

Virginia Robinson Gardens

2013 Newsletter

President – Kerstin Royce

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Editor – Nancy Miller

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Message from the President

KERSTIN ROYCE — PRESIDENT 2013-2014



One of the joys that I have experienced as President of Friends of Robinson Gardens is working with gifted, caring, hardworking individuals. Reflecting on this past year, I am in awe of what we have accomplished and the many “seeds” we have planted for future success.

We have completed our new Friend’s office and the beautiful prep-kitchen in the Pool Pavilion. Many, many thanks to Restoration Chairman, **Ellen Levitt**, **Jeanne Anderson**, **Catherine Fellowes** and **Cynthia Carlson** for a magnificent job. See the back cover for a full description of this exciting project.

We are still basking in the afterglow of the 2013 “..into the garden” Benefit Tour, *Fête des Fleurs*. It is such a huge undertaking, that we sometimes wonder if we will have enough woman-power to create another Garden Tour. Yet, year after year stalwart Friends, volunteers and community sponsors come together to present another outstanding event. Our sincerest thanks go to **Garden Tour Co-chairs Julia Klein and Shiva Moshtael**, the Garden Tour Committee, our Docents, the Bruin Bells, and garden hosts. A special Bouquet of thanks to **Jeanne Anderson**, **Maralee Beck** and **Laura Alpert**, for coordinating the private garden selections and to **Nancy Miller** and **Leslie Tillmann** for their creative print work. Now mark your calendars for Saturday, May 17, 2014 – the next Benefit Garden Tour!

We begin the fall on September 21st with the **Patron Gala**, “*Midnight in Paris*.” Chairmen **Cathy Kurstin**, **Sunday Taylor** and **Jacqueline Tesoriero** have orchestrated *un soirée magnifique*. Merci Mesdames! The **Annual Membership Luncheon** chaired by **Susan Rosenthal** will be held on October 4th at the Gardens. We look forward to welcoming new members into our circle of Friends. Hats off to Susan, but hats ON at the luncheon. Education Chairman, **Marian Power** has scheduled our first program for October 9th when Maria Tuttle, wife of former Ambassador to the United Kingdom, will speak on the restoration and redecoration of the historic Winfield House. Also on the calendar are a floral demonstration by Peter Otero of *Silver Birches* and a lecture by Victoria Kastner on her new book about the Hearst family. Then **Tania Norris** has a series of “garden talks” planned, as well as, classes with guest instructors in botanical illustration.

Another exciting membership opportunity is as a Fellow of the Friends. For the Fellows, our Special Event Chairs **Jeanne Anderson** and **Donivee Nash** are planning an excursion to San Francisco in March to attend the opening gala of “*Bouquets to Art*” at the de Young Museum. The weekend will also include a tour of gardens and art collections in private homes. Please go to our website at www.robinsongardens.org for a complete list of activities. You may make reservations for all programs, events and classes online or you may call the Events Coordinator, Bianca Costin at (310) 550-2068.

To our returning members and especially new members, welcome to an exciting year. I encourage you all to become involved in a committee of your choice early in the year. Wonderful rewards and great fun are an integral part of this amazing organization. Author Jean de La Fontaine wrote in 1680, “*Rare is true love, true friendship is rarer.*” At Robinson Gardens, friendships bloom everyday.

Warmest regards,

Kerstin Royce

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Fellows Palm Desert Escapade

The first day of our desert escapade began in the afternoon of February 22, 2013 with a visit to the home of **Lois and Duane Hagadone**. This architectural masterpiece was built into the mountain at Bighorn Country Club. It covers an area in excess of 64,000 square feet. The \$30 million home has a futuristic design with 19 electronic, moveable glass walls, which open onto the mountain air and the vast network of pools that weave through the property.

At sunset, **Ellen and Mark Lipson**, members of the Fellows, treated us to cocktails in their stunning home at Vintage Country Club. For dinner, participants were on their own to explore a variety of local restaurants.

Saturday morning the Fellows had a lecture and tour of *Sunnylands*, the Walter and Lenore Annenberg Estate in Rancho Mirage. The newly planted gardens are designed as “an impressionist canvas”- a magnificent vista of the San Jacinto Mountains looming above *palo verde* trees. Landscape architect James Burnett used Vincent Van Gogh’s *Olive Trees* (1889) as inspiration for creating this aspect of the Center’s unique gardens. In addition there are 1.25 miles of walking paths that meander through more than 53,000 individual plants and 50 arid-landscape species. The gardens were carefully conceived to appear different in every season with variations that create a memorable sensory experience.

“We like desert plants for their beauty, sculptural habits, and color.”

Thanks to the gracious hospitality of **Donna MacMillan**, the Fellows enjoyed an *al fresco* luncheon overlooking the spectacular Stone Eagle Country Club on State Route 74 – the Pines to Palms Highway – where the Santa Rosa Mountains connect to the San Jacinto Mountains. After lunch, Donna invited us to see her outstanding contemporary art collection, which includes one of the major Dale Chihuly collections in the world. Donna and her late husband Cargill spent many exciting years creating their renowned art collection, much of which has been donated to museums across the country.

For the finale of the Palm Desert Esplanade, **Chip Tom of Heather James Art Gallery** invited us for cocktails and dinner in the gallery. Artists Constance Mallinson and Penelope Gottlieb were on hand to tell us about their work while we dined among their paintings.

The Fellows wish to thank our generous hosts the Hagadones, Donna MacMillan, Chip Tom and *Friends*, **Jeanne Anderson, Donivee Nash and Ellen Lipson** for organizing this memorable weekend.



Sunday Taylor, Wendy Wintrob & Margy Hudson



Ellen Lipson in her garden at The Vintage.



Donivee Nash and Chip Tom



Garden Chairs Shiva Moshtael, Julia Klein with Grand Marshall Eric Haskell, Friends President, Kerstin Royce and Superintendent Tim Lindsay



Lynn Pile and Mary Valentine Buckingham, a relative of Harry Robinson



Harriet Beck, Maralee Beck and Erika Saffir



Greer Saunders, Auction Chairman



Fashion Coordinator Adrienne Horwitch (center) Max Mara Fashions modeled by The Mannequins



Ellen Lipson, Susi Niven, Ellen Levitt



Jeanne Anderson, Ellen Levitt, Kerstin Royce and Danielle Haskell



Angela Movassaghi



Chef Delcours and Mark Bergadan



Bel Air Garden Club



Bianca Costin, Chris Stamatis, Leslie Kavanaugh, Gunilla Horacek, Maude Adams and Marcella Ruble



Dorothy Kamins and guest



Linda Vitale, Lynda Fadel and Kathy Toppino



Claudia & Benjamin Deutsch and Robbie Anderson



Kerstin Royce and Dale Witt



Rodney Kemerer

Silver Birches



Fête des Fleurs



The garden [Giverny] was planted in light of paintings not yet painted, and paintings took on a kind of audacity in light of the fact that they were responding to a garden that had already been organized... the garden was more than a subject, it was a site, a site for a specific way of seeing, and finally a specific way of painting.

Michael Marrinan, Associate Professor of Art and Art History at Stanford University.

Each year our "...into the garden" Benefit Tour presents an interpretation of Virginia Robinson's vision in the creation of her estate and garden. Just as Claude Monet created "a site for a specific way of seeing," The Robinsons sculpted a barren hillside into a magical retreat blending elements from many different plant cultures. This year the Friends', **Fête des Fleurs**, showcased the romance and elegance of French garden design as it is reflected in the landscape of the Robinson Estate.

Floral and Room Design Exhibits incorporated color, composition and sophistication inspired by the French to enhance the residence. Here and there, even a bit of the risqué was used to achieve their design goals. We are grateful to the many talented artists who participated.

A glorious "dejeuner sur l'herbe" was also created and served by **The Kitchen** of Pasadena. From country paté and assorted mustards to crispy pommes frites served in paper cones to miniature éclairs and petit fours – every morsel délicieux. During the early afternoon, **Max Mara** presented their outstanding couture with informal modeling by **The Mannequins**.

To honor our Grand Marshal, **Dr. Eric T. Haskell**, professor of French Literature at Claremont College, the Friends presented him with a vintage watering can to add to his collection. Dr. Haskell then enchanted everyone with his recollections of his grandmother's accounts of the parties at the Robinson estate. Professor Haskell has given several outstanding educational programs at Robinson Gardens on French landscape design and historic French landmarks, such as the Gardens of Brécy.

In addition to the design exhibitions, guests enjoyed shopping at the Boutique Fantastique where twenty vendors displayed beautiful accessories. Authors **Evy Carlson, Tim Lindsay, Marcella Ruble, Jeffrey Hyland, Eric T. Haskell, Robert Anderson, Annie Kelly** and **Tim Street-Porter** were also available to sign their books.

Anthropologie

Bel Air Garden Club

Beverly Hills Garden Club

Birgit Klein Interiors – Birgit Klein

Bloomingdale's

Cartier – Worthy McCartney

Catherine Fellowes

Cottage Garden Design – CJ Forray

Cynthia Carlson & Associates

Eskandar

Chef Emmanuel Delcour

Empty Vase – Yvonne Van Pelt

Eric Solberg Gardens – Eric Solberg

Eric Buterbaugh Flower Design – Eric Buterbaugh

Euforia Flowers – Lisa Hunstad

Floral Art – Jennifer McGarigle

Greenwood Daylily Gardens – John Schoustra

Lily Pad Floral Design – Rebecca Perry

MacKenzie-Childs

Magical Blooms – Jenny Barker

Mayfair House, Inc.

Max Mara

Neiman Marcus

Nicole Antoine Design – Nicole Antoine

Robert Joyce Architecture – Robert Joyce

Santa Barbara Garden Club

Scandia Home – Kim Gregory

Silver Birches – Peter Otero

Silver Lake Farms – Tara Kolla

Stephanie Grace Designs, Inc. – Parnell Corder

The Flower Box – Brenda Berkley

The Stevenson Group – Majid Sadr

The Velvet Garden – Kimm Birkicht

Teryl Design Landscaping – Teryl Ciarlo

Twig & Twine – Heather Williams

Yamaguchi Bonsai Nursery – Marianne Yamaguchi

Yves Delorme – Casey Coleford

Fete des Fleurs

2013 "...into the Garden Benefit Tour

Elegant simplicity



Catherine Fellowes & Cynthia Carlson



Eric Solberg Gardens



Lily Pad Floral Design

Inspired by the French



The Flower Box – Brenda Berkley



Bloomingdales



Kim Gregory for Scandia Home & Nicole Antoine Design



Euforia

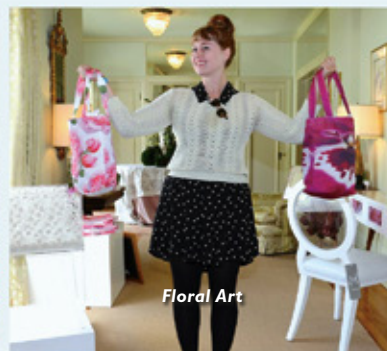
Created for Robinson Gardens



Floral Art



MacKenzie-Childs



Floral Art



Eric Buterbaugh



The Empty Yase



Parnell Corder for Stephanie Grace Design



Magical Blooms



The Stevenson Group - Majid Sadr



Santa Barbara Garden Club - Joan Selwyn



Yamaguchi Bonsai Nursery



Concierge Table by Silver Birches

"I am following Nature without
being able to grasp her...
I perhaps owe having become
a planter to flowers."

Claude Monet



Yves Delorme



Casey Coleford & Caitlin Hoffman
for Yves Delorme



Eskandar



Eric Solberg Gardens



Twig & Twine



Silverlake Farms



Anthropologie



Teryl Design & Anthropologie



The Velvet Garden



Mayfair House, Inc.



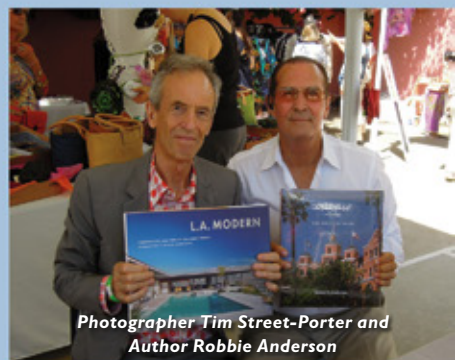
Mayfair House, Inc. Representatives



C.J. Forray - Cottage Garden Design



Design by Robert Joyce & Birgit Klein
Flowers by Eric Buterbaugh



Photographer Tim Street-Porter and
Author Robbie Anderson



Flowers by Teryl Design Landscaping



Jamie Wolf for the Beverly Hills Garden Club



Greenwood Day Lily Gardens

Thank You!

The highlight of the Benefit Tour is the privilege of visiting a selection of outstanding private gardens. The Friends wish to extend our deepest gratitude to the families who welcomed us "...into their gardens." We salute you and the landscape professionals who contributed so much to this event.

Past Education Lectures

“Around Beauty” by Barbara Barry

February 20, 2013



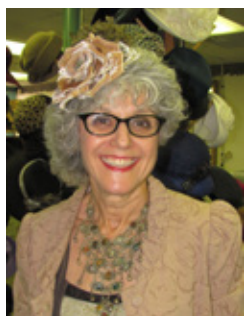
Renowned designer, **Barbara Barry** presented her new book, *Around Beauty*. Beautifully dressed in a ruffled ivory blouse and pearls, Ms. Barry explained how the simplest designs inspire her, from the perfect oval of an egg to the shiny, waxy leaves of a plant against a matte background. “*You have to pause and look at what is in front of you; our bodies are so sensitive, we pick up everything,*” she explained. Barbara showed slides of several homes whose interiors she designed. In a home in Northern California, the “Bay Area Fog” inspired very beautiful subtle colors of celadon, cool blue and spearmint. Similarly, the stronger light in Southern California inspired a home with a warmer palette of sage and vanilla. In Jackson Hole, Wyoming—again the home is a source of protection and comfort, but the colors are ivory, black, brown and blue.



After the lecture Barbara graciously signed her book while guests were treated to a delightful lunch. The décor complimented Barbara Barry’s signature look: ultra-refined, imbued with subtle serene elegance.

Louise Green Hat Tour

March 4, 2013



In business for 25 years, British born **Louise Green** gave us a delightful tour of her award winning millinery factory and showroom. It is an exciting environment, filled with the romantic, beautiful, vintage-inspired hats. From cloche hats with vintage trim, to delicate, gossamer ones with flowers and ribbons, all are handmade, with colors ranging from pale mint green, lavenders, and pinks to deep jewel tones of cherry red and royal blue. In addition to doing work for the movie industry, Louise revealed that Neiman Marcus and Saks are her biggest customers. Showing us a shimmering hat with metallic threads, she explained that these particular hats are beautiful in the sun and thus very popular

at the Kentucky Derby and Royal Ascot. Many customers also bring an outfit or fabric to match the color for a custom hat.

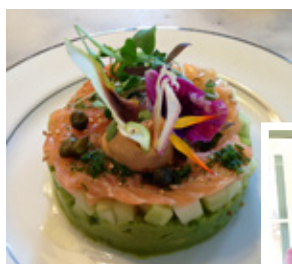
We were then given a tour of the factory, where one of the workers steamed fabric onto a hat block made of wood. Louise showed us multiple shapes of the hat blocks, most of which are from the 1920’s to the 1950’s. She sometimes adapts these vintage blocks to fashion newer shapes. “*There are only one or two block makers left in the United States,*” she explained. The hat is then put in an oven for 10 minutes to dry and harden, after which the edges are sewn, and trims from India, Japan and France, and flowers are sewn by hand.



Education Chairs Susan Rosenthal and Wendy Wintrob

Cooking with Chef Emmanuel Delcour

March 19, 2013



Salmon Carpaccio Apéritif



Emmanuel Delcour conducted the class in the newly renovated estate kitchen. His enthusiasm and delightful personality put everyone at ease and produced a delectable lunch based on some of Virginia Robinson’s favorite ingredients. Chef Delcour advised, “*Don’t forget, cooking is an art form. There is no right or wrong, and you can infinitely create – put your own twist on it by substituting an ingredient you like or plating it differently.*”

Petits Plats

Cantaloupe Bite
with Mint Lime Yogurt, Mascarpone
Balsamic Glaze and Prosciutto Chips

Apéritif

Salmon Carpaccio
with Granny Smith Chips on Micro
Greens with Spicy Ginger Aioli

Pâtes

Black Truffle Nori Pasta

Secondes

Pan Seared Sea Scallops

Bonbons

Dark Chocolate Soufflé

Innovative Ideas and Inspirational Trends

April 26, 2013



Stephanie Grace and her partner **Parnell Corder** wowed the ladies of Robinson Gardens with a fabulous demonstration on “*how to create an unforgettable party!*” Instead of just talking about party planning, Stephanie Grace actually created an impromptu luncheon with linens, centerpieces and fun take home ideas. Stephanie started with a few pointers on do’s and don’ts of dinner parties and then outlined the many ways to make a table setting come to life. Featuring six different centerpieces,



Stephanie Grace and
Parnell Corder

Stephanie discussed her floral concepts in detail, demonstrated “how to” achieve the different looks, and answered questions from the audience. At the end, everyone had an opportunity to review showcase books of Stephanie Grace’s past events and floral installations.

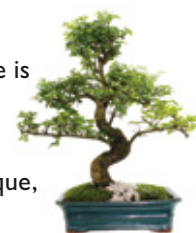
Past Garden Programs

Bonsai, The Ancient Art of Miniaturization

February 27, 2013

Tim Lindsay, Superintendent Virginia Robinson Gardens

Tim Lindsay explained the basic techniques of how to prune and train trees grown in containers – the purpose is to represent nature in miniature; the essences of Bonsai. Each student was provided a bonsai tree that needed training, and with directions from the instructor, the student’s started the training process. At the end of class, student’s left with their bonsai; promising to return in one year to exhibit their work for the class to critique, providing valuable feedback and great fun!



Tomatomania

March 27, 2013



Scott Daigre, owner of Powerplant Garden Design, shared the magic of growing exceptional tomatoes. Both the species and its use as a food originated in Mexico and spread around the world following the Spanish colonization of the Americas. There are over 7,500 tomato varieties. Heirloom tomatoes are becoming increasingly popular among home gardeners and organic producers, since they tend to produce a more interesting and flavorful fruit, although they are prone to disease and yield smaller crops.

The definition of an heirloom tomato is that they are self-pollinators (not hybridized) and have been bred true for 40 years or more.

Botanical Workshop Sessions

April 10-19, 2013



Jenny Phillips, acclaimed Australian botanical painting instructor returned to Robinson Gardens to conduct two one-week sessions. The subject was “roses,” in all their simple complexity, a challenge for all. The first 2-day session focused on graphite renderings, to learn the structure and shading of the form. For the second 5-day session, Elaine selected a Species rose, *rosa mutabilis*, a 5-petal rose that can be found along the driveway at Robinson Gardens. Students developed complete watercolor compositions and shared them at an informal exhibition and critique at the end of the class.



BOTANICAL WORKSHOPS

Please see robinsongardens.org for exact dates and times. Workshops will be held the last two weeks of October. Instructor(s) to be announced. **Ann Marie Evans** is scheduled for April 2014.

“**GARDEN TALKS**” – Beginning in October, Garden Talks will be held at 10:00 a.m. on the fourth Wednesday of October, November, January, February, March, and April. The topics will be posted on robinsongardens.org. For more information please contact **Tania Norris** at floyd1908@aol.com

Spring Gardens Mini-Tour

Just a month before the 2013 “...into the Garden” Benefit Tour, 35 Friends took a break to explore three gardens on Los Angeles’ West Side. **Chery Horacek, Libby Doheny** and **Lauren King**, all from the Bel Air Garden Club, opened their gorgeous homes and gardens for a morning Mini Tour.

We began in Brentwood at the Doheny garden. Designed by Nancy Goslee Powers, Libby’s garden exudes the warmth and generosity of its owner. As one stands in the front garden, hugged by a privacy hedge, Libby’s very personal and eclectic perennial borders flank the central driveway entrance. You pass through the vegetable parterre and can either proceed into and through the raised Balinese pool house or directly into the back garden past her garden office. The back garden stretches out before you to the west and is anchored by a custom fountain, rose garden and magnificent mature oak tree.

In Westwood Hills, Chery Horacek greeted us at her home where she graciously welcomed the group and explained the history of her 1930’s era Paul Williams home. The home opened in the back to a formal garden dotted with boxwood topiary where brick pathways along each side of the great lawn led to an oval pool and formal pool house.

At our last garden in Holmby Hills, owner Lauren King and designer, Nancy Goslee Powers shared an impromptu discussion about specific design elements, as well as, the process involved in creating the overall garden design of these extensive grounds. Our group enjoyed exploring the garden on their own, finding ideas and inspiration.

In each garden we visited, every bed was precision and every area was designed for maximum impact. We all felt fortunate to be able to spend the morning in some of Los Angeles’ most exquisite gardens and be a part of this exclusive event.

March Wiseley



Lauren King



Chery Horacek



Libby Doheny

Friendly Books Worth Reading

“THE DRUNKEN BOTANIST”*

By Amy Stewart

This book is filled with facts that will rock your world and send you running to pour something over the “rocks.” Amy Stewart delighted her readers with **Wicked Plants: The Weed that Killed Lincoln’s Mother & Other Botanical Atrocities**. Now she has compiled everything you ever wanted to know about alcohol, which has been produced by every culture in the world. Here’s the way it all begins no matter what....



“The science of fermentation is wonderfully simple. Yeast eats sugar. They leave behind two waste products, ethyl alcohol and carbon dioxide. If we were being honest, we would admit that what a liquor store sells is, chemically speaking, is little more than the litter boxes of millions of domesticated yeast organisms, wrapped up in pretty bottles with fancy price tags.”

**Note: A great book to have on hand for hostess gifts or a gentleman’s birthday. Nicely bound and laid out for quick reads before falling asleep or running off to dinner.*

DID YOU KNOW?

“The sweet potato is not really a potato at all.”

“China’s Yangtze Valley is the origin of every variety of rice grown around the world.”

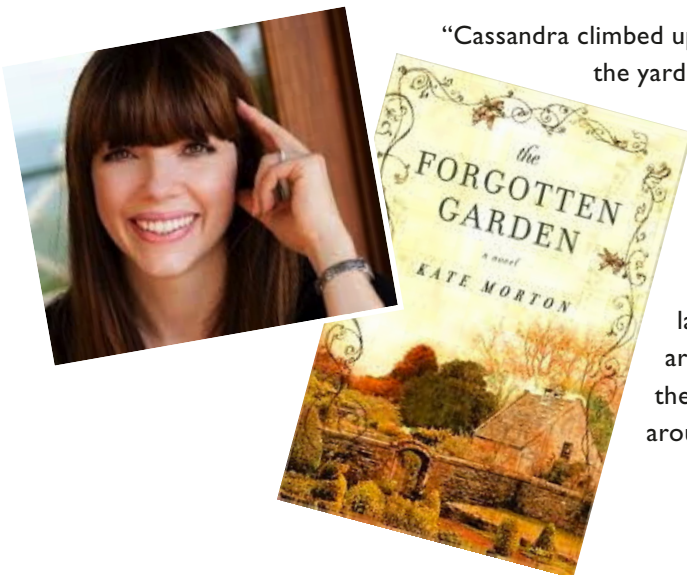
“Archeologist Patrick McGovern has analyzed ancient pottery fragments around the world and found evidence of wine making dating back to 6,000 BC in the Middle East and China.”

“Russian vodka makers looked down on cheap Polish potato vodka; to this day, they insist that the best vodka is made from rice or wheat instead.”

“THE FORGOTTEN GARDEN”

By Kate Morton

The Forgotten Garden traces the lives of three women as they uncover secrets hidden in their pasts. Their stories, separated by decades, converge on a house in England surrounded by an evocative, romantic garden. It is an engrossing story of self-discovery as each woman takes an unexpected journey and unravels a family mystery.



“Cassandra climbed up onto the lower bough of the mango tree in the back corner of the yard, pods cupped gently in her hand, and began to pop them, one by one. Enjoying the cold, gooey seeds that sprayed across her fingers...”

“It was a garden, a walled garden. Overgrown but with beautiful bones visible still. Someone had cared for this garden once. The remains of two paths naked back and forth, intertwined like the lacing on an Irish dancing shoe. Fruit trees had been espaliered around the sides, and wires zigzagged from the top of one wall to the top of another. Hungry wisteria branches had woven themselves around to form a sort of canopy.”

“THE SAMURAI’S GARDEN”

By Gail Tsukiyama

In 1937, as the Japanese were invading China, a young Chinese student’s life is suspended while he recuperates from tuberculosis. Sent to his family’s vacation home in a small village in Japan, he must learn to cope with loneliness, anxiety as the Japanese advance, and disillusionment over his parent’s separation. Friendship and love sustain him, as well as the healing comfort of gardens.

“Matsu gestured for me to enter first. Stepping through the bamboo gate, I found myself in the garden. The sweet perfumes were immediately intoxicating. A silk tree, still heavy with summer blossoms, and two large black pine trees shaded the house. An oval shaped pond, with hints of movements that flashed orange and silver beneath its surface, dominated one side of the garden. It was surround by pale green moss. A wooden bridge arched across its width, and lines of odd-shaped, waterworn stones created two paths...”



“There between two large rocks, grew a neat cluster of blooming flowers, startling beautiful, a splash of blue-purple rising out of a green patch of leaves, somehow thriving among the muted, gray stones.” “How are they able to grow here?” I asked, amazed that anything so delicate could grow among rocks” Sachi smiled. “One of the small miracles of life,” she said. “As Matsu would say, you cannot change the will of the gods once it is set.”



CORNERSTONE GARDENS

SONOMA, CALIFORNIA

Cornerstone Gardens is an ever-changing series of walk-through gardens, showcasing new and innovative designs from the world’s finest landscape architects and designers. The first such gallery-style gardens in the United States, the nine-acre Cornerstone Gardens was created as an inspiration and resource for people interested in gardens, garden design and art.

Inspired by the International Garden Festival at Chaumont-Sur-Loire in France, Cornerstone Gardens aims to create a cultural and creative haven, celebrating the connection between art, architecture and nature. The gardens contribute to the art, philosophy and future of garden design; they focus on themes and ideas, establishing or uncovering new directions in garden design and art. Continually in a state of evolution, some garden installations will be in place for a season, while others will remain for several seasons. In addition, there are gift shops, art galleries and venues for group entertaining. When planning your next trip to Northern California, make sure that Cornerstone Gardens is on your list of places to visit.



Upcoming Educational Lectures

“HISTORICAL WINFIELD HOUSE AND MY TIME THERE”

by Maria Tuttle & Marcus Binney, Photography by James Mortimer

October 9, 2013



This is the first book on Winfield House in its seventy-year history. A magnificent home, set on twelve acres in Regent's Park, Winfield House was completed in 1937 by the Woolworth heiress Barbara Hutton. After World War II, she gave it to the United States government for use as the official residence of the American Ambassador to the United Kingdom. Maria Tuttle, wife of the former Ambassador, Robert Tuttle, will tell us about the elegant house and garden, providing personal insights into the life of the house and its role as a tool of modern public diplomacy. The distinguished architectural historian Marcus Binney contributed the entertaining and informative introduction.



“THE ARTISTRY OF FLOWERS”

Peter Otero of Silver Birches

November, 2013

Peter Otero's elegant innovative design was demonstrated with the creation of the imaginative Concierge Table at our 2013 Benefit Garden Tour. We are delighted to have Peter return to share more of his floral artistry. Founded in 1976 by Walter Hubert as an artisan's studio, Silver Birches' unique designs and high quality standards immediately established the company as a premier trendsetting floral retailer in Southern California. Nearly forty years later, and now under the direction of Peter Otero, Silver Birches Floral Studio is still at the forefront of floral and wedding design.



HOLIDAY GIFT BOX WORKSHOP & COOKIE EXCHANGE

December 4, 2013



Get a running start on the holidays by participating in this fun day. Learn to make your own beautiful works of art in the form of a reusable gift box. Follow the Friends into the art of “green” gift giving - a box that goes on the shelf not in the trash, filled with an edible gift that delights your friends and family. Participants will also share in a holiday cookie exchange, where some of Virginia Robinson's favorite cookies will be included in the selection to take home in the box you created.

“HEARST RANCH: FAMILY, LAND, AND LEGACY”

by Victoria Kastner

January, 2014



We are delighted to have Victoria Kastner return to Robinson Gardens. Always engaging and insightful, Victoria will share new tales of the Hearst family, of the talented architect Julia Morgan and her staff, of the many colorful ranch employees, and of the countless Hollywood movie stars who joined Hearst and Marion Davies as they “roughed it” on the ranch. The book presents an exclusive behind-the-scenes tour of the stunningly beautiful 82,000-acre cattle ranch surrounding William Randolph Hearst's legendary Hearst Castle. Much of this spectacular landscape is still privately owned. Throughout this volume, the Hearst Ranch and its many century-old ranch buildings and residences will be seen for the first time.



Message from the County

TIM LINDSAY — SUPERINTENDENT OF ROBINSON GARDENS

A PAGE IN HISTORY

By Timothy L. Lindsay

Time marches on, people and places change, and so does the world! Conversely, in the business of historic preservation, we are the stewards of a particular time in history. In the case of Virginia Robinson Gardens, we are interpreting a page in history dated August 5, 1977. That is when Virginia passed away peacefully in the familiar surroundings of her own home. She left her residence and garden as a legacy to the public, providing physical evidence of her family's deep love of plants, and their passion for people and animals. Operating the gardens today, we have the pleasure of watching visitors react to this page in history, and more than words can say, the gardens and home of the Robinson's provides them a visual portal into an era gone by as represented by Harry and Virginia Robinson.



The Main House is filled with 19th and 20th century artifacts, collected by Harry and Virginia as they traveled the world in the name of Robinson's Department Store, searching for new sources of quality dry goods and establishing highly confidential trade routes to the West Coast. The artifacts are arranged and maintained as they were found at the time of Virginia's passing. Hence, the type of museum we technically manage is called "As Found," the term she used in her Last Will and Testament.



However, as a true gardener, Virginia embraced change in her garden. She specifically stated in her will, "The gardens are to be used for the testing of plants and the betterment of horticultural science." While we strictly maintain the identity of the extant decorative gardens on the property: the Palm Forest, Italian Terrace Garden, Rose Garden and the Kitchen Garden, we do have the prerogative to introduce new plants that compliment each setting. Above all the woody plants are sacred to us, especially the trees planted by the Robinson's. In fact, we have a program to propagate new trees from their cuttings, to protect the genotype and have plants in reserve, to replace the originals once they die. Most of the present trees are 75 to 100 years old, and each has a story. For instance, we



One of two Cycads
planted by the Robinsons

know the Robinson's allowed gardeners from Los Angeles City to harvest cuttings from the orange flowering coral tree. Once rooted, they were planted where they remain today, in the median of West San Vicente Boulevard. One other sweet story, of the dozens that our docents tell visitors, is Mrs. Robinson's naming the white flowering camellia in her garden "Coco Chanel", in honor of her dear friend. And as a patron of Chanel, Virginia wore the real camellia pinned to her dress, instead of the silk version provided by the designer.



Propagules from the Cycad

In addition to preserving the physicality of the property, we are equally committed to preserving the essence of its spirit, that of the family and people who spent six decades making it a home. This was accomplished in a substantial way when we published, **The House and Gardens of Virginia & Harry Robinson** (2011). It is done daily by our docents who are trained to interpret the property and give insight into the family history with every public tour they led. Now, thanks to the County of Los Angeles, Friends of Robinson Gardens and the community, the estate's history continues.

Pool Pavilion Restoration Project Completed



After becoming chairman of the Board of J.W. Robinson Department Stores, Harry Robinson built the Pool Pavilion in 1925. As intended, it became the architectural jewel of the property. It was modeled after the Baroque style, *Villa Pisani* located in Stra, Italy. The Robinsons loved to entertain friends in the Pavilion's billiard room, solarium or card room, so they commonly referred to it as their "playhouse." Virginia's second story Pompeian decorated card room and secluded roof top terrace, only accessible by a narrow spiral staircase, was her favorite place for playing bridge with Charles Boyer, Maurice Chevalier, Lillian Disney, Agnes Moorehead and Fred Astaire. If spending the night, guests settled into one of the two guest bedrooms, each with a kitchenette. Staff was assigned to the Pool House to tend to their guests needs.

In 1977, when the estate was opened to the public a number of changes in the Pavilion were required. The guest bathrooms were made accessible from the outside of the building, and the guest bedroom furniture was stored in the basement. Each room took on a new use, one for storage of tour materials and educational equipment and the other for caterers to set up for luncheons that follow educational programs. In historic preservation terminology, this is known as "adaptive reuse."

Due to the increased demand for educational programming at Virginia Robinson Gardens, curriculum has expanded to include

botanical illustration, gardening, floral design, and lectures on the history of decorative arts, particularly related to the many artifacts in the Robinson collection. Over the last few years, the need to increase the functionality of the pool pavilion space became critical. It was time to engage a professional to help us with the design, while addressing the esthetics in a historically sensitive manor. After fundraising for this effort, the Friends sought the advice of **Cynthia Carlson of DCM Designs** and **Catherine Fellowes**, two enormously talented design professionals, who generously donated their time and talent toward this transformation. Plans were drawn up and approved, and various contractors went to work on this four-month project. Today the former guest rooms serve as a fully functional catering "Prep Kitchen" and as an office for committee meetings which will also be used as a small gift shop.

Please see these latest improvements on your next visit to the Pool Pavilion. The "adaptive reuse" of these two rooms would undoubtedly have met with the Robinson's approval and will better serve the public attending classes at Robinson Gardens. An additional "thank you" goes to the skilled tradesmen who worked tirelessly in meeting deadlines, while maintaining attention to detail. We also wish to express our gratitude to everyone who made financial contributions to help make this project a reality.

Ellen Levitt, Restoration Chairman