



# GARDEN CLUB OF VIRGINIA

## Restoration News

January 2013

Greetings!

The Garden Club of Virginia is committed to maintaining strong relationships with our restored historic sites. To that end, the members of our GCV Restoration Committee are pleased to share Restoration News with you, designed to serve as an informational link between the GCV and historic properties, as well as a connection between the properties themselves.

The knowledge we gain in sharing maintenance concerns and success stories is extremely valuable and can benefit property managers, staff and the public who visit to learn about the past.

We thank you for your commitment to maintaining the GCV restored landscape on your historic property and look forward to hearing your comments and questions.

Sincerely,

Sally Guy Brown  
GCV Restoration Chairman

### Featured Historic Gardens

#### Kenmore, Fredericksburg

The first GCV historic garden restoration was the garden at Kenmore, the 1770s home of Fielding and Betty Washington Lewis. In 1937, the Kenmore Association asked the GCV to "redo" the grounds of Kenmore. Fundraising for this task brought about the beginnings of "Garden Week in Virginia" that has become the GCV engine for funding these historic landscape restorations.

In the 1930s and 1940s, GCV landscape architect Charles Gillette implemented his design for the front, side and upper terrace, adding a front walk and plantings, an upper terrace with arbors, flower garden and later a board fence, picket gate, tool house and smoke house.

Subsequent designs were added by Alden Hopkins (1960) in contract with Kenmore Association, Ralph Griswold (1962-74) and Rudy J. Favretti (1991) in contract with the GCV. Today, the GCV Landscape Architect, William D. Rieley, is continuing to advise on replacement plantings and design changes.



Kenmore

Fielding Lewis was one of 18th century Fredericksburg's most important and influential citizens. In 1750, Lewis married Betty Washington and they had 11 children. In 1752, he bought 681 acres immediately to the west of the town line that was surveyed by the 20-year old George Washington. He and Fielding then laid out a new development, which would enlarge the town of Fredericksburg from 64 to 180 city lots. Work began on the Lewises' house in 1771, but they didn't move into it until 1775. It was a fine dwelling, befitting his position in the community and in the colony. They never named their house, which suggests that it was

not meant to be a plantation manor, but a town villa. There are no records of Betty Lewis' garden, except for a local tradition that there were terraces on the river side of the house. The Garden Club of Virginia's restoration includes a large tree-shaded lawn edged with a long Wilderness Walk featuring native plants. The rear garden is planted with an array of authentic perennials in an eighteenth-century formal plan. The first Historic Garden Week was held in 1929, and Kenmore's garden became the first Garden Club of Virginia restoration.

**Year:** 1929 Garden and grounds plan drawn

**Landscape Architect:** James Greenleaf and Charles F. Gillette

**Year:** 1941 Grounds including Betty Washington's Flower Garden and enclosing wall

**Landscape Architect:** Charles F. Gillette

**Year:** 1996 Renovation of Betty Washington's Garden, Herb Demonstration Garden, Wilderness Walk; Restoration of East Terrace

**Landscape Architect:** Rudy J. Favretti

### **John Handley High School, Winchester**

The buildings and grounds of this handsome 1923 high school were designed by Architect Walter McCornack of Cleveland. On the National Register of Historic Places, it is sited high on a hill in a park-like setting befitting its importance to the community.



John Handley High School

In 2011, the GCV restored the original McCornack landscape design at the front of the building and along the west end of the "bowl." The "landscape park" at the east end of the bowl was designed by William D. Rieley, sponsored by the GCV and implemented by the Handley Board of Trustees and the city of Winchester. John Handley High School, now on the National Register of Historic Places, opened its doors in 1923. Judge John Handley endowed both Winchester's library and its public high school with funds from his will in 1895. The Handley Board of Trustees, formed in 1896, invested the funds and was able to break ground on the building in 1922. Architect Walter McCornack of Cleveland designed both the building and the grounds. His embrace of new methods of education inspired his design of the setting. It remains a beautiful place for education and recreation. The landscape also remains a strong presence in the community. People are drawn to the grounds not only because of the school and its athletic events, but also because it is simply a wonderful place to be. The Board of Trustees continues its oversight of the school today. They approached the Garden Club for help with the grounds when a major renovation of the school was undertaken. The Garden Club restored the original McCornack planting scheme at the front of the building and along the west end of the "bowl", the name of the area where the football field is located. In addition, the Garden Club sponsored the design of the "landscape park" east of the bowl. Construction of new walks in this area are nearing completion. Dozens of trees have been planted, including restoration of the allee of oaks from the bowl to Valley Avenue, a central piece of McCornack's original vision.

**Year:** 2011 Restored the original McCornack planting scheme at the front of the building and along the west end of the "bowl", the name of the area where the football field is located. In addition, the Garden Club sponsored the design of the "landscape park" east of the bowl.

**Landscape Architect:** William D. Rieley

**Year:** 2012 Construction of new walks in the "bowl" in progress.

**Landscape Architect:** William D. Rieley

## Historic Henry County Courthouse in the News

The City of Martinsville recently restored the Courthouse that is now the home of the Martinsville Historical Society. The Courthouse occupies a central location in downtown Martinsville and the Garden Club enthusiastically agreed to help with the restoration of its grounds. Construction is nearing completion.

A recent article published by the Martinsville Bulletin describes the logistics involved in repositioning two post-Civil War naval cannons at the courthouse entrance, a very visible aspect of the project.



Henry County Courthouse

## Historic Garden Week in Virginia Celebrates 80th Anniversary

Historic Garden Week, heralded as "America's Largest Open House" has raised millions of dollars over the years for the restoration of historic gardens across Virginia. A number of special activities and events have been planned by staff members at our historic gardens to celebrate the 80th anniversary. Contact the Historic Garden Week office at 804-644-7776 for more information.

## Design Notes

by William D. Rieley, GCV Landscape Architect

A historic site may contain beautiful old trees that were not present at the time of interpretation of the building; if lawns are maintained as they would have been in the 18th century, visitors might be appalled; we must cope with pests and diseases that were not present historically; and unlike buildings, the landscape is a living, growing entity that will always change over time. In both the design and the maintenance of historic sites, we are constantly required to make judgment calls that must balance historic, aesthetic, practical, safety and horticultural considerations. Despite these challenges, the field of historic landscape design and management is one whose breadth and depth of understanding grows every year. I look forward to raising some of the fascinating issues with which we in this field grapple. I hope you will find them informative and useful.



Will Rieley

## Featured Gardener

Valerie Balentine, Bacon's Castle

The value of part-time gardeners to a property is revealed in the work of head gardener Valerie Balentine (shown left) and her assistant, Barbara Insley (right). The 17th century garden at Bacon's Castle was uncovered in 1983 and restored by the GCV in 1984-89. Ms. Balentine has been involved in this "Virginia's first garden" since 1998 and Ms. Insley since 1991. Their dedication to its maintenance remains throughout the vagaries of weather, staffing and time.



Valerie Balentine and Barbara Insley



Their garden work involves keeping the formal garden of six large squares planted with grass and surrounding borders of perennials backed by a hawthorn hedge. A brick forcing wall at one end yields a mix of flowers, vegetables, herbs and two trellises supporting grape vines. Garden paths intersect the squares and surround the outer edges.

Ms. Balentine reports "Preservation Virginia's Bacon's Castle's garden's recent certification as a [Virginia Green Attraction](#) requires that we use earth-friendly organic products and homemade remedies. We receive help from area Master Gardeners, Mr. Glen Slade, Surry County Extension Agent and other historic site gardeners who share their expertise to maintain this garden."

Garden Tip: Ms. Balentine uses a mixture of vinegar and salt to rid pathways of grass and weeds and prevent their return.

UMW student Caitlin McCafferty served an internship at Bacon's Castle this summer and her work included some hands on garden maintenance.

## Garden Maintenance

*"Maintaining a garden or landscape is challenging in and of itself. Add to this the layer of historical authenticity and the task becomes even more complex, but also more rewarding. Our overriding goal for maintaining a historic landscape is to keep the built elements in good repair, promote healthy and vigorous plant growth, and accommodate visitors without compromising authenticity. Meeting the challenges and exploiting the opportunities at each property helps to showcase its unique beauty and historic importance."* Garden Maintenance Manual



All properties should have a copy of the **Garden Maintenance Manual**. Please let your property liaison know if you did not yet receive yours.

### Did you know...?

Boxwoods do not wilt like many other plants when they are dry but require that the soil is moist to a depth of 12" to 18" from early spring to late fall. During periods of less than normal rainfall, water boxwoods so that they receive the equivalent of 1" of rainfall every 10 days. This will require letting the hose or sprinkler run for several hours once or twice a week so the water percolates deep into the soil. Drip irrigation is not recommended.

Pruning: When the diameter of a branch exceeds 1-1/4 inches, use a pruning saw that has teeth on only one side of the blade. Curved bladed pruning saws are the best for preventing damage when pruning. Use fine-toothed pruning saws for branches 2-1/2 inches in diameter and coarsely-toothed saws for branches 3 inches or more.

## Questions from Properties

**Question from Historic St. Luke's Church, Smithfield:** Why is pine straw a better choice for mulch, rather than shredded bark (pine or hardwood)?

**Answer:** The double-shredded mulch found today is a modern invention and not as suited to the historic setting of restored landscapes. Pine straw is the preferred mulch and a good source of nutrients while discouraging weeds, retaining moisture and regulating soil temperature. Compost has historically been used also as mulch, working it into the soil at the end of each season to improve the soil structure.

**Question from Christ Church, Lancaster:** Dogwoods are in decline. What are some appropriate replacements?

**Answer:** White-Flowering Redbud, *Cercis canadensis* "alba". Black Haw, *Viburnum prunifolium*. Serviceberry, *Amelanchier arborea* or *canadensis*.



We welcome questions for future newsletters at [communications@gcvirginia.org](mailto:communications@gcvirginia.org).

Newsletter Editor: Judy Perry [perryjb@cox.net](mailto:perryjb@cox.net)  
Technical Editor: Nina Mustard [nmustard@cox.net](mailto:nmustard@cox.net)

# An Invitation to GCV Historic Site Gardeners and Garden Staff

**Maintenance Workshop February 5, 2013**  
**9:30 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. Kent-Valentine House Richmond**

## Featured Speakers

Peggy Cornett, Curator of Plants, Monticello  
Jack Gary, Director of Archeology and Landscapes, Poplar Forest  
Will Rieley, GCV Landscape Architect  
Peggy Singlemann, Director of Horticulture, Maymont



Register [Online](#)  
or phone 804-643-4137

## Contact

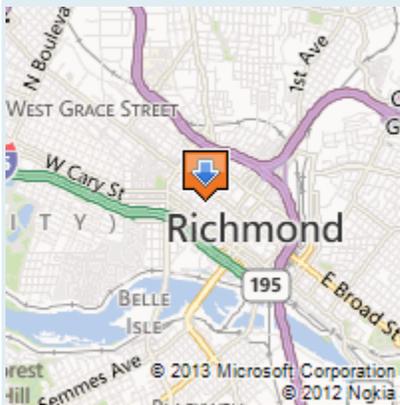
Ann Heller  
Garden Club of Virginia  
communications@gcvirginia.org  
804-643-4137

## When

Tuesday February 5, 2013 from 9:30 AM to 3:00 PM EST

## Where

[Kent-Valentine House](#)  
12 East Franklin Street  
Richmond, VA 23219



## 2013 GCV Restoration Committee Maintenance Workshop For Historic Site Gardeners and Garden Staff

**February 5, 2013**  
**9:30 a.m. to 3:00 p.m.**  
**Kent-Valentine House**

All GCV historic site gardeners and garden staff are invited to be our guests for a day of sharing and learning. Lunch will be provided.

## Featured Speakers:

Peggy Cornett, Curator of Plants, Monticello  
Jack Gary, Director of Archeology and Landscapes, Poplar Forest  
Will Rieley, GCV Landscape Architect  
Peggy Singlemann, Director of Horticulture, Maymont

Questions? Email Candy Crosby at [cloverh@ntelos.net](mailto:cloverh@ntelos.net).

Space is limited to the first 80 registrants.

*"The Garden Club of Virginia Maintenance Workshop is a wonderful opportunity to meet colleagues and to discuss our unique problems. Those of us who are responsible for historic gardens have different challenges from those who care for other gardens. In addition to the education and fellowship, I come away from these workshops both motivated and inspired."*

*-Beate Ankjaer-Jensen, Grounds*

*Supervisor, Belmont in Fredericksburg*

*Kent-Valentine House (Photo credit: Roger Foley)*