



# Magnolia

*Magnolia grandiflora*  
The Laurel Tree of Carolina  
Catesby's *Natural History*, 1743

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## Spoils of Fortune

By Mary Anne Pickens, Columbus, Texas



*Plant Hunting in China from EHM Cox Book*

Robert Fortune

We are all familiar with the old saying “To the victor belong the spoils.” While Robert Fortune was not the “victor” per se, he collected some outstanding horticultural spoils for the British after the signing of the Nanking Treaty, which ended the first Opium War. The Opium War was basically a disagreement between Great Britain and China over the fact that the British were dealing drugs and making enormous amounts of money by smuggling opium from China. With the signing of the treaty in 1842, Britain agreed to stop smuggling opium, and China agreed to open its ports at Amoy, Canton, Foochow, Ningpo, and Shanghai and ceded Hong Kong to the British. Young Queen Victoria was on the throne and the British Empire was enjoying its great colonial period. Treaties in 1858 and 1860, following other Opium War disputes, opened the rest of China to Westerners and made its rich flora available to collectors.

With this unprecedented access to China, eager British horticulturists were anxious to capitalize on the opportunities to acquire new plants. For that purpose, the Horticultural Society of London turned to Scotsman Robert Fortune who recently had assumed the duties of superintendent of the Society's hothouse department at Chiswick, west of London. Thus began Fortune's career, which lasted from 1843 until 1862, as plant collector in China and Japan. Robert Fortune's

“spoils” from that exciting period of time have become some of the most enduring plants in British and American gardens.

Fortune was born September 16, 1812, in Blackadder, a small farm town southeast of Edinburgh. His father worked as a hedger on an estate called Kelloe, and Robert attended the parish school of Edrom near Duns, Scotland. When he completed his schooling, he was apprenticed as a garden boy or “pot boy” on the estate where his father worked. From apprentice, he graduated to gardener at the estate, and then moved to employment at the Moredun estate. He married Jane Penny in 1838, and they had a family of six children, although two died in infancy. In all the years Robert traveled back and forth to China, there is no indication that Jane ever accompanied him.

In 1839, just as the Opium War was getting underway, Robert Fortune began working at the Royal Botanic Garden in Edinburgh under the widely respected director, William McNab. McNab reputedly was a strong taskmaster, but he apparently liked the young Scotsman and trained him well. His recommendation of Fortune for the Chiswick position placed Fortune in the right place at the right time in 1842 when the Nanking Treaty was signed and the Horticultural Society of London began looking for someone to send to China. Fortune was young, eager, and available.

John Reeves, a prominent member of the Horticultural Society's Chinese Committee, had enjoyed collecting plants and sending them home to England while serving as a tea inspector in China. Now, retired to London, he was anxious for the Society to grasp the opportunity to collect more Chinese plants and he encouraged it to forge ahead even before the British Government had finalized its new arrangements with China.

On February 23, 1843, just three days prior to Fortune's departure to China, the Royal Horticultural Society sent him a

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# CALENDAR

**Now through February 16, 2004.** "America's Cornucopia: A Collector's View of American Botany and Horticulture," an exhibition at the LuEsther T. Mertz Library at the New York Botanical Garden, Bronx, New York. For information, go to the garden's Web site at: [www.nybg.org/events/floshow.html](http://www.nybg.org/events/floshow.html)

**January 23-25, 2004.** 18th Annual Southern Gardening Symposium, Callaway Gardens, Pine Mountain Georgia. Keynote speaker is Greg Grant. Also on the program: Allan Armitage and Mary Palmer Dargan. For information, call 1-800-CALL-AWAY (225-5292 ext. 5153); e-mail: [education@callawaygardens.com](mailto:education@callawaygardens.com)

**February 19-20, 2004.** Southern Garden Heritage Conference, Georgia Center for Continuing Education, Athens, Georgia. To obtain a copy of the program and registration material, access the Georgia Center Web site at: [www.gactr.uga.edu/conferences](http://www.gactr.uga.edu/conferences) after Jan. 1, 2004. For additional information, contact Al Henderson at the Georgia Center at: [al.henderson@gactr.uga.edu](mailto:al.henderson@gactr.uga.edu) or (706) 542-2237, or Neal Weatherly at [nweath@uga.edu](mailto:nweath@uga.edu) or (706) 542-0943.

**April 2-3, 2004.** "Savannah Garden Exposition ... The Flavors of Savannah" Held at Savannah's Roundhouse Railroad Museum, this event will feature garden exhibits, demonstrations, and private garden tours in Savannah's Historic Landmark District. Proceeds benefit Historic Savannah Foundation and the Isaiah Davenport House Museum. For information call (912) 236-4795 or visit Web site at: [www.savannahgardenexpo.com](http://www.savannahgardenexpo.com)

**April 4-6, 2004.** 58th Annual Williamsburg Garden Symposium on "Heirloom Gardening." Many notable speakers are on this year's outstanding program including: Dr. William Welch, Kent Whealy, Scott Kunst, Dr. Neil Odenwald, Lawrence Griffith, Dean Norton, William Woy Weaver, among others. For more information call 1-800-603-0948 or visit their Web site at [www.ColonialWilliamsburg.org](http://www.ColonialWilliamsburg.org)

**May 7-9, 2004.** The 22nd Annual meeting of the Southern Garden History Society, in New Orleans, Louisiana. The meeting will be headquartered in the Historic French Quarter and the entire St. Marie hotel has been reserved. Programs will be held at the Historic New Orleans Collection facility. Tours are planned for the French Quarter gardens and Uptown in the Garden District. Mark your calendars and plan early for this exciting meeting. For more information, contact Sally K. Reeves at [sakr@cox.net](mailto:sakr@cox.net) or Betsy Crusel at: [hapc@aol.com](mailto:hapc@aol.com)

**June 9-12, 2004.** AABGA Annual Conference in Dallas Fairmont Hotel, in Dallas, Texas. The meeting topic is "How-to Conference" focusing on garden design, master planning, development, attracting visitors, managing design and construction partnerships, and meeting science-based curriculum standards. For information, call (302) 655-7100.

## *SGHS Fall 2003 Board Meeting in Winston Salem*

Betsy Crusel reported to the board on the upcoming annual meeting of the society, to be held in New Orleans May 7-9, 2004. Mrs. Crusel and Sally Reeves are co-chairs.

Kenneth M. McFarland announced the date of the 2005 annual meeting as April 16-18, to be held in Fredericksburg, Virginia. Mr. McFarland is meeting chair. Serving on the planning committee with him are Beate Jensen, Gail Griffin, Dean Norton, Ed and Nan Schull, Wayne Amos (White House gardener), Decca and Carter Frackelton, Peggy Cornett, and Philip Watkins. The meeting's theme will be "Colonial Meets Revival."

The board decided to hold the 2006 annual meeting of the society in Kentucky, if possible. The fall meeting of the SGHS board will be held in Shakertown, Pleasant Hill, Kentucky, with

Ruth Coy as meeting host. Reports were heard on the society's Web site, the historic plant list for the South project, and the restoration of the Elizabeth Lawrence garden in Charlotte, North Carolina. A committee composed of Staci Catron-Sullivan, Susan Haltom, and Ced Dolder was appointed to review papers for possible publication in *Magnolia*.

The board meeting was held September 29 in Old Salem, Winston-Salem, North Carolina, immediately following the conference on Restoring Southern Gardens and Landscapes. Board members attending were Flora Ann Bynum, Ms. Cornett, Mrs. Coy, James R. Cothran, Mrs. Crusel, Nancy Haywood, Davyd Foad Hood, Mr. McFarland, Mary Anne Pickens, and Mr. Shull.

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letter clearly spelling out his duties as they saw them. He was to embark on the Emu where he would “have a berth and mess with the Captain.” His salary was to be 100 pounds a year plus additional money for expenses, and he was to collect “seeds and plants of an ornamental or useful kind, not already cultivated in Great Britain” and also to collect information about Chinese agriculture and how the climate affects the vegetation. He was to keep a very detailed journal and to write home at every opportunity. A year later when Fortune complained about the meager salary for the amount of work he was doing, he was chastised with a comment that salary should not be his number one concern.

His instructions included which ships he was to use in shipping his plants and how he was to instruct the captains concerning the care of such plants. In addition to funds for his limited expenses, he also was provided with seeds and trinkets to use as gifts to the natives. The Society gave him a wish list of plants they desired including blue peonies and yellow camellias, tea plants, varieties of bamboo, the orange called Cum-quat, and “the Double Yellow Roses of which two sorts are said to occur in Chinese gardens exclusive of the Banksian.” The Society advised him that there was little point in collecting heat loving plants for Great Britain, except for “Aquatics, Orchidaceae, or plants producing very handsome flowers.” He was to pay particular attention to the soil that grew camellias, azaleas, chrysanthemums, and enkianthus and collect soil samples for later analysis. When he sent home seeds, he was to send enough for general distribution whenever possible.

As the lengthy, and often strange, instructions show, the Society had no real comprehension of the vastness of the country, the types of plants Fortune would encounter, or the problems he would face even though John Reeves himself had spent time in China. When Fortune requested that he be allowed to carry a firearm with him, he was refused. Only when he persisted, pointing out that Great Britain had only recently been at war with China, was he granted permission to carry a pistol. The pistol later proved to be a most fortuitous possession.

Fortune left England aboard the Emu on February 26, 1843 and arrived in Hong Kong in July. On this first voyage, he took with him three Wardian cases of plants so he could monitor the plants and test the new cases. These closed glass cases played a major role in Fortune’s success in shipping plants to England. Made by Nathaniel Bagshaw Ward of London, the cases were like our closed terrariums today that allow plants to grow without additional water.<sup>1</sup>

Collecting plants in faraway places had been a popular exercise for many years before Fortune was sent to China, and getting those plants back to England had always been a challenge, for many plants were lost in transit. Often the plants collected were simply sent as dried herbarium specimens. Although other collectors had attempted to use the boxes,

Robert Fortune was the first to successfully use them. When he returned to England at the end of his first China trip, he transported 18 Wardian cases filled with 250 plants. The voyage took four months and 215 of the plants arrived in good condition in London. His instructions were to keep the cases on the poop and never open them. Any broken glass should be replaced immediately, and if glass was not available, a thin board should be used. He also advised that in stormy weather old sails should be thrown over the cases to protect them and “never allow sailors to throw a drop of water over them when they are washing decks in the morning.”

Soon after Fortune arrived in Hong Kong in 1843, he proceeded to sail north along the coast to Amoy and later to Chusan. He never penetrated the interior more than thirty

miles and most of his plants were acquired from private gardens and nurseries. Also, as antique rosarians frequently do today, Fortune visited the cemeteries and collected from them. He found *Anemone japonica*, one of his first discoveries, in a Chinese graveyard and within a year it was thriving and blooming in Chiswick. Fortune seemed particularly impressed with the flowers on the tombs in China and noted that they were generally not the expensive camellias or peonies, but rather more simple plants such as the anemones, roses, or tall, waving grasses. Near Shanghai, he noted a species of *Lycoris* covering a grave with its “mass of brilliant purple.”

After his first trip to China, he wrote his first book, *Three Year’s Wanderings in the Northern Provinces of China*. In it he tells of his travels and his joy in discovering new plants along with the

pleasures of finding familiar plants such as crape myrtles and azaleas in their natural settings. Fortune writes of visiting Buddhist temples and comments on the nearly futile efforts of both Catholics and Protestants to convert the native people. He discusses the mode of dress of everyone from the coolie in his dyed cotton apparel to the “red buttoned mandarin.” He comments on the tragic opium habit and the British acquisition of Hong Kong. He discusses dwarfing plants, the silk industry, and tea culture. He also tells of learning to eat with chopsticks and donning Chinese dress so that he could travel unnoticed throughout the country. He traveled by chair, by boat and, often to the surprise of the natives, on foot. He said, “My head was shaved, I had a splendid wig and tail, of which some Chinaman in former days had doubtless been extremely vain; and upon the whole I believe I made a pretty fair Chinaman.”

One of the book’s more interesting stories is his account of being attacked by pirates. Near the end of his trip, he was traveling by cargo boat to Chusan when a pirate ship attacked. Such attacks were common because Chinese mandarins would not allow captains of cargo boats to carry firearms even though *Jan-dous* or pirates frequently bothered them. Fortune had contracted a fever and had taken to his berth when the captain and pilot of the ship rushed into his cabin to inform him that



Tea Gardens at Shanghai - Fortune - 1847 - Three Years Wanderings in China

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pirates were at hand and for him to get his pistol. Rising from his sick bed, he prepared his pistols, ramming a ball on top of each charge of shot in his guns. He then stood on the deck, and with his small handheld telescope, he watched the approaching pirates. Meanwhile, the captain and pilot were ripping up boards off the deck to hide their valuables below. The crew's only defense preparation was the bringing up of several baskets of small stones kept on hand to throw at the pirates. As the pirates approached, most of the crew ran below deck to hide. Only the two helmsmen were on deck with Fortune, and they were there only because he threatened to shoot them himself if they moved.

As the pirates began to fire at them, Fortune was able to analyze the range and power of their guns. When they were within thirty yards of his boat, and were ready to fire another round, he told the helmsmen to hit the deck and he did the same. After the pirates discharged their guns, Fortune coolly fired his double-barreled gun and the pirates, unaccustomed as they were to meeting resistance, dropped back.

Not as interesting as pirates perhaps, but probably more important was Fortune's account of his visits to the famous China tea districts. Fortune learned how the Chinese flavored their tea using various flowers, and also determined that green and black teas were produced from the same plant, *Camellia sinensis*. The variation resulted from the method of drying and processing. He also learned that the blue and green colored tea, which was very popular with the British, was simply tea that had been dyed using Prussian blue<sup>2</sup> or gypsum. The Chinese made the colored tea for export but never drank it. Upon learning this, Fortune said, "No wonder that the Chinese consider the natives of the west to be a race of 'barbarians'."

When Fortune returned to England in 1846, he was hired for the prestigious position of Curator of the Chelsea Physic Garden. His salary was 100 pounds, but he also was provided a house (without piped water) for his family and he had the right to grow vegetables along the river. The previous curator had been quite elderly and the facilities and gardens had deteriorated badly. In the two years that Fortune held the position, he restored order to the gardens and persuaded the members of the Society of Apothecaries to fund and build new greenhouses.

In 1848, the East India Company asked Fortune to go to China to collect tea plants for their venture of establishing a tea industry in India. Jumping at the opportunity, Fortune asked for a two years' leave of absence from his position at the Chelsea Physic Gardens. The Society of Apothecaries, who managed the garden, was reluctant to grant such an arrangement, so Fortune then resigned his position. His second trip to China lasted from 1848 to 1851, during which time he made extensive travels through the tea districts, often penetrating where foreigners were not allowed to travel. He polished up his use of chopsticks, had his queue dressed, and repeated his practice of traveling in Chinese clothing. He always hired Chinese servants to travel



Remarkable Tree- A Residence Among the Chinese

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with him and when he ran into a language problem situation, his servants would just inform the Chinese that Fortune was from another district "far beyond the wall" and couldn't speak their dialect.

Upon his return to China, Fortune was pleasantly surprised to see the improvements in Hong Kong, and was pleased to see all the gardens. He also revisited Chinese friends who had assisted him in his plant collecting. In a November 1850 article in the *Gardeners' Chronicle*, Fortune told of revisiting a Chinese nurseryman in Shanghai. The man wanted to know if his plants had traveled well and how they were received in England. When Fortune replied that the beautiful *Weigela florida* had even attracted the attention of her Majesty the Queen, it pleased the old nurseryman. Fortune said the *Weigela* attained even higher status than ever with the Chinese after his remark.

On this trip, Fortune had no more attacks with pirates, but met other challenges with thieves who stole his British clothes and spies who followed him. Through it all, he kept his sense of humor, a prerequisite for dealing with the Chinese he said, and conducted himself with typical British dignity and aplomb. Fortune's second book, *A Journey to the Tea Countries of China*, describes his travels during this period. He discusses the various tea growing regions and tells of his sometimes intricate travel arrangements to get to remote places. He paid attention to soil conditions and collected samples for geologists in India to examine. He collected information about tea cultivation and harvesting and hired experienced Chinese to accompany him to India to help establish the tea plants. Among the details about which Fortune writes is how the tea was processed for both home and foreign consumption and how it was shipped to various destinations. Interestingly, a coolie carried one tea chest on his shoulders if it contained fine tea and two chests if the tea was of lesser quality. The chest of fine tea was never allowed to touch the ground or be jostled, but the chest of common tea was just cargo and could be carried and put down at will.

The Chinese were very protective of their tea industry and did not willingly share information and tea plants with outsiders. Fortune often was followed by spies, who were intent upon knowing who he was and where he was going. In spite of all that, Fortune was able to collect both plants and seeds and eventually took more than 2000 plants and 17,000 germinated seeds to Calcutta. He learned that tea seed germination was poor because the seeds have a short life, so he sowed the seeds in glass cases among young mulberry plants that he also was sending. By the time the boxes reached Calcutta, the tea seeds had germinated and were growing. Space was at a premium in the boxes, and he packed his Wardian cases as full as possible.

A third trip to China, again for the East India Company, lasted from 1853 to 1856. His book, *A Residence Among the Chinese: Inland, On the Coast, and At Sea*, again tells of his travel experiences. This book was published in 1857, showing that Fortune wasted no time writing his books. On this trip, he

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also began sending plants to Standish and Noble Nursery at Bagshot and to Glendinning Nursery at Chiswick, thus augmenting his income.

Fortune's fourth trip did not produce a book, but to us, it is of interest for it was taken on behalf of the United States Government for the purpose of collecting tea plants to establish a tea industry in the South. In 1971, William Gardener wrote at some length about this aspect of Fortune's life in the Harvard journal, *Arnoldia*.<sup>3</sup>

Until 1862 when the Department of Agriculture was formed, the United States Commissioner of Patents was responsible for helping farmers find new crops. As early as 1744 there had been attempts at growing tea in South Carolina, and the government had thought for sometime that tea could possibly become a viable crop for the Southern states. In July 1857, the Commissioner, Charles Mason, wrote to the firm of Charlwood & Cummins, "his customary seed suppliers in London" in Covent Garden, to inquire about purchasing tea seed. The seed firm replied that they would consult Mr. Fortune and Dr. Royle of the East India Company.

Fortune informed them that the East India Company could not spare tea seed, and if the Commissioner of Patents wanted seed, he should send someone to China to collect them. Fortune wrote the Commissioner a letter in which he described some of the problems in tea cultivation, referred the Commissioner to his book *Journey to the Tea Countries of China and India* and said he would "have no objection to take the business in hand, and from the experience I have here, would most likely bring it to a successful issue." Subsequently, arrangements were made for Fortune to go to China in March of 1858 to collect for the United States Government. His salary was 500 pounds plus additional expense money of 700 pounds, a significant improvement over his early salaries. The agreement was for him to send 20 or 30 Wardian cases, each containing seeds to produce 2000 plants. Gardner reports that the cardinal importance of the journey was the direct introduction of various Chinese ligneous (woody) and other species that would prove useful for cultivation in the United States. Fortune, in all his travels, paid particular attention to the various uses of all cultivated crops in China, and now he was simply being hired by the United States to collect for them.

In his first report to the Commissioner, he sent three packages of seeds he thought would be useful. Two packs were Chinese turnip-radish and the third a mustard or rape seed, now called *Brassica campestris*, which was grown for its oil. The Chinese used the oil in lamps as well as for culinary purposes. Fortune also reported that he had visited various tea districts and had made arrangements for large supplies of tea and other seeds to be collected at harvest time. His reputation stood him in good stead, and he had no trouble in acquiring seed. Through his many years of experience he had refined his seed sowing techniques in Wardian cases and could almost plan their germination time by the depth of soil with which he covered the seed. He planned to have seedlings at the proper stage for transplanting when he arrived in Washington the next spring to oversee their plantings.

Fortune never made it to the United States. By the time he returned to London in March 1859, a letter was waiting for him that cancelled his trip to North America. He was sorely disappointed, having looked forward to establishing his

seedlings in the ground and completing his assignment. Presumably, the looming American Civil War was the major issue in the decision to cancel Fortune's trip. He wrote a letter to the Commissioner in which he stressed how he regretted not being able to see the project to completion and stated that without expertise from one with knowledge of tea cultivation the results would be a failure.

Through Fortune's efforts, 26,000 tea plants were available for distribution by the Patent Office. In 1859, in return for a letter from Fortune in which he gave detailed instructions on tea cultivation, the Patent Office sent him an additional six months salary. It then summarized his report and published it in the Commissioner's Report on Agriculture for 1859. Tea plants were distributed and tried in various parts of the country including Texas. In 1867, members of the Cat Spring Agricultural Society experimented briefly with tea cultivation. Their minutes indicate that one of the people who had seed was a Mr. Hirsch from Brenham. A few years later, J. F. Leyendecker from Pearfield Nursery near Frelsburg also received tea plants from Washington, so there were a number of attempts at



Photo by Bill Welch

*Rosa x fortuniana* - Henkel Square

growing tea in south central Texas.

Other plants included in Fortune's shipments to the United States were the tung oil tree (*Aleurites fordii* Hemsl.), camphor tree (*Cinnamomum camphora*), hemp palm (*Trachycarpus fortunei*), ligustrum (*Ligustrum lucidum*) and perhaps most interestingly, the tallow tree (*Sapium sebiferum* Roxb.). Grown for their wax, tallow trees were a cash crop in China. Fortune viewed it as a possible useful plant for the United States. He commented in his letter of December 14, 1858, that both camphor and tallow trees "ought to succeed admirably in the United States, and both are not only very useful but very ornamental." Like the tree of heaven and many other invasive exotic species, their establishment in America has proven all too successful.

On Fortune's final trip, 1860 to 1862, he visited China and Japan. He embarked on his own to collect not only plants and objects of natural history, but also works of art and antiques. His fourth book, *Yedo and Peking, A Narrative of A Journey to The Capitals of Japan and China*, published in 1863, once again described his travels. Japan had recently been forced to open her doors to foreigners and Fortune was ready to collect in new territories. He was familiar with many of the plants he found there for they had already been introduced into China, but there

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were some new Fortune discoveries. For example, out of his Japanese collecting came interesting new chrysanthemums:

“One had petals like long thick hairs, of a red colour, but tipped with yellow, looking like the fringe of a shawl or curtain; another had broad white petals striped with red like a carnation or camellia; while others were remarkable for their great size and brilliant colouring.

One of his Japanese prizes was a beautiful lily, *Lilium auratum*. The lily, which was almost simultaneously discovered by two other collectors in other places in Japan, became the find of the year. At its appearance in a South Kensington flower show, it was dubbed “the most attractive object of the present floral season” and “gentlemen removed their hats in deference to its exquisite beauty.”

When Fortune returned to England in 1862, his traveling days were over. He retired to Gilston Road in London where his family had lived since 1857, and occasionally contributed articles to the *Gardeners' Chronicle*, the gardening magazine published by his friend John Lindley. Just a few months before he died in 1880, the magazine published an article in which he listed the plants he had collected as best he could remember. He died April 13, 1880, at the age of 68.

Accounts show that Fortune introduced 190 plants, 120 of which were completely new to science. He was not always the first to discover some of these Chinese plants, but he was the first to successfully collect and ship them to England for propagation. Often his collections were of varieties never seen before in the West. Peonies, for example, were well known before Fortune's time, but when he visited Shanghai in 1844-45, he discovered a dozen new varieties. He also shipped home new varieties of rhododendrons (azaleas) and chrysanthemums, although both plants were well known to British gardeners. His introductions always provided the icing on the cake, so to speak. His small flowered chrysanthemum, *C. rubellum*, introduction from Chusan, referred to as Chusan Daisy, provided the parent of today's Pompom Chrysanthemums. His later chrysanthemum introductions from Japan added a touch of the unusual to what had become a very stylized flower.

Did he find yellow camellias and blue peonies as the Horticultural Society of London requested? He found neither on his first trip, but in 1850, he discovered a yellow camellia in a nursery near Shanghai. He bought it and sent it to England where it subsequently was identified as a variety of *Camellia sasanqua*. Apparently it never proved to be very popular. As for peonies, while he found many new varieties, including purple and lilac colored one, he found no blue. The British appreciated his new introductions, however, and apparently did not quibble about the lack of blue!

Many of Fortune's plant introductions did not prove hardy in England but yet succeeded well in the United States. Much of the southern United States lies on the same latitude and longitude as parts of China, and consequently much of our climate is similar to that of places in China where Fortune collected.

Many of the plants commonly installed as foundation plantings can be traced back to Fortune even though most are now hybrids or cultivars of his original finds. According to plant authority and author Greg Grant of Texas, Fortune's *Ligustrum sinense* is the “common privet of clipped hedge fame” and *Abelia*

*uniflora* is the parent of the very common *Abelia x grandiflora*. Grant notes that *Ilex cornuta* is the common Chinese holly and the origin of the sports, seedlings, and hybrids Burford, Dwarf Burford, Rotunda, Nellie R. Stevens and others. Our old favorite cape jasmine, *Gardenia florida*, is his *Gardenia florida Fortunei*.

Fortune also introduced some real garden classics. The beautiful and intensely fragrant shrub honeysuckle, *Lonicera fragrantissima*, is one of Fortune's finds from his first trip. Another exceptional introduction is his *Buddleia lindleyana*, one of the plants commonly called butterfly bush. Today, *Buddleia davidii* is quite popular, but Fortune's *B. lindleyana* is drought tolerant, tough and blooms well into July and August. Fortune found the plant when he arrived at Chusan and sent seeds of it to England in November 1843. He requested that it be named for his friend John Lindley who described many of the plants Fortune sent home. In his first book, *Three Years Wanderings in China*, Fortune discussed seeing it in bloom for the first time in the spring of 1844 after he had collected seeds the previous autumn.

A fine new Buddlea (B. Lindleyana) had a most graceful appearance, as its long spikes of purple flowers hung in profusion from the Hedges on the hill-sides, often side by side with the well-known *Glycine sinensis*.<sup>4</sup>

Fortune's first trip also produced the Chinese fringe tree, *Chionanthus retusa*, a cousin to our native fringe tree, *Chionanthus virginica*. The Chinese species, as so often is the case, is a much showier plant with larger blossoms. Fortune found it in a garden near Foo Chow and introduced it to nurserymen Standish and Noble. Fortune observed that it was grafted onto *Osmanthus fragrans* and decided that the species was probably from a colder climate, possibly Japan.

*Osmanthus fragrans*, commonly called sweet olive, was not a Fortune introduction, but he observed that the Chinese used its blossoms to scent their tea or as potpourri in ornamental jars and that the Chinese women wore fresh osmanthus blossoms in their hair. He commented that the flowers were a source of great profit to the Chinese cottager, as well as to the nurserymen who produced them in large quantities. Even today the flowers are used to flavor wine, to make perfume and medicines, and the bark is used in dye-making.

Of all the plants for which Fortune is famous, particular note must be made of his roses. Having been specifically advised by the Horticultural Society to search for yellow roses, he succeeded admirably. By May 1844, Fortune had established good relations with several Chinese nurserymen and while visiting the garden of a mandarin in Ning-po he met the treasure known to us as Fortune's double yellow rose. *From Three Years Wanderings in China:*

The gardens of the mandarins were extremely gay, particularly during the early months of the year: and, what was of more importance to me, contained a number of new plants of great beauty and interest. On entering one of the gardens on a fine morning in May, I was struck with a mass of yellow flowers which completely covered a distant part of the wall. The colour was not a common yellow, but had something of buff in it, which gave the flowers a striking and uncommon appearance. I immediately ran up to the

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place, and, to my surprise and delight, found that it was a most beautiful new double yellow climbing rose.

Fortune's double yellow rose is one of the plants that never did very well in England, but has thrived in the United States. Perhaps the most well known of Fortune's roses is the one which carries his name, *Rosa x Fortuniana*. He sent it to England in 1844. Some rose experts believe this rose is a cross between *Rosa laevigata*, commonly known as the Cherokee rose, and the white form of *Rosa banksia*. *R. x Fortuniana* is a drought tolerant, tough rose, very similar to *R. banksia* in its cascading habit. It is not thornless like the Banksia rose, however.

About the same time that Fortune discovered his double yellow rose, he found another rose that he said the Chinese called the "five-coloured" rose. Describing it, he wrote:

It belongs to the section commonly called China roses in this country, but grows in a very strange and beautiful manner. Sometimes it produces self-coloured blooms—being either red or French white, and frequently having flowers of both on one plant at the same time—while at other times the flowers are striped with the two colours. This will also be as hardy as our common China rose.

This rose disappeared from commerce for many years, but some rosarians believe the "Smith's Parish" rose discovered in Bermuda in recent times is Fortune's "five coloured" rose. In gardens in Shanghai, Fortune also found two other roses, *Rosa anemonaeflora*, and *Rosa rugosa*, which he sent to England.

Fortune paid particular attention to the citrus industry of China and was impressed with the kumquat, which the Horticultural Society had specifically asked him to collect. The British had known and enjoyed Kumquats as a preserved fruit for many years. Fortune reported that bushes of the kumquat were quite common on the island of Chusan and grew to be 3 to 6 feet high. Meeting the Horticultural Society's objective, in 1846, Fortune brought home live specimens of the kumquat, then classified as *Citrus japonica*. In 1915, the kumquats were separated from the genus *Citrus* and given the name *Fortunella* in honor of Robert Fortune. Two species commonly grown are the round kumquat, *Fortunella japonica* and the oval kumquat, *Fortunella margarita*, both extremely ornamental. In the Mandarin dialect, the word Kum-quat means gold-orange, a perfect description of the color of their small fruit. Writing in the *Gardeners' Chronicle* in 1849, Fortune said, "I think if the Kumquat was better known at home it would be highly prized for decorative purposes during the winter months."

In 1850 Fortune introduced *Poncirus trifoliata* to Britain. This plant found its way to Texas and was listed in the Pearfield Nursery catalogue in 1894. Sometimes called hardy orange or wild orange, it is often found naturalized around old home sites. Traditionally, in China and in Texas, *Poncirus trifoliata* has been used as rootstock for other citrus, as a thorny fencing hedge (before barbed wire) and as an ornamental plant. One cultivar enjoying popularity today is *Poncirus trifoliata* var. *monstruosa* or 'Flying Dragon.'

Fortune's "Hemp Palm" or Chusan Palm, *Trachycarpus fortunei*, which he first saw in 1843, is commonly known today as one of the windmill palms and has long been popular on the Gulf Coast. Fortune noted that the Chinese found the palm very useful in everything from ropes and cables to clothing. In 1860, plants grown from seeds sent to Glendinning's Nursery were auctioned to the public, thus launching their distribution.

Fortune found several significant vines including the common evergreen vine we know as Confederate jasmine, *Trachelospermum jasminoides*. He also found a white form of *Wisteria sinensis* that is a nice change from the ever-present purple form. A kind elderly Chinese gentleman let Fortune make layers of his white wisteria on top of his house and cared for them while Fortune was traveling elsewhere. Another of Fortune's introductions, his *Clematis lanuginosa*, a type of large "wooly clematis," has been used as the parent of many of the popular clematis today.

His *Spirea prunifolia flore-pleno*, common in East Texas and the Southeastern United States, is known as popcorn spirea or bridal wreath. It has long been a favorite in our gardens. Other plants popular in the Southeastern U. S. are two Mahonia species (*Mahonia bealei* and *Mahonia fortunei*), *Weigela florida*, *Viburnum macrocephalum*, called Chinese snowball, *Viburnum plicatum*, *Forsythia viridissima*, *Caryopteris mastacanthus*, and *Caryopteris incana*, which Greg Grant says is a hot "new" plant and one of the parents of the very popular "Blue Mist Spireas," which is sometimes available in local nurseries. The 1929 edition of *A Garden Book for Houston*, the first edition of the still popular book published by the River Oaks Garden Club, lists *Caryopteris* in its "considered difficult but worth trying" section. The more recent editions have moved it to its "flowering shrubs and trees" section.

Another plant whose popularity is attributed to Fortune is balloon flower, *Platycodon grandiflora*. Although *Platycodon grandiflora* had been collected in 1829, it had been dried for a herbarium specimen. When Fortune found this species growing wild near Chimo bay in October 1843, he gathered roots and sent them to Chiswick in early 1844. He found a semi-double, white flowered form in a Shanghai garden and sent it to the Horticultural Society in April 1845. *A Garden Book for Houston* lists *Platycodon* as easy to grow from seeds.

Among Fortune plants that Dr. William C. Welch recommends are: *Clerodendron bungei*, *Exochorda racemosa*, and *Aucuba japonica vera*. *Clerodendron bungei* was first discovered by Russian Dr. Alexander von Bunge in 1831, but it was another one of those plants that took Fortune to make it popular. He introduced it in 1850 and with its large rose-colored flowers it became a favorite easy-to-grow pass-a-long plant of the last century. Because the plant has become naturalized in Mexico, its common name, Mexican hydrangea, indicates many do not realize its true origins. Sometimes called cashmere bouquet, *Clerodendron bungei* is certainly an easy to grow Fortune plant if you can tolerate its rather strange odor.

*Exochorda racemosa* was a Fortune plant that was named as a new genus. Originally it was classified as *Spiraea grandiflora*

Photo by Mike Shoup



Fortune's Double Yellow Rose

(continued on page 8)

# Spoils of Fortune...

(continued from page 7)

because it resembled the spireas. *Exochorda racemosa* is commonly called pearl-bush for its flower buds, which resemble pearls. Fortune sent home two specimens of the plant: the first from North China in 1845, and the second ten years later from the "Hills of Che kiang."

The story of Fortune and *Aucuba japonica vera* is quite intriguing. The variegated-leaved *Aucuba japonica* had been introduced from Japan in 1783 and was quite popular in British gardens and parks around London. Aucubas are dioecious, meaning male and female flowers are on two different plants, and since all the plants in Britain had been propagated from the original specimen, a female, the British had never seen the Aucuba's bright red fruit. In 1861, when Fortune visited Japan, he found a male plant, sent it to England, and plants complete with berries soon followed. The variegated form is sometimes called gold dust plant.

During his many years of travel, Robert Fortune endured danger, deception and intrigue, but despite these difficulties, he persevered with remarkable results. Many of his discoveries are quite common in southern gardens today, but it is well to remember the spoils of Fortune were not earned lightly.

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## End Notes

<sup>1</sup>Nathaniel Bagshaw Ward "discovered" the Wardian cases when he buried a chrysalis of a Sphinx moth in the soil in a glass box so that he would have the moth contained when it emerged. To his surprise, seeds began to grow in the soil and survived without his giving them additional water. The closed container maintained sufficient moisture to allow plant growth through the simple process of transpiration and condensation. Ward subsequently began to manufacture the cases and promote their use in transporting plants.

<sup>2</sup> Prussian blue, according to Webster, is any of several complex cyanogen compounds of iron used in dyeing, especially ferric ferrocyanide.

<sup>3</sup> Reprinted in *Journal of the Royal Horticultural Society*, vol. XCVII, September 1972, part 9.

<sup>4</sup> Now known as *Wisteria sinensis*.

## Native Plants and Creole Gardens: SGHS Goes to New Orleans

For the first time the Southern Garden History Society will hold its annual meeting in New Orleans, a city long celebrated for its multi-faceted history, its architecture and food, and the beauty of its lush gardens. The meeting takes place at the Hotel St. Marie in the heart of the historic French Quarter, complimented by walking tours of the Quarter's intimate walled gardens. Lectures will discuss native plants and the development of horticulture in the region from the 18th through the 20th centuries.

The study of 20th-century southern plants women, begun at last year's meeting in Atlanta, will continue in New Orleans. Anne Abbott, former president of the Herb Society of America, will speak on Jean Prat and 18th-century New Orleans "medecin;" Judith Tankard, landscape historian and founding editor of the journal of the New England Garden History Society, will focus on Ellen Biddle Shipman's work, especially at Longue Vue Gardens; and Karen Cole will discuss Louisianan Caroline Dorman (1885-1965) and her home Briarwood, her botanical illustrations and correspondence, and her mission to establish the Kisatchie National Forest near Natchitoches.

Friday's meeting takes place at the Williams Research Center (WRC) of the Historic New Orleans Collection. The WRC, a 1915 Beaux-Arts-style structure by architect Edgar Angelo Christy, formerly served as a police station and municipal courthouse. Saturday's venue is the Arsenal, one of the properties of Louisiana State Museum. The 1839 Greek Revival building was designed by architect James Dakin.

In addition to the lectures, SGHS members will enjoy a luncheon and visit at Longue Vue, the garden estate of the late Edith and Edgar Stern, and take tours of Uptown gardens in the Garden District as well as visit the City Park Botanical Garden Show.

Registration brochures will be mailed in January 2004. Be sure to register and make hotel reservations early. You won't want to miss this annual gathering of the Southern Garden History Society.



# AABGA Networking Guide to Historic Landscape Resources

The American Association of Botanical Gardens and Arboreta and its Historic Landscapes Committee is currently developing an online searchable database which will better identify and organize historic resources within the organization and provide networking opportunities among historic sites. Presently there is no easy way to identify and locate historic plant cultivars or special features of historic landscapes. Just as important is the need for a good tool to identify who the landscape historians, architects, librarians, archivists, and preservation consultants are who can provide the research, planning, design, and technology needed by site managers. The AABGA is collaborating with two other project partners: Bloom, Inc. ([www.bloominc.org](http://www.bloominc.org)), a non-profit corporation whose mission is to support conservation efforts by advancing the use of technology for better information management, and Filoli Center, a property of the National Trust for Historic Preservation, which is committing staff for administrating and maintaining the project, computers, and interim Web hosting.

The Networking Guide to Historic Landscape Resources will be developed in phases beginning with the design of a hard copy survey and the development and design of a database and Web prototype. The ultimate goal is to eventually produce a simple

publication that can be maintained online, downloaded and printed from the AABGA Web site. The key to this project is the design of the survey, which will eventually be mailed to all institutional and individual members and also distributed online. Currently, the AABGA has over 50 institutional members (among 500 total) identified as historic landscapes and over 100 individual members with attachments to historic landscapes and sites.

All of the information accumulated from the survey will be searchable and accessible to members online with the goal of keeping the information as current and dynamic as possible. Printed reports will be generated from the database upon demand; however, the Web site will enable the end user to generate and print them. It will be made accessible to nonmembers as a CD Rom for a fee.

The Stanley Smith Horticultural Trust has provided partial funding for this project. For further information, contact the AABGA Historic Landscapes Committee, Susan Greenstein, Director, Kykuit Program for Historic Hudson Valley, ([stgreenstein@hudsonvalley.org](mailto:stgreenstein@hudsonvalley.org)) or Lucy Tolmach, Director of Horticulture, Filoli, Canada Road, Woodside, Calif. 94062, (650) 364-8300 x214, [garden@filoli.org](mailto:garden@filoli.org).

## Bayou Bend - Maintaining a Garden's Integrity

by Bart Brechter

NOTE: This material appeared originally in the *Proceedings of the 10th Annual Oktober Gartenfest*, Winedale, Texas, 2003, by Texas Cooperative Extension and The University of Texas Center for American History (Dr. William C. Welch, Committee Chairman).

Bayou Bend is situated in the heart of River Oaks, a remote and tranquil suburb when it was originally developed in the 1920s by the Hogg family of Texas. In 1926 Miss Ima Hogg and her brothers Will and Mike began to plan a home for themselves on a fourteen-acre site of prime real estate in the Homewoods section of River Oaks, bordered on the north by a large bend of the Buffalo Bayou. Originally the site was a wild woods of lush native plants such as yaupon holly, cherry laurel, and towering pines. With the help of prominent Houston architect John Staub and landscape architect C. C. Fleming, they set out to transform the wilderness into a place of beauty. The house, designed by Staub, was based on English and American architecture of the 18th century in its plan and proportions, but the pink stucco elevation and cast-iron details were chosen to reflect the architectural heritage of the Gulf Coast.

The Hoggs' love of nature and especially their respect for the many large trees on the property helped shape the gardens and even the placement of the house. The house was originally designed facing the bayou, but due to the location of several important trees, which the builders were specifically instructed not to take down, the house was turned 90 degrees to face Lazy Lane. Soon after its completion, the Hoggs named their home Bayou

Bend, reflecting the way the Buffalo Bayou bends around three sides of the property.

The thoughtful design and breathtaking beauty of Bayou Bend's gardens are the result of Miss Hogg's creativity and devotion. The landscape encompasses natural woodlands and distinctive formal gardens, featuring a variety of imported and native plants, including spectacular azaleas and camellias. Shortly after the house was built, two gardens were created: the upper garden that is now referred to as the East Garden, and the lower garden, now known as the Clio Garden. With the help of Fleming, the Diana Garden and the Euterpe Garden were next developed north of the house. These two gardens were nearing completion when the Garden Club of America met at Bayou Bend in March 1939. Four other gardens were added over the remaining twenty years Miss Hogg lived at Bayou Bend.

Miss Hogg wisely provided for the ongoing care of her gardens, home, and magnificent collection of early American decorative arts into perpetuity by donating Bayou Bend to the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston, and entrusting the oversight of the gardens to River Oaks Garden Club. Bayou Bend opened to the public as a house museum in 1966. Since that period, the museum and the garden club have worked together closely to maintain Miss Hogg's gardens. Today, under the guidance of a master plan adopted in 1966, the estate property is maintained as a historical garden for all to enjoy.

# *“A Genius and his Legacy: Frederick Law Olmsted in the South”—A Review of 2003 Restoring Southern Gardens and Landscapes Conference*

by Davyd Foard Hood, Vale, North Carolina

Frederick Law Olmsted died in the early morning of Friday, the 28th of August 1903. Rick, his son and namesake, was at his side. The private family funeral was held on Sunday at Fairstead. Olmsted's body was cremated, and his ashes were carried to Hartford, Connecticut, and deposited in the family vault in the Old North Cemetery. Afterward John Charles Olmsted described the service as “meager” and “unsatisfactory.” Indeed, it was insufficient for a man of Olmsted's genius and legacy. Over the course of a half-century, he had applied his prodigious talents to a wide range of projects and writings, giving generously without reservation. This conference revealed that some of his most important works were in the South.



*Bill Alexander leading post-conference trip to Biltmore*

Olmsted's clients had included wealthy and important figures in the world of finance, politics, industry, society, and education, among other fields and professions. But none of them came to his funeral service bearing wreaths or the usual floral offerings. Their tributes were in letters. The New York Times published his obituary under the headline “F. L. Olmsted is Dead.” He was described as a “great Landscape architect,” the “Designer of Central and Prospect Parks and Other Famous Garden Spots of American Cities.” The Olmsted name, its association with New York's great parks, and the firm that continued his work, all held powerful currency. Frederick Law Olmsted, however, had walked out of the limelight and into deep shadows eight years earlier, at the age of 73. Since September 1898, he had been confined, where he died, at McLean Asylum in Waverly, Massachusetts, a few miles from Fairstead.

His death that summer morning, after an eight year course of inexorable decline, must surely have come as a welcome relief to his family. On its centennial, we have taken the opportunity to celebrate his association with the South, the genius he brought to his work here, and the handsome legacy we continue to appreciate, study, restore, and enjoy. Some might have seen the

co-title of this conference, “Frederick Law Olmsted in the South,” as something of an artificial construction, given his larger association with the Northeast and the great parks he created there and in the upper Midwest. However, as we went about the organization of this conference and the selection of speakers, we came to realize the critical role the South played in the life of Frederick Law Olmsted and the shaping of values that sustained his deeply humanitarian work.

His long career as the nation's preeminent 19th-century landscape architect is framed at its start by his travels in the South in the early 1850s, his experience of slavery and its effects, and the publication of *A Journey in the Seaboard Slave States* in 1856. That book made him a famous man. He continued to write and publish on the South to the outbreak of the Civil War in 1861.

The final years of Olmsted's professional life were largely spent on two important projects, the grounds of the World's Columbian Exposition, which opened in Chicago in 1893, and the design and creation of Biltmore Estate. Olmsted first visited the future grounds of the estate in the late summer or early autumn of 1888. His last visit to Biltmore, to inspect the progress of work, the plantings, parks, and forest plantations came in the spring of 1895.

During that visit, John Singer Sargent also was a guest of George Vanderbilt. So, too, was Richard Morris Hunt, the designer of the mansion and most of the estate's original outbuildings. Sargent was at work on the portraits of both Mr. Hunt and Frederick Law Olmsted, commissioned by Mr. Vanderbilt, which continue to hang in Biltmore House today. Sargent posed Hunt on the front terrace of the chateau. Olmsted could have posed anywhere on the estate whose lands he had



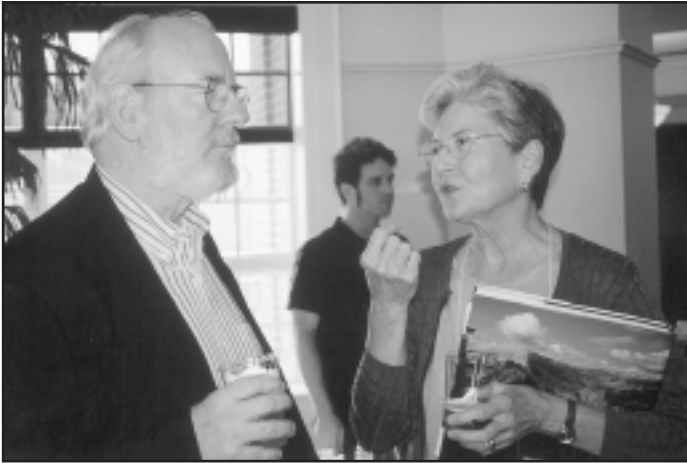
*Panel - Ed Shull, Lucy Lawliss, Dale Jaeger, Bill Alexander, Susan Rademacher*

restored, renewed, essentially remade. But Sargent wisely asked the aging Olmsted to stand near the edge of the Approach Road, the most important single landscape feature at Biltmore. Olmsted

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# Landscapes Conference

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*Charles Beveridge and Mary Anne Pickens*

patiently posed for Sargent, leaning on his cane, until he could stand no longer. Young Rick put on his father's coat and continued the pose for Sargent. At the end of May 1895, Frederick Law Olmsted departed Biltmore for the return to Fairstead. When he left Biltmore, his health rapidly failing with the onset of dementia, he also effectively left the practice of landscape architecture *forever*. In the period between these events, his first visit to the South in 1852, and his departure from Asheville in 1895, he, his sons, and their colleagues produced a distinguished body of work here, with Biltmore, Mount Vernon Square, and the Louisville Park System at the forefront.

Each speaker throughout the conference eloquently addressed its subject, "A Genius and His Legacy: Frederick Law Olmsted in the South," and the nature of his many-faceted association with our region. In his excellent overview and introduction, Charles Beveridge explored the whole of Olmsted's professional experience in the South. Articulating his impressions as an antebellum traveler, social critic, and author, he also gave voice to Olmsted's strongly held views on slavery that history came quickly to



*Susan Klaus & Davyd Hood*

support, and enforce. Dr. Beveridge's long service as editor of *The Frederick Law Olmsted Papers*, likewise enlivened his perspective on Olmsted's work he as a landscape architect. Most of his involvement came in the final decade of his career. Between 1885 and 1895, Olmsted undertook work in Louisville, Atlanta, and Baltimore, that shaped the face of those cities and the lives of their citizens.

Arleyn Levee, the acknowledged authority on the work of Olmsted's sons, John Charles Olmsted, who was both his nephew and stepson, and Frederick Law Olmsted, Jr., built on the foundation laid by Dr. Beveridge. With over 800 southern projects or consultations in the Olmsted firm roster, covering the period from 1857 to 1959, her task Thursday afternoon was formidable. Rising to the occasion, she addressed this large body of work by project type: Parks and Park Systems; Residential and Subdivision Work; and Institutional projects. Doing so, she was able to provide an intelligent, analytical, and very welcome overview of a series of projects that have remained little explored, as yet, by scholars other than herself and speakers on the conference panel.



*Arleyn Levee and Susan Rademacher*

Lauren Meier opened the Friday morning session with an equally welcome account of Fairstead. It served both as Frederick Law Olmsted's residence and office after 1883, and thereby became the first full-scale professional office for the practice of landscape architecture in the country. Reviewing the preparation of the Cultural Landscape Report for Fairstead, and the subsequent restoration of the facility, to its appearance in the 1920s, she set the stage for the series of speakers who examined important Olmsted projects in Louisville, Atlanta, and Baltimore.

Olmsted's creation of a metropolitan park system for Louisville clearly ranks as one of his most important projects in the South. It compares easily in its extent and quality with those of the Northeast, including Boston and Buffalo. With Biltmore, his work in Louisville forms a coda to his involvement in the region. Susan Rademacher, since 1991 the head of the Louisville Olmsted Parks Conservancy, outlined the design of a network focused on Cherokee, Iroquois, and Shawnee Parks. The firm's extension of the system in the early 20th century added a further

# Landscapes Conference

(continued from page 11)

thirteen parks to a network of public pleasure grounds and parkways without peer in the South. The conservancy's studied and pragmatic approach to the restoration of Shawnee, Iroquois, and Cherokee Parks, preserving the particular qualities of each and their reflection of Olmsted's intentions, is a model of intelligent commitment. Frederick Law Olmsted and his firm's work in Atlanta was focused on the conceptual design for Druid Hills and later work for the L. P. Grant Park. Dale Jaeger, whose firm was engaged to prepare a master plan for Grant Park and its rehabilitation, also presented her firm's work on the local historic district designation report for Druid Hills and a companion design guidelines manual.

Frederick Law Olmsted, senior, and the firm, in its various guises, were engaged on projects in Baltimore for a longer period than that enjoyed by any other city in the South. Beginning in the 1870s, each successive phase of metropolitan development was marked by the influence of one or more important contemporary works by Olmsted, his sons, and their colleagues. Ed Shull, a past president of the Friends of Maryland Olmsted Parks and Landscapes, presented an overview of these residential, civic, and institutional commissions. Focusing his account, first, on Mt. Vernon Square, he then moved out and on to the important subdivision projects, including Roland Park and Guilford. Mr. Shull used maps, historic photographs, and other records to illustrate the growth of Baltimore and the ways the Olmsted's work shaped its development. His group is to be commended for reprinting both the 1904 and 1926 reports on the city parks prepared by the Olmsted brothers.

Saturday morning Ken McFarland offered his perspective on Frederick Law Olmsted, the traveler, and the important series of books he produced in the 1850s and early 1860s. Olmsted was a working visitor in England and the South, observant to a degree few of us can comprehend. His experiences as a traveler first shaped his vision. It, in turn, shaped his work as a landscape architect, crafting landscapes from a well of memory. I can say this easily. During my recent work at Biltmore, expanding and revising a 1963 National Historic Landmark designation report, I came quickly to realize the extent to which Olmsted's travels in England

and the Carolina back country shaped his intentions for the estate and the reforestation of its partially ruined lands. Bill Alexander, the current landscape curator of the estate, gave an enjoyable account of Olmsted's accomplishments at Biltmore. Visitors to the estate today experience the culmination of Olmsted's vision. Virtually every aspect of the lush, rich landscape, except for the presence of the French Broad and Swannanoa Rivers, owes to his genius and persistence.

During this conference, eight scholars offered their appraisals of Frederick Law Olmsted and his work. But now, at the close of this conference, letting the man speak for his work, I would like to share with you an account Olmsted, himself, wrote. In December 1890 he was at Biltmore, staying in the Brick Farm House that George Vanderbilt had fitted up as a residence and guest house during the construction of his mansion. On the 16th of December, probably after supper, Frederick Law Olmsted wrote to his long-time friend, Mrs. William Dwight Whitney.

"I need not conceal from you that the result of what I have done is to be of much more consequence than anyone else but myself supposes. As I travel I see traces of influences spreading from it that no one else would detect—which, if given any attention by others, would be attributed to 'fashion.' There are, scattered through the country, seventeen large public parks, many more smaller ones, many more public or semi-public works, upon which, with sympathetic partners or pupils, I have been engaged. After we have left them they have in the majority of cases been more or less barbarously treated, yet as they stand, with perhaps a single exception, they are a hundred years ahead of any spontaneous public demand, or of the demand of any notable cultivated part of the people. And they are having an educative effect perfectly manifest to me—a manifest civilizing effect. I see much indirect and unconscious following of them.... Then I know that I shall have helped to educate in a good American school a capital body of young men for my profession, all men of liberal education and cultivated minds. I know that in the minds of a large body of men of influence I have raised my calling from the rank of a trade, even of a handicraft, to that of a liberal profession—an Art, an Art of Design...."

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## Members in the News

SGHS Board Member **Patti McGee's** Charleston, South Carolina garden is profiled in the October 2003 issue of *Horticulture* magazine. Nan Blake Stinton's article, "New Steps in a Charleston Garden," beautifully photographed by Virginia Weiler, details Patti's magnificent, walled garden in the heart of Charleston's historic district. In addition to descriptions of the plants and design, the article also discusses Patti's activities and involvement with the Garden Conservancy and the Charleston Horticultural Society, as well as the Southern Garden History Society.

Colonial Williamsburg's 56th Antiques Forum program, February 1-5, 2004, features a lecture by landscape architect and consultant **C. Allan Brown**, "The Formal Gardens of Federal America."

The November/December 2003 issue of *Horticulture* magazine features an in-depth article by Eric Hsu "L. H. Bailey Father of American Horticulture," which includes quotes from *Fine Gardening* contributing editor and owner of Old House Gardens, **Scott Kunst** and *Magnolia* editor **Peggy Cornett** of Monticello.

## Book Reviews

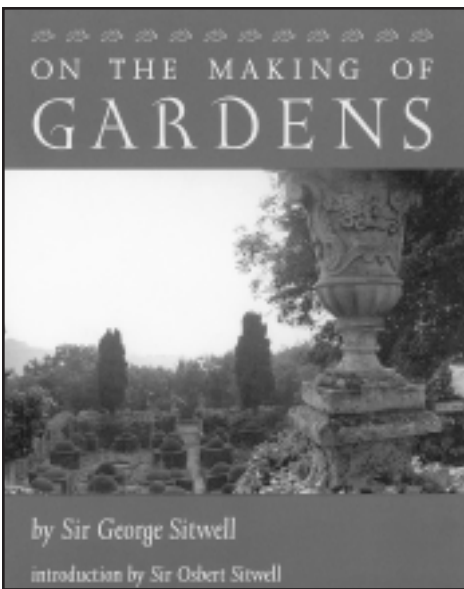
*English Pleasure Gardens*, by Rose Standish Nichols, with a new introduction by Judith B. Tankard. David R. Godine, 2003. 326 pages, soft cover, b/w illustrations. ISBN 1-56792-235-5. \$21.95.

*On the Making of Gardens*, by George Sitwell, with a new introduction by John Dixon Hunt. David R. Godine, 2003. 168 pages, soft cover, b/w illustrations. ISBN 1-56792-238-4. \$16.95

The Boston publishing house of David R. Godine has just reprinted two important gardening books of the early 20th century; both have been out-of-print for far too long, available only by chance

even in the best of antiquarian book shops. Now, in attractive paperback editions, they should gain a new circle of readers and deservedly so. Of the two, one has a particular appeal to readers in the South.

Rose Standish Nichols' *English Pleasure Gardens*, published in 1902 by The Macmillan Company, immediately became one of a small number of pioneering garden



histories issued in America that coincided with the increasingly visible appearance of women in the landscape architecture profession. It followed by a year Macmillan's publication of Alice Morse Earle's *Old-Time Gardens* in 1901. The two books figure as the first among a distinguished body of garden histories, manuals, guides, and picture books, written mostly by women, that appeared in the decades up to World War II.

This new edition of *English Pleasure Gardens* has an introduction by Judith Tankard who quickly draws a picture of the cultivated world of affluence, privilege, and intellectual curiosity into which Miss Nichols was born in Boston in 1872 and where she lived until death in 1960. The critical event in her youth occurred in 1889 when her family began to spend their summers in Cornish, New Hampshire, and she quickly gained entré to the summer colony established there by her uncle, Augustus Saint-Gaudens. Under the tutelage of Charles Platt, a summer neighbor, she took up the study of drawing, horticulture, and design, working in the offices of Thomas Hastings in this country and that of H. Inigo Triggs in England, together with study at Harvard's Bussey Institution and MIT. Travel was equally influential in her education, and it was on a series of trips that she visited gardens, gathered documentation, and made sketches that appear in *English Pleasure Gardens*. Her travels in England were during a period of clashing theories among garden designers, with competitive stances taken between the formalists, including Reginald Blomfield and Mr. Triggs, among others, and those who appreciated the views chiefly espoused by William Robinson and put forth in 1883 in *The English Flower Garden*. This ferment gave birth to the work of Gertrude Jekyll who brilliantly combined features of both in the gardens that secured her fame. A

like influence affected Miss Nichols, informing her writing on gardens, in England in this instance, and her work as a garden designer. Tireless in her travels and garden visits, she gathered material for two further books: *Spanish and Portuguese Gardens*; and *Italian Pleasure Gardens*. Both were published in the 1920s.

Although Rose Standish Nichols assured the preservation of the Nichols residence on Beacon Hill as a house museum, she was altogether unsuccessful with the records of her long career as a garden maker. Her office papers, drawings, and related materials, maintained since 1904, when she gained her first professional commission, were destroyed after her death. Thus, the record of her work as a plantswoman, designer, and collaborator with architects and better-known landscape architects, principally in her native New England and the American Northeast, survives today only in the pages of garden and professional landscape magazines, journals, and books of the period including her own articles.

While the extent of her work in the South remains to be confirmed, it was probably like that of her single, best-known commission here, the gardens of Morningside in Augusta, Georgia. Her clients for this project, begun in the 1920s, were Mr. and Mrs. Alfred Severine Bourne of New York, who maintained a seasonal residence in the mild climate of the southern winter resort. Three fine views of the Bourne garden at Morningside were published in 1933 in *Garden History of Georgia*.

Many readers of *Magnolia* will be less familiar with Sir George Sitwell (1860-1943) and *On the Making of Gardens*, however, for some the Sitwell name may conjure up images of his brilliant if somewhat eccentric daughter Edith, the poet, and his sons Osbert and Sacherevell, who became celebrated men of letters. After time, others will come to associate the name with Renishaw, the Sitwell seat in Derbyshire, or Montegufoni, the family's residence in Tuscany, which Sir George bought in 1909, the same year *On the Making of Gardens* was published. Unlike Miss Nichols' book, which was reprinted once in 1925, *On the Making of Gardens* was reprinted four times between 1909 and 2003. The 1951 reprinting featured an introduction by Osbert Sitwell, the eldest son, who had inherited both Renishaw and Montegufoni and was master of both until his death in 1969 at Montefugoni.

That fascinating appraisal is reprinted in this edition with a new introduction by John Dixon Hunt. Both introductions are valuable to the reader as they represent critical perspectives on Sir George's essay at points half a century apart. Osbert's introduction, subtitled "My Father and the Garden," is a charming sketch, part a memoir of his father (with whom he had a difficult relationship), an appreciation of this work that was one of the few of Sir George's scholarly enthusiasms that made its way into print; and a tribute to his father's very successful efforts to enhance the beauty of the rooms and grounds of both Renishaw and Montegufoni. John Dixon Hunt's introduction is scholarly in tone and purpose, addressing the historical context of the essay and its celebration of the psychological pleasures of the garden and garden-making and the sensual and visual delight derived from each. Sir George Sitwell had a learned affection for Italian Renaissance gardens, the product of travel, study, and his own garden-making efforts at Renishaw. His was an admiration reflecting the values of his day and, as John Dixon Hunt notes, one of continued relevance to readers today whether they are designers, historians, or visitors to gardens.

Davyd Foard Hood, book review editor  
Isinglass, Vale, North Carolina

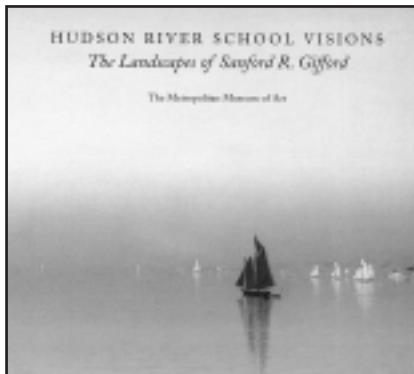
## Three Exhibitions and their Catalogues

*Hudson River School Visions: The Landscapes of Sanford R. Gifford*, edited by Kevin J. Avery and Franklin Kelly. Yale University Press, 2003. 252 pages, 87 color; 133 b/w images. \$65 cloth; \$35.95 paper.

*George Inness and the Visionary Landscape*, Adrienne Baxter Bell. George Braziller, Publishers, 2003.

*The Changing Garden: Four Centuries of European and American Art*, Betsy G. Fryberger. University of California Press, 2003.

Three current exhibitions, two in New York and another in



Memphis, Tennessee, should garner the attention of Society members in the closing days of 2003. If travel to either city is not in your near plans this season, each show is accompanied by a companion catalogue that is a worthy substitute.

Whether by institutional collaboration

or coincidence, the Metropolitan Museum and the National Academy of Design are the venues for shows celebrating two of the country's most accomplished 19th-century landscape painters. The professional careers of Sanford Robinson Gifford (1823-1880) and George Inness (1825-1894) overlapped through the mid-century when both undertook their study and attended classes at the National Academy of Design in the 1840s. Inness first exhibited in a show at the Academy in 1844, and three years later Gifford exhibited his first painting in the Academy's annual exhibition to which each continued to submit work in the years up to their

deaths. When Sanford R. Gifford died in 1880 the Metropolitan Museum mounted a memorial exhibition of some 160 works in its newly-completed building at the edge of Central Park. The next year the museum published a memorial catalogue documenting 739 of Gifford's paintings. His body was brought back to this country for interment; his funeral, led by the Rev. John Curtis Ager, was held on the 23rd of August at the National Academy.

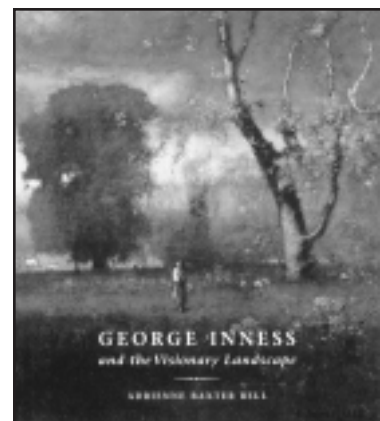


"Hudson River School Visions: The Landscapes of Sanford R. Gifford" is a collaborative effort between the Metropolitan Museum and the National Gallery of Art in Washington, DC. On view in New York until February 8, the show next travels to the Amon Carter Museum in Fort Worth, Texas (March 6 to May 16, 2004) and concludes its tour at the National Gallery in Washington (June 27 to September 26, 2004). Kevin J. Avery and Franklin Kelly, curators at the New York and Washington museums, respectively, wrote two of the four essays in the book of

the same title, which precede the catalogue of paintings in this second major Gifford retrospective at the Metropolitan.

Sanford Gifford grew up at Hudson, New York, in the heart of the Hudson River Valley, and near the Catskill Mountains, whose scenic richness formed the subject of more than 100 of his works. Several of the finest of these are in the show as are groups of paintings from other points to which Gifford, his fellow Luminist painters, and many 19th-century American artists traveled to study and to paint. Scenes in New England are joined by views from England, Italy, and an extended trip in the Near East that carried him to Egypt, Constantinople (now Istanbul), and Greece. And, like others of his generation, he traveled to the American West and painted in the territories that are now the states of Wyoming and Washington. His experience in the South, not unexpectedly, was largely limited to his service in the Seventh Regiment of the New York National Guard in 1861 to 1863. Working from sketches and memory in 1864 he painted "Camp of the Seventh Regiment, near Frederick, Maryland, in July 1863." He had described the site of the camp in a letter to his father on July 9, a few days after the Battle of Gettysburg.

"We are in beautiful country. The fields were not too near the camp are covered with rich harvest. The line of the South Mountain runs about three miles west of us .... We came into this field... in the rain and bivouacked in the mud. It did not take long to strip the neighboring fences of their remaining rails, and thatch them with sheaves of wheat from the next field. It seemed a pity to waste the rich grain, but after all it was not wasted, for it made very comfortable beds and pretty good thatches.



George Inness also was a native of New York, born on a farm near Newburgh, however, his family soon moved to New York City. Thereafter, he was a resident of the city or nearby towns in New Jersey including Montclair, where he lived from 1885 until his death. His early experience as an art student and a landscape painter of the Hudson River School was similar to that followed by Sanford Gifford. But on two trips to the Continent in 1851-52 and 1853-54, with extended stays in Paris, George Inness came under the influence of Barbizon School artists. His painting style soon departed from the conventions of his earlier work and the Hudson River tradition. The greater influence on Inness' career, however, was the writings of the visionary Swedish theologian Emanuel Swedenborg (1688-1772). In 1868 the Reverend Mr. Ager baptized Inness and his wife as members of the Swedenborgian Church. Thereafter Inness' landscape paintings, saturated with rich color and capturing the spiritual qualities of nature, embodied a mystic, visionary character. Those of the late 1860s, 1870s, and 1880s, particularly the autumn and winter scenes, drenched with the golden glow of a setting sun or the shades of an approaching storm, are among the most beautiful paintings produced in 19th-century America.

(continued on page 15)

# Three Exhibitions and their Catalogues

(continued from page 14)

These form an important part of the show, "George Inness and the Visionary Landscape," which closes at the National Academy of Design on December 28. The exhibition does not travel. The catalogue of the same name by Adrienne Baxter Bell includes remarkably true color reproductions of the show's forty paintings that span Inness' career from 1852 to 1894. Among them is "Early Moonrise, Tarpon Springs," which Inness painted in 1892, about the time he started to spend his winters in the small town on the west central coast of Florida.

Pleasurable hours were spent in October viewing the New York exhibitions, however, I have not seen "The Changing Garden: Four Centuries of European and American Art," which opened in Memphis in October and continues there until January 11, 2004. Members of the Society also have the possibility of seeing the exhibition at its third and final venue at the University of Michigan Museum of Art in Ann Arbor, March 13 through May 23, 2004. The show was first mounted at the Iris and B. Gerald Cantor Center for Visual Arts at Stanford University where Betsy G. Fryberger, the curator of the show and author of its catalogue, is curator of prints and drawings.

"The Changing Garden"—the show and the catalogue—examine the garden and the park, their evolving purposes, character, appearance, and usages, in some 200 prints, drawings, paintings, watercolors, and photographs. These works, which Ms. Fryberger describes as "the visual evidence of garden history," date from the late 16th century when van der Heyden engraved Pieter

Brueghel the Elder's well-known "Ver" (Spring) and an anonymous painter in England executed "A Perspective View of Denham Place, Buckinghamshire," through the 18th, 19th, and 20th centuries in Italy, France, Britain, and the United States, to conclude with the photographs of Lee Friedlander, Becky Cohen, Michael Kenna, Luigi Ghirri, and Marion Brenner, among others, and both photographs and drawings of the work of landscape architect George Hargreaves. While Betsy Fryberger drew on the holdings of many institutions, the illustrations for "The Changing Garden" come principally from two important collections of garden and landscape works: the Cantor Center for Visual Arts; and the Canadian Center for Architecture, Montreal, which has quickly assembled an extraordinary collection under the patronage of Phyllis Lambert.

The catalogue for "The Changing Garden" is organized in two parts. In her introductory essay, "The Artist and the Changing Garden," Ms. Fryberger provides a valuable overview of the role of the artist in recording the art and the history of gardens and parks. It introduces a series of short essays by Claudia Lazzaro, Elizabeth S. Eustis, Diane Ketcham, Carol M. Osborne, and Paula Dietz, which explore aspects of garden landscape history through art and historic images. The catalogue of the exhibition is organized under three themes with "Historic Gardens," illustrating Villa d'Este, Vaux-le-Vicomte, Versailles, Stowe, The Désert de Retz, Ermenonville, and Méréville, among others at its center.

—DFH

## In Print

**Gardens and Historic Plants of the Antebellum South**, by James R. Cothran and published by the University of South Carolina Press, is a lavishly illustrated history of antebellum gardens and plants that have become synonymous with southern gardening. Jim, who serves as vice-president of the Southern Garden History Society, consulted a multitude of historic sources—diaries, letters, travel accounts, garden plans, maps, paintings, photographs, nursery catalogs, garden books and agricultural diaries—to produce this latest volume on the antebellum South. The book's 142 color illustrations, 21 halftones, and 27 line art drawings, feature botanical prints, lithographs, garden plans, historic photographs, and contemporary photography. In addition, Mr. Cothran provides profiles of prominent gardeners, horticulturists, nurserymen, and writers who, in the decades preceding the American Civil War, were instrumental in shaping the South's horticultural and gardening legacy.

Hardcover, ISBN 1-57003-501-6, \$49.95. 2003.

**Restoring American Gardens: An Encyclopedia of Heirloom Ornamental Plants, 1640-1940**, by Denise Wiles Adams. 420 pages, 201 color photos, 37 b/w photos, approx. 200 line

drawings. ISBN 0-88192-619-1. Hardcover. \$39.95. Published by Timber Press, February 2004.

Horticultural consultant and ornamental-plant historian Denise Wiles Adams has written a remarkable book of history and horticulture that documents the changing plant palette of American gardens. From the colonial era to the pre-World War II period, no region of the country is neglected and no major plant group unrepresented. From a database of more than 25,000 plants and hundreds of antique nursery catalogs, she has distilled a unique survey of American ornamental gardens.

Denise Adams' book is an exhaustive work of primary research, culled from old books and journals, photo albums, and even postcards. For each of the more than 1,000 plants described, from trees to heirloom roses, she includes their earliest know literature citation as well as quotes from period garden writers that reveal changing opinions and fashions. Stunning images from catalog art, early photographs, and period illustrations provide a visual record of these plants in gardens.

Extensive tables and appendices list ornamental plants by region and date, providing a quick reference for plants typical in any given garden at any given time in American history. This volume is an important resource that will be consulted for years to come.

## Publications Available Through SGHS

**The New Louisiana Gardener - *Nouveau Jardinier de la Louisiane*, 1838**  
 publication by Jacques-Felix Lelièvre and translated into English by Sally Kittredge Reeves. Published by LSU press in cooperation with SGHS. Hardcover. 186 pages with color photographs and halftones. Specially priced for SGHS members at \$25 (plus \$3.95 postage). *NC orders add 7% sales tax.*

**Bound Sets of Magnolia Back Issues.** Includes Vol. I, No. 1 (Fall 1984) through Vol. XIV, No. 4 (Winter/Spring 1999), with index. \$50. Price includes postage and tax. (Individual back issues of *Magnolia* \$5.00 each)

**NEW *Cultivating History: Exploring Horticultural Practices of the Southern Gardener*** (2001 proceedings of the thirteenth biennial Restoring Southern Gardens and Landscapes Conference held at Old Salem). \$10 (plus \$3.95 postage). *NC orders add 7% sales tax.*

Also available: *Breaking Ground* (1997 proceedings) and *The Influence of Women on the Southern Landscape* (1995 proceedings). Contact publications secretary for special SGHS member's pricing.

Send orders to: Kay Bergey, publications secretary, SGHS, c/o Old Salem, Inc., Drawer F, Salem Station, Winston-Salem, NC 27108.

NOTE: Checks payable to SGHS for *Nouveau Jardinier* and *Magnolias*. Checks payable to **Old Salem, Inc.** for conference proceedings. For information call (336) 721-7378 or e-mail: [bergeymk@wfu.edu](mailto:bergeymk@wfu.edu)

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Institution/Business	\$30		
Life membership	\$1,000 ( <i>one time</i> )		

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### Editor:

Peggy Cornett  
 Monticello, P.O.B. 316  
 Charlottesville, VA 22902  
 (434) 984-9816  
 Fax (434) 984-0358  
[pcornett@monticello.org](mailto:pcornett@monticello.org)

### Assistant Editor:

Kenneth M. McFarland  
 Stratford Hall Plantation  
 Stratford, VA 22558  
 (804) 493-1558  
 Fax (804) 493-8006  
[kmcfarland@stratfordhall.org](mailto:kmcfarland@stratfordhall.org)

### Book Review Editor:

Davyd Foard Hood  
 6907 Old Shelby Road  
 Isinglass, Vale, NC 28168  
 (704) 462-1847  
 Fax (704) 462-2491

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