



# THE DIRT

Catching up on the Duke Gardens Volunteers

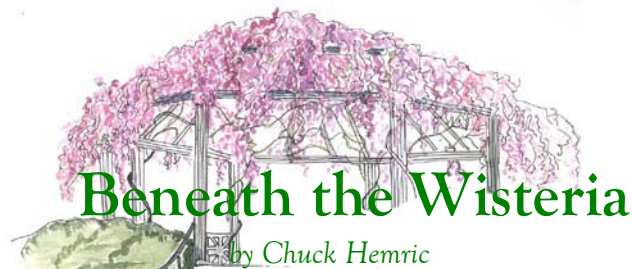
Editor: Jerry Sheehy

Summer/Fall 2011  
[www.gardens.duke.edu](http://www.gardens.duke.edu)

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## Newest Volunteers

T.E. Austin  
Sue Behringer  
Jessalyn Byrd  
George Carey  
Yvonne Dittmar  
Ed Eastman  
Clay Edison  
Marissa English  
Melissa English  
Frederick Feely II  
Cristina Fenesan  
Ashleigh Fogg  
Ninna Gagnon  
Pierre Gervais  
Beth Harvat  
Whitney Hunt  
Laurie Jahnke  
Dasha Karelov  
Susan Kosempa  
Rita Magas  
Benjamin Michael  
Alain Michot  
Deborah Miller  
Erin Moorehead  
Evan Murray  
Annie Nashold  
Atsuko Nelson  
Isaac Payne  
Jessica Pei  
Marco Perez  
Natalie Rice  
Wendy Simpson  
Sumeet Singh  
Michael Tillotson  
Jeanine Tregay  
Hideko Tsurumi  
Nhoupinh Vongphrachanh  
Karin Waelti  
Paul Welty  
Linda Williams



## Beneath the Wisteria

by Chuck Hemric

Beginning with our founding fathers, volunteering has been necessary for the survival of each thriving community. We have all heard that it takes a village to raise a child. I believe there is an important parallel to that statement: it takes every neighbor to raise and strengthen a community. Without people stepping up, many of the organizations that provide so much goodwill would not survive.

Volunteerism strengthens our nation, our communities, and our neighborhoods. We are also strengthened as individuals when we give of ourselves to help others. When I think of the immense number of people who volunteer, and the sheer impact of their efforts, I am truly humbled. I have often commented that the greatest gift a person can give is the gift of their time. What shape would this country be in without the American Red Cross, Habitat for Humanity, and the local churches, synagogues and mosques that fulfill a variety of societal needs on a daily basis? And we cannot forget that the United States, as the greatest nation on the planet, owes immense gratitude to a totally volunteer military for the freedom that we enjoy.

At this point in history, our country is on the brink of crisis. Now, more than ever, it is important for Americans to stand up and be counted. A recent article by Brian O'Connell in *U.S. Society & Values* indicated that 50% of Americans over the age of 13 are now actively volunteering. That is an astounding statistic—to think that every other person you meet is a volunteer. O'Connell also states that 90% of all philanthropy comes from individuals—not corporations or foundations. This says to me that being a good neighbor builds stronger communities.

As the leader of the volunteers at Sarah P. Duke Gardens, I, along with my fellow staff members, strive to demonstrate enthusiasm and confidence, knowledge, kindness and understanding, all traits that I feel are necessary to encourage others to do that which needs to be done and to support and further the mission of Duke Gardens. If we are successful in this role, these leadership qualities will be reflected in the successful outcome of the volunteers' efforts. As we celebrate the 20<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Volunteer program at Duke Gardens, I am grateful for the countless contributions of each of you.

## Daniel Stowe Botanical Garden Hiatus

*by Jerry Sheehy, Editor*

Early on the morning of April 19, twenty members of the Gardens staff and volunteers gathered outside the Doris Duke Center for a bus trip to the Daniel Stowe Botanical Garden in Belmont, a small town outside of Charlotte.



Our seats were comfortable and conversation was flowing as we braved the threat of rain, rain, rain. This hiatus was a gift from the Gardens to those volunteers who have given many years of service.

When we arrived, Chuck Hemric, in charge of the event, arranged to have a docent explain the happenings in each of the gardens. She began with the Garden's history, saying that in 1991 Daniel Jonathan Stowe, a textile executive, set aside nearly 400 acres of prime rolling meadows, woodland, and lakefront property for a botanical garden to rival the world's best. Our docent also explained that the Visitor Pavilion (a 13,500-square-foot building topped with a stained-glass dome) housed rooms for classes, a gift shop, space for plant sales, and places to eat inside or out.

The Stowe Botanical Garden comprises 110 acres under cultivation, including ten acres of manicured, themed gardens. Among them are the Four Seasons Garden, Canal Garden, Perennial Garden, Cottage Garden, Conifer Garden, Encore Azalea Garden and West Gardens. All of these gardens are open to visitors. The Garden features twelve fountains and the Orchid Conservatory, which opened in January of 2008 and was my personal favorite. I think I could have made it my new home! An entire wall of the Conservatory was home to numerous hanging orchids—all in bloom!

As I read back over what I have written, I see that I've left out the camaraderie among the Duke Gardens group. Much laughter, chit-chat, and plant queries made for a lovely day away from all cares. We arrived back at Duke around 5:30 in the afternoon, pleasantly tired but also rejuvenated! The Stowe Botanical Garden is a good family destination if you are looking for a day trip!

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## Meet Ninna

by Jerry Sheehy, Editor



One of my most interesting assignments as editor of the newsletter is interviewing a new Gardens volunteer. It was suggested that I meet Ninna Gagnon who has been a volunteer with us for about four months. In time, I contacted her and asked if she would be willing to be interviewed and, via *The Dirt*, be introduced to all the volunteers who did not know her. She acquiesced, so “Meet Ninna.”

Ninna is a lovely young lady from Sweden who has been married to Yakir for almost a year. She is both an ambassador and a docent. Ninna declares that she does not have a “green thumb,” however, she hopes to acquire one, for she is in the best place to obtain it. She loves the Gardens, where she finds the serenity she needs. In fact, it was this attraction that spurred her to become a volunteer.

Her husband, Yakir, is in the postdoctoral program in the Department of Biology. Together they have made many new friends through the International House on campus, which has made their transition to Duke and Durham much easier.

If you happen to see Ninna in the Gardens, just say “hello.” She and Yakir are a long way from home.

*This is (a bit more of) your life,*

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## Ellen Biddle Shipman

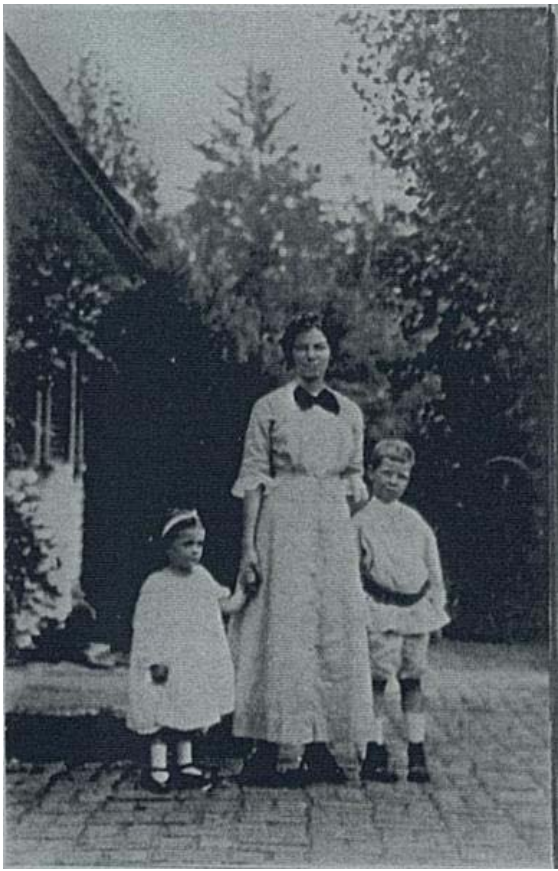
by Nan Len

The last time I wrote about Ellen Biddle Shipman, designer of the Terraces, she was ten years old (1879) and on her way from the Arizona Territory to her maternal grandparents’ (John and Catherine Caldwell McGowan) home in Elizabeth, New Jersey. It seems most likely that Ellen was taught at home by her grandparents until she went to finishing school at the Sarah Randolph School for Girls in Baltimore.

Sarah Nicholas Randolph (1839-1892) was a great-granddaughter of Thomas Jefferson. With her sisters, Randolph ran several well-respected schools for girls; however, she is most known for her book *The domestic life of Thomas Jefferson compiled from family letters and reminiscences* (Harper & Brothers, 1871).

When she was 18 (1887), Ellen’s father was reassigned to the War Department in Washington, DC. According to her mother, Ellen enjoyed the social life of Washington. Exactly what Ellen did in the next few years is unclear, but in 1892 at the age of 23, she was in Cambridge, Massachusetts, attending what was then known as Harvard Annex, later to become Radcliffe. Academic life did not suit our Ellen. It may have been that she was more interested in her social life because in October 1893 she married Louis Evan Shipman.

I have been able to find out a few things about Louis Evan Shipman. He was born in Brooklyn into what seems to have been a well-off family. Like Ellen, he was not especially drawn to academic life and he left Harvard the year they were married. Louis was a writer. He wrote plays and stories, did a few introductions for books, and edited *Life* magazine from 1922 to 1924. This first *Life* was a light-entertainment magazine before it was bought (for its name) by Henry Luce in 1936. He died on his 64th birthday (August 2, 1869–August 2, 1933).



Ellen Shipman with two of her children, Mary on the left and Evan on the right.

(Photograph from the Shipman Family Archive, found on the web page for the book *Grace under pressure: the life of Evan Shipman* by Sean O'Rourke. [www.evanshipman.com](http://www.evanshipman.com))

Manhattan family, Platt studied art both in New York City and in Europe. He was quite accomplished in the art of etching. Platt's first wife died in childbirth (as did their newborn twins) in 1887 and he went into a period of deep mourning. Platt was invited to Cornish in the summer of 1889 by a friend and the visit seemed to have helped him because soon after that visit he resumed his artistic endeavors.

In 1892, Platt and his brother toured Italy to photograph the gardens and villas built during the Renaissance. His book *Italian Gardens* (Harper & Brothers, 1894) and Edith Wharton's *Italian Villas and their Gardens* (Century Co., 1904, illustrated, interestingly enough, by another Cornish resident, Maxfield Parrish) had a huge impact on landscape designs in America. The Beaux Arts garden style is characterized by an overall formal geometry. Elements of this style include long vistas, fountains, and arbors.

This seems like a good place to leave Ellen for a while. In 1909, Ellen was forty years old with three children and a late-eighteenth-century homestead called Brook Place that she was remodeling to suit her tastes. She and Louis lived in a beautiful part of New Hampshire and were established members of a community of creative and talented people. Difficult times lie ahead for Ellen, but, for now, let us imagine her in her garden on a lovely summer morning, strolling around admiring her plants, pulling a few weeds, and planning her next improvements.

Resource:

*Beaux Arts / Neoclassical*. The Cultural Landscape Foundation: Stewardship through Education. [tclf.org/content/beaux-arts-neoclassical](http://tclf.org/content/beaux-arts-neoclassical)

Ellen and Louis's first child, Ellen (I guess everyone in the family really liked that name—you may remember that our Ellen's mother was also named Ellen), was born in August, 1894. Their next child, Evan, was born ten years later in October, 1904, and their last child, Mary, was born in February, 1907.

The most important decision Ellen and Louis made was to move to Cornish, New Hampshire, in 1894. This small town is situated between the ridge of the Croydon Mountain and the Connecticut River. From the photographs and pictures I have seen, the area is quite beautiful.

The sculptor Augustus Saint-Gaudens (1848-1907) had come to Cornish in 1885 to escape the summer heat of New York City. His friends began to come to Cornish as well, and soon the area turned into an artists' colony. Although the area stopped attracting artists by the 1930s, the author J.D. Salinger moved there in the 1950s and lived there until his death in 2010.

Ellen and Louis most likely moved to Cornish because their friends from Cambridge, Louise and Herbert Croly, had moved there. The couples shared a house for two years. Herbert Croly (1869-1930) went on to be the editor of *The Architectural Record* and was one of the founders of *The New Republic*. He was an influential figure in the Progressive Movement.

One part-time resident of Cornish who was to have a huge impact on Ellen's life was Charles A. Platt (1861-1933). Born into a wealthy

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# Spring Plant Sale

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*by Jason Holmes*

What a wonderful day for a plant sale! The Spring 2011 Plant and Craft Festival was one for the books. We had great weather, great public turnout, and sold almost all the plants we had to sell. Herbs were the biggest hit; thanks to Sara Smith and Lynn Nelson for teaching patrons about their uses in the garden. House plants, water plants, and native plants were also a huge draw, and our knowledgeable staff and volunteers answered questions from many plant-hungry gardeners. I like to observe the interactions of those helping and those being helped; it always makes a hard day's work worth it to see everyone so happy to get some really great plants.

The Propagation Team has started a new table of cuttings taken from plants within Duke Gardens. For those of you unfamiliar with this group of volunteers, the Propagation Team roots cuttings for use in the Gardens or to sell at the Plant Sale. Designated "Duke Gardens Collection," these plants are typically smaller-sized plants. Their size along with their esteemed designation helped these plants sell out this spring. Continue to look for these special additions at the Terrace Shop as well as the Fall Plant Sale.

Thanks to all who help support the Duke Gardens Plant Sale. Whether you are staff, volunteer, or patron, you helped make the day a huge success.

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## Water Gardening at Duke Gardens: 2011

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*by Tamara Kilbane*



It's that time of year again! The ponds at Duke Gardens are alive with vibrant hardy and tropical waterlily blooms, an assortment of eye-catching marginals (including the beautiful, showy lotus), and colorful dragonflies buzzing from one flower to the next.

We are proud to host once again the IWGS New Waterlily Competition; the number of entries received has again broken a record. We set a limit on the number of entries we can grow each year, and this year we are at maximum capacity with 40 new hybrids set to vie for the title of Best New Waterlily of 2011. These unique new plants were sent from hybridizers in Canada, Taiwan, Thailand, Cyprus, West Virginia, Texas, Ohio, and Florida and are blooming now in the Virtue Peace Pond. They will remain on display through the end of September.

Preparations for the contest began behind the scenes in the propagation greenhouse as the entries started rolling in this spring. The young plants were photographed, potted, fertilized, and placed in a heated water table until the outdoor pond-water temperatures warmed enough to plant them outdoors. The lilies were then potted in solid round tubs using clay soil mixed with aquatic fertilizer. Many of the planters were surrounded by a black plastic mesh to deter nibbling by the pond's resident turtles and ducks until the plants had become established enough for the netting to be removed.



Throughout the summer months, our volunteer waterlily team (composed once again this year of dedicated volunteers Karen Webbink, John Wyman, Jean Reniers, and Jeff Prather) will fertilize the lilies twice a month and work to remove dead leaves and blooms weekly, as well as to space the plants as they grow. Photos will be taken of the first-through-third-day blooms, and the blooms will be measured with a yardstick. This information will be sent to the IWGS in mid-August. A panel of IWGS judges will then choose the “Best New Waterlily of 2011” in late August. Additional awards will be given to the “Best New Tropical,” “Best New Hardy,” “Best New Intersubgeneric” (crosses between plants of different subgeneras), and “Best New Anecphya” (an Australian subgenera) waterlily hybrids.

As in years past, we would like to invite Gardens visitors to vote for their favorite new hybrids in the 5th Annual People’s Choice Awards. The public vote adds a fun and interactive aspect to the contest, while providing the IWGS and hybridizers with valuable feedback about the plant characteristics that are most in demand. Votes can be cast on our website at sarahpdukegardens.org from now through the end of August. The official IWGS voting will take place in late August and those results will be posted on the organization’s website at iwgs.org.

In other news, the fish pool at the base of the terraces has been completely renovated, with hardy and tropical aquatics blooming now. Curator Mike Owens and Horticulturist Jan Watson have been donning waders to plant and maintain the waterlilies and marginals showcased in this pond. In mid-June, a generous donor gave ten large koi for the pool, and they are now enjoying their spacious new home alongside a school of goldfish which were added by children celebrating the recent Family Fun Day.

We hope you will join us pond-side this summer for what will surely be one of the most colorful and exciting seasons to date!

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## My Love Affair with Boston Ferns

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*By Jerry Sheehy, Editor*

Yes, I am in love with my beautiful, stately, Boston Ferns. I have been enamored for years, but the affair seems to be escalating.

I start out in the spring with two ferns that I have managed to hold over from the previous spring. When the weather begins to warm, I take them outside (where they really want to be), cut away the dead fronds, set them under my old oak trees, water and feed them carefully, and thus begins another season of my love affair.



Gradually, I add to my display every time I go to the garden shop. I fill the trunk of my car with at least six new ferns, and happily go home to set them under the trees. As the season progresses, I make another trip to the garden shop for Boston Ferns that have been reduced in price, not watered, and ignored. Happily, I choose a few dying ferns, pay the reduced price, and bring them home to be watered, fed, and put under another big tree. They thank me by coming back to life, becoming stately again, and making me very happy.

Yes, I am in love with my Boston Ferns for I now have 16 of them. Whatever shall I do with 16 ferns when the winter winds begin to blow? I’ll find a way—that’s how love is—we find a way!

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## Mark your Calendars

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**October 27, 2011 – An Evening of Celebration to commemorate 20 years of Volunteerism at Duke Gardens. More details forthcoming**