



**BARD COLLEGE AND THE GARDEN CONSERVANCY  
JOIN FORCES TO REHABILITATE HISTORIC BLITHEWOOD GARDEN  
A Beaux Arts gem in a grand setting**

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ANNANDALE-ON-HUDSON and GARRISON, NY – October 16, 2016 – Bard College and the Garden Conservancy, a national nonprofit organization dedicated to saving and sharing outstanding American gardens, have signed an agreement to work together on the rehabilitation of Blithewood Garden on the college campus in Annandale-on-Hudson, New York. They will partner to address desperately needed repairs to the historic garden’s structures and hardscape.

Amy Parrella, horticulture supervisor at Bard College, notes that “Blithewood Garden is a very special place on the campus and in the Hudson Valley. We hope that by working together we can restore the garden so that it continues to inspire visitors for centuries to come.”

Susan Lowry, chair of the Garden Conservancy’s Preservation Committee and co-author of *Gardens of the Hudson Valley* (Monacelli Press, 2010), describes Blithewood Garden as “an intricately wrought Italianate garden, intimate rather than grand. It complements the magnificent surroundings and represents an important moment in the history of American gardening in the Hudson Valley.”

The first steps of the partnership will be to identify goals and strategies for the rehabilitation of the garden, develop a roadmap for achieving the goals, and create a “Friends of Blithewood” subcommittee of the existing Friends of Bard Landscape and Arboretum to steer the project forward by raising both visibility and funds and advocating on its behalf. The Garden Conservancy will advise on appropriate treatments for the historic garden, including repair of the garden’s masonry and structural elements. Once a plan is set, the team will identify contractors for the work, establish a timetable, and address funding.

**Blithewood Garden: a Beaux Arts gem in a grand setting**

An early twentieth-century Beaux Arts masterpiece overlooking the Hudson River, Blithewood Garden is a formal Italianate walled garden constructed in 1903 for Captain Andrew Zabriskie to accompany his Georgian-style mansion of the same name. The garden’s intimate scale (15,000 square feet) creates a peaceful, green space overlooking an awe-inspiring panorama of the Catskill Mountains and the Hudson River. The garden is strongly architectural, with paths on geometric axes, symmetrical beds, a central

water feature, statuary, and marble ornaments. A copper-roofed gazebo flanked by two wisteria-covered pergolas frames the majestic river view.

The garden was designed by Francis Hoppin, an architect trained at MIT and the *École des Beaux Arts* in Paris. He also designed The Mount, Edith Wharton's summer house in Lenox, Massachusetts, in 1902.

Historically, the garden had an evergreen edging around the fountain basin; an early postcard of the garden also shows plantings of roses, iris, wisteria, and peonies. Today's plantings are inspired by its historic palette, but include some contemporary plant choices as well. While the garden's structural elements are crumbling, the garden beds are well-maintained by Bard College staff.

### **A rich cultural history**

Blithewood Garden and the Bard College campus as a whole have significant connections to the heritage of the Hudson Valley region and the evolution of American landscape design. Acquired from local native Americans by Pieter Schuyler in 1680, the property was sold to Robert Donaldson circa 1835, who commissioned the preeminent landscape gardener of the day, Andrew Jackson Downing, to design the grounds. Downing's design for what is now the campus of Bard College is an excellent example of a Picturesque landscape. The Gothic and Romantic styles of architecture and landscape design of Downing's era were updated at the turn of the twentieth century by Captain Andrew Zabriskie, who commissioned Hoppin to redesign the garden according to the tastes and trends of the Gilded Age. The Georgian manor house and Italianate garden that we see today are considered outstanding examples of the Country Place Era residences of the Hudson Valley's social and political elite.

The site of many significant events in early American history, the Hudson River Valley has also been the inspiration for uniquely American forms of art and literature which helped shape our national identity—a role acknowledged by Congress when it established the Hudson River Valley National Heritage Area in 1996.

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Founded in 1860, **Bard College** is a four-year residential college of the liberal arts and sciences located 90 miles north of New York City. With the addition of the Montgomery Place estate, Bard's campus consists of nearly 1,000 park-like acres in the Hudson River Valley. It offers bachelor of arts, bachelor of science, and bachelor of music degrees, with concentrations in more than 40 academic programs; graduate degrees in 11 programs; 9 early colleges; and numerous dual-degree programs nationally and internationally. Building on its 156-year history as a competitive and innovative undergraduate institution, Bard College has expanded its mission as a private institution acting in the public interest across the country and around the world to meet broader student needs and increase access to the liberal arts education. Bard is committed to enriching culture, public life, and democratic discourse by training tomorrow's thought leaders. For more information about Bard College, visit [www.bard.edu](http://www.bard.edu).

**The Garden Conservancy**, established by noted plantsman Frank Cabot in 1989, is a national nonprofit organization whose mission is to save and share outstanding American gardens for the education and inspiration of the public. The Conservancy partners with garden owners and with public and private organizations to help secure a garden's future. It further fosters appreciation of the important role gardens play in America's cultural and natural heritage through its national Open Days garden-visiting program and through educational programs and garden-study tours. [www.gardenconservancy.org](http://www.gardenconservancy.org)

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