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NOTES FROM RIVER FARM

HAPPY NEW YEAR! I hope each of you had a joyous holiday and that you are anticipating this new year as much as we are here at AHS headquarters. The first snow of the season blanketed the great lawn at River Farm like a puffy winter comforter and lit up the branches of each of our great trees like streaks of white lightning. To top that, the bald eagle that frequently visits our sycamore snag down by the Potomac River arrived the very morning the snow fell. He perched on a snowy branch, decorating our tree like no other.

There is so much going on here that it has been difficult to stand still long enough to take stock of these natural wonders around us. Over the past few months we have initiated several new national programs and put the finishing touches on the planning for others already in the works. I have space only to cover a few highlights, but you can read more about all these exciting projects in the news section starting on page 7.

Updated USDA Plant-Hardiness Zone Map. This is an important and exciting project that the American Horticultural Society is working on in cooperation with the U.S. Department of Agriculture. With the USDA hardiness map and its companion AHS Plant Heat-Zone Map, we as gardeners now have critical tools that work together to help us select exactly the right plant for the right spot. The new map will be released in March and all AHS members will receive a printed copy of the updated hardiness map in the next issue of *The American Gardener*.

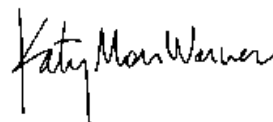
Flower shows are blossoming everywhere and AHS has a relationship with many shows through its national awards program. The AHS Environmental Award will be presented at more than 30 flower shows to recognize environmental excellence in major garden displays. In addition, I will be speaking at a number of shows—including at AHS regional meetings in Oklahoma City and Atlanta—and our President Emeritus Dr. H. Marc Cathey is serving as a judge at others. We love to meet AHS members at these shows, so please stop and say hello.

Washington Blooms! This exciting new AHS annual event is being held right here in our own back yard the first week of April in conjunction with the famous National Cherry Blossom Festival in Washington, D.C. The whole week will be filled with festive events and amazing floral displays, but I'd particularly like to extend an invitation for you to join us on the evening of April 4 at the 2003 AHS Great American Gardeners Award banquet to help us recognize and celebrate the national horticultural heroes who are making a difference in American gardening.

The Growing Connection. To further encourage youth gardening in America, the Society has forged a partnership with NASA, the United Nations Food and Agricultural Organization, and several other groups to create a unique educational program for middle-school children in America and abroad. Growing nutritious food, learning about science, sharing across cultures, doing research, using technology, having fun—all of these are essential components of this creative new program.

As you plan exciting and inspirational activities for your new year, I hope you will consider participating in some of these AHS events!

Happy Gardening!



—Katy Moss Warner, *AHS President*