

New Master Plan for River Farm Approved by AHS Board of Directors

IN JUNE, the American Horticultural Society's Board of Directors approved a new Master Plan for the AHS's River Farm headquarters. The Master Plan was coordinated by Pittsburgh-based landscape architectural firm **Marshall•Tyler•Rausch** in cooperation with **Martinez & Johnson Architecture**, a Washington, D.C., firm that specializes in restoration and adaptive reuse of historic structures.

"This is the most exciting development for the American Horticultural Society that I have witnessed since first joining the AHS Board of Directors more than 10 years ago," says AHS President **Katy Moss Warner**. "This Master Plan, guided and informed by the vision and goals charted for the AHS during a 2002 strategic planning session, will transform River Farm into a true celebration of American horticulture and create an ideal site where groups can convene to address major issues facing American gardeners."

Highlights of the proposed first phase of the Master Plan include improved visitor services, enhanced gardens that highlight past horticultural trends and historical figures in American horticulture, and state-of-the-art facilities for educational programs.

"The new Master Plan serves to guide the future enhancement of the AHS headquarters in many ways," says landscape architect **Missy Marshall**, an AHS Board member and principal of Marshall•Tyler•Rausch. "It provides storylines that will shape the visitor experience, it establishes relationships between the various elements and existing characteristics of the site, and it anticipates locations of planned features as well as circulation patterns."

According to committee member **Ron Kagawa**, an associate professor in the department of landscape architecture at Virginia Tech's Alexandria Center, "Another strength of the plan is the way that it fulfills the national mission of the AHS while respecting the character, natural beauty, and heritage of the River Farm site."

The approval of the conceptual Master Plan culminates nearly two years of planning and work that started with a design charrette held at River Farm in the fall of 2002. At that time, 26 national leaders in horticulture, education, and landscape design met at River Farm for three days to shape a new vision for the AHS headquarters. "The charrette helped us identify the most

pressing issues and set priorities for our site," says **Tom Underwood**, AHS director of horticultural programs.

Focusing on the priorities established during the charrette, the AHS River Farm Committee began meeting regularly to identify and address site and programmatic issues critical to development of a new Master Plan. Throughout the process,

Missy Marshall played a leading role in guiding the committee's activities and the preparation of the Master Plan.

"We're so fortunate to have Missy's leadership and the support of a landscape design firm with the national credentials of Marshall•Tyler•Rausch," says new AHS Board Chair **Arabella Dane**. "They have been instrumental in the design of many of the major public gardens around the United States."

Look for updates in future issues of *The American*

Gardener on the implementation of the Master Plan and ways you can get involved in this exciting project. Please direct any comments or questions about the Society's headquarters at River Farm to Tom Underwood at tunderwood@ahs.org.



Scenic vistas of the Potomac River are incorporated as major elements of the visitor experience in the new River Farm Master Plan.

Time to Save Seeds!

Remember to start saving seeds now for the **2005 AHS Free Seed Exchange**. Last year's exchange was a huge success, with 163 different seed varieties offered and more than 1,000 seed orders from AHS members filled. The most popular seed offering last year was *Salvia transsylvanica* 'Blue Cloud', for which there were more than 300 individual orders.

More information about the annual seed exchange—and a form that can be used when you donate seeds—will be published in the September/October issue of *The American Gardener*. You can also print out a seed donor form by going to the Member's section of the AHS Web site (www.ahs.org) and clicking under Annual Seed Exchange.

André M. Bluemel Meadow to Bloom at River Farm

MORE THAN 20 staff members and volunteers from the AHS, **Mount Vernon Estate and Gardens**, and **Kurt Bluemel Inc.** nursery teamed up April 26 and 27 to plant the first stage of a restored meadow at River Farm. In two days this intrepid group planted—by hand—some 32,000 plugs of mostly native wildflowers and grasses across a one-acre sweep of ground sloping down to the banks of the Potomac River.

Kurt Bluemel, the outgoing AHS Board Chair and owner of Kurt Bluemel nursery in Baldwin, Maryland, designed the meadow and is donating all of the plants—a total expected to exceed 100,000—that will be needed to complete the four-acre meadow, which will be installed in three more planting phases over the next few years. “Kurt has provided us with a meadow that will be a beautiful and sustainable element of River Farm for generations to come,” says **Tom Underwood**, AHS director of horticultural programs. At Kurt’s request, the meadow has been named in memory of his son, **André M. Bluemel**.

In addition to offering scenic beauty for River Farm visitors, the meadow will serve as a natural filter to reduce runoff into the Potomac River and provide rich habitat for wildlife. “A meadow fits in well with the philosophy of reducing the use of chemical pesticides and fertilizers and is a logical planting for this location on a slope near the Potomac River,” says Kurt. “It also provides four-season interest through flowers, foliage, and seedheads and will become a natural habitat for many kinds of wildlife.”

To determine how the meadow affects River Farm’s overall bird population both in quantity and diversity of species, the Virginia chapter of the **National Audubon Society** will be conducting regular bird surveys at River Farm over the next 10 years.

“It will be especially rewarding when the meadow plants are mature and blooming,” says AHS Horticulturist **Peggy Bowers**, “because it contains so many good seed and nectar plants for wildlife, like *Monarda punctata*, *Asclepias tuberosa*, and *Helianthus angustifolius*.”



Staff from AHS, Mount Vernon, and the Kurt Bluemel nursery teamed up to plant the first phase of a meadow at River Farm this past spring.

To ensure the long-term success of the meadow, an endowment fund has been established and many generous donations have already been received. If you’d like to support the André M. Bluemel Meadow, please contact **Joe Lamoglia**, director of business operations, at (703) 768-5700 ext. 115.

Restoring the White House Gates

PLANS ARE UNDERWAY to restore and preserve a set of former White House gates that graced the American Horticultural



Before hanging at the entrance to River Farm for many years, this gate was part of a set at the northeast entrance to the White House.

tural Society’s River Farm property entrance for over half a century. The gates’ unique history was uncovered only recently by architectural historian and AHS Board member, **William Seale**, who has authored several books about the history of the White House.

After researching historical records and photographs from the White House archives, William confirmed that the AHS gates were the same ones that stood at the northeast entrance to the White House during the presidencies of James Monroe through Franklin D. Roosevelt. “They are very fine hand-forged gates, representing the best quality of fencing in the early republic,” says William.

The AHS is committed to restoring the 185-year-old, handmade iron gates for their historical value and eventually incorporating them into the landscape at River Farm. Before the gates can be permanently displayed, however, professional restoration is needed to combat the wear and tear of time and exposure to the elements.

“This project has generated a lot of excitement,” says **Joe**

AHS Gala Set for September

Available tables were limited as this issue went to press, but there may still be time to make a reservation for yourself at the 2004 AHS Gala, “Through the White House Gates to River Farm,” which will be held on September 25. For more information, please turn to page 7 or call (703) 768-5700.

Lamoglia, AHS director of business operations. "We've received a \$50,000 pledge from a generous donor who wishes to remain anonymous, and we're seeking grants and individual funding for the balance. Properly restoring and displaying these American treasures will require funding of more than \$100,000."

AHS members will have a final opportunity to see the gates prior to restoration at the AHS Annual Gala, which will be held at River Farm on September 25. Restoration will be completed this winter and the gates will make their national debut as the official entrance to the 2005 Philadelphia Flower Show, which will be held March 6 to 13 at the Pennsylvania Convention Center. **The Pennsylvania Horticultural Society** invited the AHS to participate in next year's show because the identity of the gates as a historic American landscape feature ties in perfectly with the show's theme, "America the Beautiful."

River Farm's George Harding Memorial Azalea Garden

THIS SPRING, the 12 beds within the George Harding Memorial Azalea Garden at River Farm were alive with the grandeur of more than 700 azalea selections. The fine colors of the early-blooming selection, such as the rich pink Glenn Dale hybrid 'Bountiful', were followed by many large-flowered, Satsuki hy-



Volunteers Milton Lerner, left, and Robert Stelloh erected the sign for the Harding Memorial Azalea Garden prior to its official dedication in 1994.

brids like the soft pink 'Gwenda' and the outstanding Polly Hill selection, 'Wintergreen.' These and many rare and unusual azaleas can be found in this outstanding collection, which is interplanted with a wide variety of uncommon herbaceous perennials and specimen trees that can be viewed from woodchop covered paths.

Designed and planted by members of the **Azalea Society of America** (ASA) in partnership with the AHS, the garden was dedicated in 1994 as a memorial to George Harding, a leading azalea expert who was chief of maintenance with the National Capitol Parks and a co-founder of the ASA. He died in 1990.

Ornamental grasses, perennials, bamboo, ferns. Liners available.

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Among those who helped create the garden are **Denise and Robert Stelloh**, **Bea and Robert Hobbs**, **Sue and George Switzer**, and **Joan and Milton Lerner**. It continues to be maintained and planted by ASA members—including George's grandson, **Michael White**—who keep George's memory alive through their remarkable dedication.

"George was a great personality and plantsman," says Milton, who along with his wife, Joan, has volunteered in River Farm azalea garden since its inception. "When I first met him he had begun losing his sight, but this didn't slow him down. Instead, he started learning to identify trees based on the feel of their bark."

To view the azalea garden at its peak of glory, visit River Farm from late April through mid June.

Arabella Dane is New Board Chair

ARABELLA DANE became the new Chair of the AHS Board of Directors at the June Board meeting, succeeding **Kurt Bluemel**, who remains on the Board as immediate past chair.

A resident of Center Harbor, New Hampshire, Arabella has been on the AHS Board since 1996 and is also active in the Garden Club of America



and National Garden Clubs. An internationally recognized flower show judge, she frequently teaches courses on flower arranging. Arabella received the AHS Frances Jones Poetker Award in 1996 and has been recognized for her floral arrangements and her numerous gardening outreach activities by the Massachusetts Horticultural Society, the Garden Club of America, and many other organizations.

As new AHS Board Chair, Arabella Dane takes the gavel from Kurt Bluemel.

Newly elected AHS Board officers are **Brian Holley**, executive director of the Cleveland Botanical Garden, who is first vice chairman, and **Don Riddle**, owner of Homestead Gardens nursery in Davidsonville, Maryland, who is second vice chairman. They join current Board officers **Albin McDonough Plant** of Baltimore, Maryland, who is secretary; and **Christine Perdue** of Middleburg, Virginia, who is treasurer.

Board members who have fulfilled their terms are **Jim Corfield** of Geneva, Illinois, and **Valerie Thomas** of Alexandria, Virginia. Newly elected directors are **Beverly Hanselman**, **Arnold Steiner**, and **Margaret Kulp**. Beverly lives in Nashville, Tennessee, and has served as president of the Garden Club of Nashville. Arnold, an investment banker and avid gardener, resides in Birmingham, Alabama. A resident of Louisville, Kentucky, Margaret is a member of the Garden Club of America travel committee and is on the board of the Bernheim Arboretum and Research Forest.

AHS Welcomes New Horticultural Partner

THE AHS is pleased to welcome the largest men's garden club group in North America, **The Gardener's of America/Men's Garden Clubs of America (TGOA/MGCA)**, as the AHS's newest horticultural partner. As of this issue of the magazine, all 4,000 members of TGOA/MGCA are now also AHS members. "We welcome all these enthusiastic new gardeners; it was a great pleasure for me to meet so many of them recently," says AHS President **Katy Moss Warner**, who spoke at the group's annual convention in Des Moines, Iowa, this past June.

TGOA/MGCA holds an annual convention each year at one of its 78 garden club affiliates around the United States. The organization also produces an annual gardening calendar and sponsors photography and horticultural awards. In addition, its participating garden clubs host numerous local events and programs. "We are very excited about this partnership with the AHS," says TGOA/MGCA President **Honey Barnekoff**. "It will undoubtedly be of mutual benefit to our respective members."

Look for more information about TGOA/MGCA programs and activities in future issues of *The American Gardener*. Or visit the TGOA/MGCA Web site at www.tgoa-mgca.org.

New Online Gardening Courses Launched

BASED ON the success of the online "Art and Science of Container Gardening" course, which debuted in fall 2002 and has been successfully completed by more than 1,000 gardeners across America, the AHS and Michigan State University's **Horticultural Gardening Institute (HGI)** have developed two new exciting online gardening courses that will open for registration in late summer and fall.

These new online courses are "The Art and Science of the SMARTGARDEN™" and "Herbaceous Perennials: Identification, Culture & Garden Attributes." The SMARTGARDEN™ program is designed to work with four AHS SMARTGARDEN™ *Regional Guides* that are tailored to gardeners in the Northeast, Southeast, Northwest, and Southwest. "The structure of the SMARTGARDEN™ course is really ground-breaking," says **Chris Geith**, director of the MSU Global Institute and co-executive director of HGI. "It is de-

PARTNERSHIP FOR PLANT-BASED EDUCATION MEETS AT RIVER FARM



In April, more than 50 representatives of the national Partnership for Plant-Based Education (PPBE) met at River Farm. The PPBE was formed in 2002 to promote the use of plants as an important element of children's educational programs. In addition to AHS, groups represented at the meeting included the U.S. Botanic Garden, the National Wildlife Federation, the National Gardening Association, and the Chicago Botanic Garden.

signed to truly fit the individual gardener's needs." The herbaceous perennials program—developed in partnership with the University of Georgia's celebrated perennial expert **Allan Armitage**, an AHS Board member—will provide instruction on all aspects of selecting and caring for more than 200 outstanding perennial plants.

Meanwhile, the online container gardening course—the first venture in the educational partnership between the AHS and HGI—is still open for registration. This 12-week online course is based around projects and interviews provided by gardening experts such as AHS's President Emeritus **Dr. H. Marc Cathey** and Associate Editor **Carole Ottesen, Brent and Becky Heath** of Brent and Becky's Bulbs, and container specialist **Heather Will-Browne**.

In addition to offering first-rate gardening education, all these online courses include perks such as a complimentary AHS membership and access to HGI resources for a full year. Participants can also communicate with other gardeners online through a special member-share feature.

And all the courses offer participants the option of attending special regional gardening events relating to each online course. Two upcoming regional events designed to complement "The Art and Science of Container Gardening" course will be held at the **Leila Arboretum Society** in Battlecreek, Michigan, on August 21 and at the **Ohio Master Gardener Program** in Beaver Creek, Ohio, on September 9.

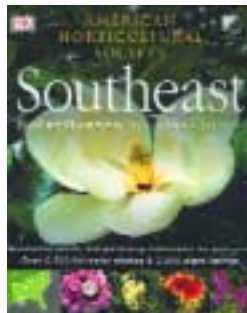
Help Test an Online Course!

Interested gardeners have an opportunity to play an integral role in the final stages of testing for the "Herbaceous Perennials" program by registering to attend The Grand Hotel: Gardens of Mackinac Island, a gardening event with Allan Armitage hosted by the Michigan Master Gardeners on August 22 to 24. For more information, visit www.gardeninginstitute.com.

For further information, or to register for these programs and events, visit the HGI Web site (www.gardeninginstitute.com), or link to this site through the AHS site (www.ahs.org).

New SMARTGARDEN™ Book Out

THE LATEST in the AHS SMARTGARDEN™ *Regional Guide* series, tailored to gardeners in the Southeast, is now available from DK Publishing. Co-authored by **Rita Pelczar**, former associate editor of *The American Gardener*, and AHS Board member **Dr. William E. Barrick**, who is executive director of Bellingrath Gardens in Mobile, Alabama, the book contains practical advice on creating a beautiful and earth friendly garden. Also included are hundreds of fully illustrated plant lists suited to a variety of garden sites. To order the book, visit the AHS Web site at www.ahs.org/books/books.htm, or call DK directly at (800) 526-0275.



The Growing Connection

THE AHS initiative, *The Growing Connection* (TGC), is reaching new heights this summer as the program expands to reach more schools and communities across the country and abroad. AHS has partnered with the **Food and Agricultural Organi-**

zation (FAO) of the United Nations to develop this unique international program, which teaches middle-school-age children the science behind growing food, and helps them explore important issues like nutrition and water conservation.

Students and youth groups in the program receive TGC kits that include vegetable seeds, educational materials, and a scientifically designed growing unit called an EarthBox™. The seeds are used to conduct science experiments and the children can share their results with other participants and project scientists around the world through the Internet.

The city of Chicago, which has agreed to serve as a flagship city for TGC, is setting up demonstration gardens at the **Garfield Park Conservatory** and at the **Chicago High School for Agricultural Sciences**. The city of Chicago and the University of Illinois Master Gardeners will oversee this program, which will operate as a hub for new members of TGC. “From there we reach out to about 20 individual communities and schools,”



AHS President Katy Moss Warner, left, meets with students from the Crossroads school in St. Louis, Missouri, who are participating in *The Growing Connection* program.

said **Bob Patterson**, senior liaison officer with FAO in the United States.

TGC has also taken off this summer in the Washington, D.C., area, with 12 additional schools introduced to the program in June. Visitors to the Washington area can see a TGC demonstration garden in action by visiting the AHS headquarters at George Washington’s River Farm.

On the international front, Bob says that the program in the West African nation Ghana is doubling this summer to include a total of 16 villages. In Mexico, a “preliminary adaptability trial” is underway, he says, to determine if the environmental conditions are compatible with TGC’s system. The program there is scheduled to be up and running by the end of the year.

To find out how to get your school or youth group involved in *The Growing Connection*, contact **Amy Chaffee** of FAO at (202) 653-2458 or by e-mail at Amy.Chaffee@fao.org.

AHS news items were written by editorial interns Jessie Keith and Katie Palanjian.

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