more diverse educational and outreach opportunities. The Orange and

Dutchess County Garden Club which is affiliated with the Garden Club of America has given a generous gift of \$1000 to help with the creation of an audio tour for the garden which will work in conjunction with existing NPS technology. We are excited about setting to work on this project moving us further in the direction of our educational vision.

A great success in our partnership with NPS has been the Bellefield Design Lectures held at the Wallace Center of the Franklin D. Roosevelt Presidential Library. Our second lecture in the series given by Gail Collmann Griffin, Director of the Farrand gardens at Dumbarton Oaks, is covered in Kate Kerin's article in this issue.

Our website (designed by David Hayes of the NPS) has brought us increased visibility and groups wanting guided tours of the garden are contacting us. Of special note was the North County Garden Club from Long Island. This highly knowledgeable group were delighted by the beauty of the garden and asked a flurry of horticultural questions all the while scribbling in notebooks

The New York Times featured our garden in a July article about garden gems of the Hudson Valley. The story and its accompanying web version offered a number of photographs of the garden and a savvy description of its illusion of

Director of Gardens at Dumbarton Oaks, Landmark American Garden in Washington, D.C., Gives 2007 Bellefield Design Lecture

By Kate Kerin, Co-Vice President, BFGA

On Saturday, June 9, over 120 people gathered from as far afield as Charlottesville, Virginia and Madison, Georgia to attend the Second Annual Bellefield Design Lecture. This year, Gail Collmann Griffin, Director of Gardens at Dumbarton Oaks, spoke about Beatrix Farrand and the stunning garden Farrand created in Georgetown for Mildred and Robert Woods Bliss between 1920 and 1945. In her talk, *Dumbarton Oaks: Eighty Years of Change*, Ms. Griffin discussed the twenty-five year collaboration between Farrand—one of the greatest garden designers of the twentieth century—and Ambassador and Mrs. Bliss—educated, urbane, and noted art collectors—that resulted in one of the most famous and famously beautiful gardens in the world.

In her role as Director of Gardens at Dumbarton Oaks, Ms. Griffin has been supervising the maintenance and ongoing preservation of this 16-acre garden for the past decade. As a landscape scholar and experienced practitioner, Griffin presented Farrand's vision and long-term work at this landmark American garden in an insightful and congenial fashion. A sprawling country estate in the heart of our nation's capitol, Dumbarton Oaks is widely considered one of the great gardens of the world. Now owned by Harvard University, it is a renowned study center for Byzantine, Pre-Columbian, and Landscape scholars. Part of Ms. Griffin's charge is not only to preserve the beloved character of this site, but to help balance the evolving academic needs of the Dumbarton Oaks Scholars within the historic landscape that serves as their campus. For this listener, it was a pleasure to be reminded that any garden is a work in progress, and even at the most famous of places, that work is never done.

After Ms. Griffin's lecture, which was held at the Wallace Center, the group walked across the lawn to Bellefield. It was a magnificent spring day and Farrand's garden was overflowing with peonies in

full bloom. Beatrix Farrand Garden Association (BFGA) volunteers had prepared an array of elegant edibles, and organized a sale of historic plants (mostly from the garden), Foxgloves garden gloves created by our long-time patron, Harriet Zbikowski, and select books on Farrand. Volunteers and BFGA Director, Anne Cleves Symmes were also on hand to answer guests' questions about the garden at Bellefield. The Roosevelt-Vanderbilt Historical Association, which raises funds to support projects on the National Historic Sites in Hyde Park, transformed the living room at Bellefield, now known as the Morgan Room, into a fabulous boutique featuring desiderata for the home and garden. As Farrand's birthday was June 19, we ended the afternoon with a hearty round of "Happy Birthday, Beatrix" and a magnificent birthday cake festooned with flowers and donated by Ms. Symmes.

The Bellefield Design Lectures represent a collaboration between the Beatrix Farrand Garden Association, National Park Service, the Franklin D. Roosevelt Presidential Library, the Hyde Park Visual Environment Committee, and the Roosevelt-Vanderbilt Historical Association. The aim of this annual lecture series is to bring noted speakers on topics including art, architecture, decorative arts and gardens to the Hudson Valley, where centuries of exceptional design have been preserved for public enjoyment. These lectures also serve as a fundraiser for the Beatrix Farrand Garden Association. This year the event cleared over \$2,200 to support the ongoing preservation and interpretation of the Farrand Garden at Bellefield.

Anne Cleves Symmes,
Director, BFGA

Frank Frutel,
Curator, NPS



Our speaker,
Gail Collmann Griffin



BFGA member, Kate Braun serving Beatrix's birthday cake to Campbell Symmes Ives and friends.

President's Report

Continued from page 1

elongated space and its quiet and sublime peacefulness. A host of visitors who read the article have already come to visit.

Our "secret garden" has never been easy for visitors to find, but, with increased visibility, our website complete with directions and map and special signage from the NPS, we look forward to more and more visitors finding us.

On September 15th, for the first time, our garden was a featured stop on the Annual Hudson River Valley Ramble sponsored by the Hudson River Valley National Heritage Area and Hudson River Valley Greenway. On September 29th, we will once again take part in the Roosevelt Farm Day. We will be highlighting the herbal and medicinal plants found in Beatrix Farrand's planting plans.

Great thanks go to the loyal corps of weeders who assemble every Tuesday morning to work under Anne Symmes' direction to keep Beatrix Farrand's vision at Bellefield going and growing. Thank you to Doris Adams, Virginia Bickford, Kate Braun, Linda Freisitzer, Florence Fried, Debby Glynn, Helen Page, Bev Polistena, Luise Seelbach, Jim Smith and Cynthia Whitman. And thanks to Vice President, Kate Kerin and her wealth of ideas, input and support.

And our ongoing thanks to the many members and friends who care for the garden and support the work.

Allelu Kurten
President, BFGA

Two Heirloom Pink Irises for Early Summer



Iris germanica "Queen of May"

Two of the old named varieties of iris that are now flourishing in the garden at Bellefield are our pink royalty, Rose Queen and Queen of May. Beatrix Farrand lists *Iris germanica* 'Queen of May' in her planting plan for the pink border and we were able to locate it through the great help of the Historic Iris

Preservation Society or HIPS www.hips-roots.com and their remarkable commercial source information. Queen of May was first documented in 1859 and is classified as a Tall Bearded iris although we find it to be a bit shorter than most modern bearded irises reaching only around 30" in height. It needs good drainage and is said to require strong sun although it blooms well in our pink border despite being partially shaded by a giant oak and offers up its delicate and intricate rose blossoms in mid June.

Rose Queen substitutes here in our garden for what Farrand listed as a mauve *Iris laevigata*. Information from HIPS helped us determine that the nomenclature for the water irises of which *laevigata* is one, was often confused in the early part of the 20th century and since all the *laevigatas* are in fact



Iris ensata 'Rose Queen'

blue and white it may have been an *Iris ensata* (or *Iris kaempferi* as they were called then) that Farrand intended. One of the most noted pale pink water iris of that period was *Iris ensata* 'Rose Queen' and since we were able to locate this cultivar once again through HIPS commercial sources, it now blooms for us in late June into July sending up magnificent, floating blossoms right after Queen of May is finished. Rose Queen requires moist soil especially to become established and needs to be moved around every few years because *Iris ensata* deposit a substance into the soil over time, which will stunt its own growth. We think it is well worth the trouble especially when we catch these beauties glistening with dew on a sunny morning.

Anne Cleves Symmes, Director, BFGA