



Rosa 'The Fairy'



Allium aflatunense 'Purple Sensation'



Rosa 'Claire Austin' (Ausprior)



Lavandula angustifolia 'Munstead'

Photos: Emily Hart

BLITHEWOOD GARDEN: A RICH CULTURAL HISTORY

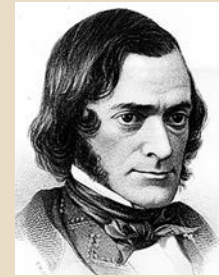
Blithewood is an important Hudson River estate, renowned for the beauty of its setting and the significance of its architectural and natural history. It is situated atop a steeply sloping bluff overlooking the river, which the original Native residents of the region called Mahicantuck, or “great waters in constant motion.” In 1609, English venturer Henry Hudson anchored off a small island near the Blithewood shoreline and named the area Red Hook, possibly inspired by the autumnal colors of the sumac and Virginia creeper growing there. The estate itself began to gain national attention in the mid-19th century as many influential designers, horticulturalists, and forward-thinking owners came together to innovate, inspire, and build. Their work contributed to the development of a uniquely American architectural style and new concepts in landscape design.



Alexander Jackson Davis

Blithewood, part of Bard College since 1951, is a contributing property in the Hudson River National Historic Landmark District. The estate was influential in the American Picturesque movement in architecture (1840–80), as it was one of the earliest to emphasize the site's natural beauty through the practice of ornamental horticulture. Blithewood and its grounds garnered national interest thanks to the prominence of the original designers: Alexander Jackson Davis, one of the leading architects of his time; owner Robert Donaldson, a patron of the arts

and frequent Davis collaborator, who bought Blithewood in 1835; and landscape designer Andrew Jackson Downing, who featured the home as the frontispiece to his 1841 book, *A Treatise on the Theory and Practice of Landscape Gardening*. For Downing, Blithewood fully embodied the unity of man-made design and nature.



Andrew Jackson Downing

While the architecture at Blithewood changed with the times, the underlying principle of the Rural Gothic, with its deliberate magnification of the tension between architecture and nature, remained. The Donaldson home, a renovation of an existing Federalist structure, introduced the bracketed architectural style in the United States. Another building formerly on the property, Gardener's Lodge, is considered the first American-style Gothic cottage (a style famously depicted in Grant Wood's *American Gothic*). Of the structures designed for Blithewood by Davis and Downing (who were also instrumental in the design of Montgomery Place, an adjacent estate acquired by Bard in 2016), only a hexagonal brick gatehouse still stands.

The grand mansion and Italianate garden you see today date from the early 20th century; both were designed for Captain Andrew C. and Frances Zabriskie by architect Francis L. V. Hoppin, who also designed The Mount, Edith Wharton's home in the Berkshires.

The history of the Blithewood estate is of interest beyond its architectural significance. The land was originally home to Algonquian-speaking Native Americans, who had inhabited the Hudson Valley region for more than a thousand years before colonial settlement. In 1680, Pieter Schuyler, the first mayor of Albany, was given rights to a tract of land that included the Blithewood site. Eight years later, he was issued a Crown Patent for 22,400 acres (slightly larger than the Town of Red Hook, including the village of Tivoli) under a land-grant system that eventually took much of the state from the Native people. In 1795, John Armstrong Jr. and his wife, Alida Livingston, purchased the property. Armstrong later served as a US senator, minister to France, and secretary of war during the War of 1812 before retiring as a gentleman farmer. In 1841, Donaldson and his neighbor, Louise Livingston of Montgomery Place, entered into an agreement to purchase the Saw Kill ravine and preserve its beauty, vowing never to develop it for industrial use—thus creating one of the first conservation covenants in the United States.

The Mansion

The majestic Beaux-Arts mansion, which today houses the Levy Economics Institute of Bard College, was built in 1899. Robert and Susan Donaldson had named the place Blithewood in 1835, but it was changed to Annandale when the estate was bought in 1853 by John and Margaret Bard, founders of St. Stephen's College (later renamed Bard in their honor). The Zabriskies reverted to the

original name, “blithe” meaning happy. The 30-room manor house is approximately 9,000 square feet and made from brick and stucco. In his design for Blithewood, Hoppin incorporated characteristics of 17th- and 18th-century English mansions along with the latest technology. Heating, lighting, and servants' quarters were given as much thought as pediments and moldings. The unusual siting of the house reflects Captain Zabriskie's preference for a southerly exposure rather than a view of the Hudson River to the west. After Zabriskie's death in 1916, his widow maintained the estate, taking an active part in the development of the gardens and grounds. Upon her death in 1951, the Zabriskies' son, Christian, donated Blithewood, by then an 865-acre estate, to Bard College. The manor was named Zabriskie Hall and used primarily as a women's dormitory and nursery school until 1987, when it was renovated and transferred to the Levy Economics Institute.

The renovation of the mansion was an effort to preserve the building and adapt it for academic use while maintaining its character and original detail. Working closely with the Levy Institute, the firm of James Stewart Polshek, Architect (noted for its critically acclaimed restoration of Carnegie Hall) was able to put in office space, a large meeting room, an elevator, new mechanical systems, and other modern amenities while sacrificing almost none of the building's grand formal elements. Conferences, art exhibitions, and musicales are held there.

Annandale-on-Hudson, New York
Bard College
BLITHEWOOD GARDEN



Photos: ©Peter Avron '88; Estefron; Pamela Governale



Photo: Pete Mauney '93, MFA '00

The Garden and Grounds

The present-day landscape of the Mid-Hudson Valley is, in large part, the result of major advances and retreats of glacial ice. When the last glaciers receded at the end of the Pleistocene period, about 12,000 years ago, the region was left with great folds of bedrock, a gouged bed for the Hudson River, and tundra vegetation that changed to deciduous forests as the climate warmed. These changes in the landscape allowed for intermittent prehistoric settlement on the Blithewood site.

Today, the property's horticultural assets include landscape artifacts from previous owners, including historic specimen trees, the great lawn, and Blithewood Garden, a classic example of a walled Italianate garden. The garden was designed around 1903 by architect Francis L. V. Hoppin to act as an extension of the mansion so that both, as Hoppin noted in an interview, “are properly parts of a single design ... rather than afterthoughts.” In keeping with the opulence of the Gilded Age, the garden includes stately terraces, statuary, and symmetrical plantings, all set against the spectacular backdrop of the Hudson River and Catskill Mountains.

A quintessentially architectural garden, Blithewood features a flat ground plane, paths on geometric axes, proportioned beds, a central water fountain, marble ornaments, and walls that form an enclosure, creating a green “room” that Hoppin hoped would provide a sense of solitude for the owners. The main axis of the rectangular garden and

its terraces terminates at a pavilion overlooking the Hudson. The copper-roofed structure is flanked by wisteria-covered pergolas.

The garden has 18 plots on either side of the central walkway, with shapes that vary from triangular and L-shaped to square and rectangular. A 1905 garden plan shows numerous shrubs, uniform and evenly spaced, lining the walk from the house and within the walled garden—encircling statuary at its path crossings, centered in garden beds, and edging the fountain basin. Frances Zabriskie, an avid horticulturalist, would have included clipped evergreens, tree peonies, tulips, irises, hyacinths, gladioli, daffodils, phlox, delphiniums, lavender, forget-me-nots, ivy, butterfly bush, rhododendrons, lilacs, wisteria, and rugosa and climbing roses, as well as maintained turf. Some of the original plants remain, but many have been replanted in a more contemporary interpretation of the historical garden design. Ornamental grasses, flowering shrubs, and naturalistic plantings help soften the garden's formal and geometrically shaped beds.

Blithewood's lawn and woodlands also contain remnants of vegetation that date from the original estate. A former New York State Champion red maple, known as the “All Saints” maple, still stands on the north lawn. Twin black locusts on the south lawn are approximately 300 years old. Along the woodland edges, significant ground covers of periwinkle and pachysandra and large forsythia may represent plantings from the 19th and early 20th centuries.

Blithewood Timeline

- 1688 Pieter Schuyler receives a Crown Patent for 22,400 acres, an area slightly larger than the Town of Red Hook. New York's patent system, which granted large tracts of land to prominent individuals and groups, eventually took much of the state from the Native people.
- 1725 Barent Van Benthuyzen and his children become owners of more than half of Schuyler's patent, including Blithewood.
- 1795 John Armstrong Jr. and his wife, Alida Livingston, purchase the property and name it Mill Hill. They convert a barn into a 50-by-50-foot Federal-style home and lay out the estate's avenue and grounds.
- 1801 John and Mary Johnstone Allen purchase the property from the Armstrongs, renaming it Annandale after Mary's ancestral home in Scotland.
- 1810 John C. Stevens purchases the property from the estate of John Allen.
- 1833 John Cruger acquires the property.
- 1835 Robert Donaldson and his wife, Susan Jane Gaston, purchase land from John Cruger and name the estate Blithewood, or “happy wood.”
- 1836 Alexander Jackson Davis redesigns the Donaldson house and collaborates with Andrew Jackson Downing, who landscapes the grounds in the Romantic style.
- 1853 John and Margaret Bard purchase Blithewood, again calling it Annandale.
- 1899–1903 Captain Andrew C. and Frances Hunter Zabriskie purchase the estate, return the name to Blithewood, and replace the Donaldson home with a neoclassical mansion and garden designed by Francis L. V. Hoppin.
- 1934 St. Stephen's College is renamed Bard College.
- 1951 Christian Zabriskie donates Blithewood to Bard.
- 1987 Blithewood becomes the home of the Levy Economics Institute.
- 1990 The US Secretary of the Interior includes Blithewood in the Hudson River National Historic Landmark District.



View of the Blithewood grounds in A. J. Downing's *Treatise on the Theory and Practice of Landscape Gardening*, 1841. Courtesy of the Hudson River Valley Institute.

Visiting Blithewood

The garden and grounds are open to the public from sunrise to sunset, unless otherwise posted.

For the safety and enjoyment of all visitors:

- Carry out everything that you carry in.
- Be aware that ticks found in this area may carry Lyme disease or other tick-borne diseases
- Drone operators must have prior approval from the Bard Office of Safety and Security.
- Professional photographers must obtain a signed release from Bard College.

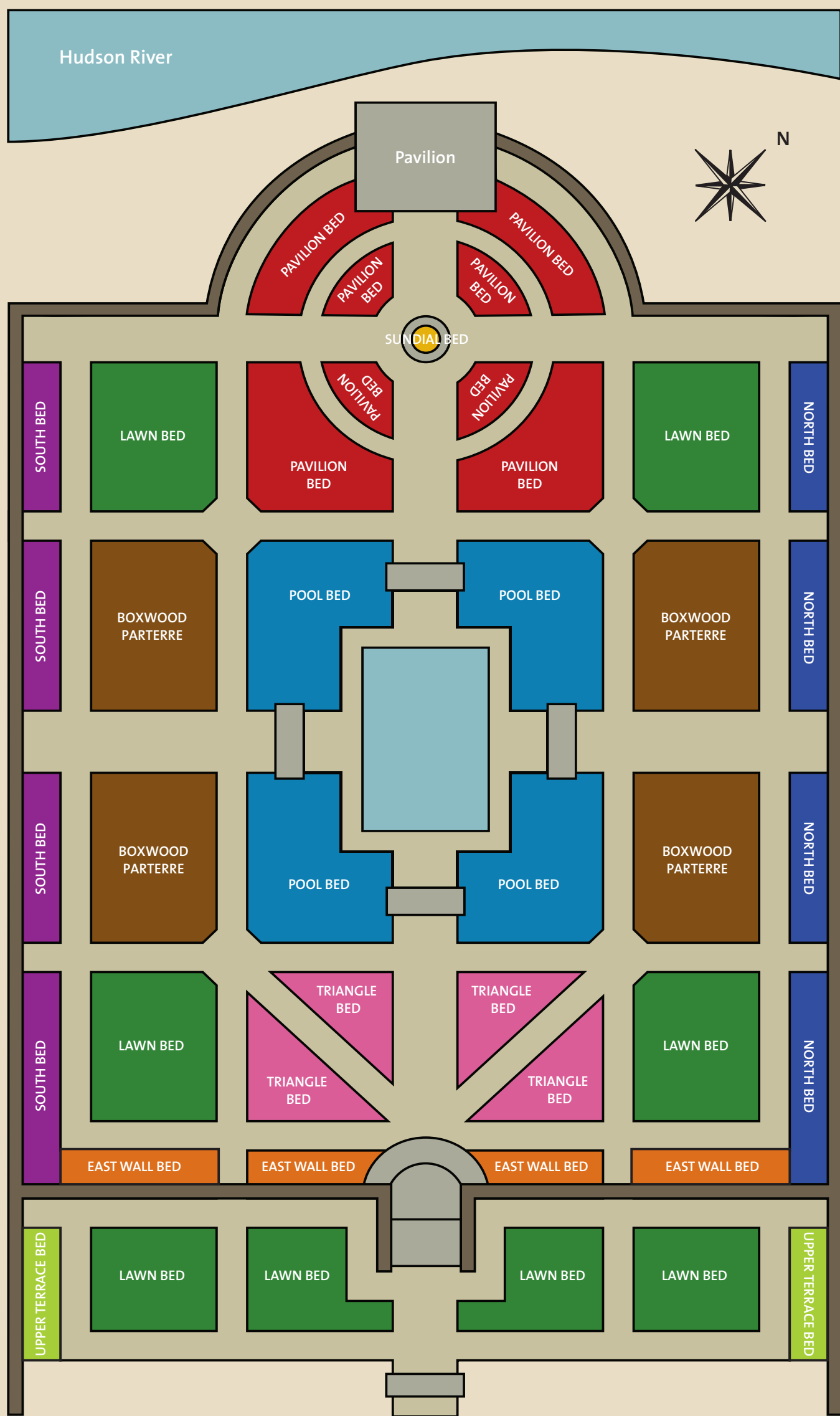
The following are prohibited:

- Pets
- Glass containers
- Picking flowers
- Climbing trees, walls, or garden structures
- Swimming or bathing
- Alcohol and illegal drugs
- Vandalism (violators will be fined)
- Firearms or other weapons, including projectile-firing devices

Thank you for your cooperation.

NOTICE: The premises are under surveillance. Please notify Bard Security about any concerns or hazardous conditions at 845-758-7460.

For information on guided group tours, visit bard.edu/arboretum/visit.



BOXWOOD PARTERRES

Camass, *Camassia leichtlinii* subsp. *suksdorfii* 'Blue Danube'
Fountain Grass, *Pennisetum alopecuroides* 'Hameln'
Korean Boxwood, *Buxus sinica* var. *insularis* 'Wintergreen'

EAST WALL BEDS

American Wisteria, *Wisteria frutescens*
Black Cohosh, *Actea racemosa*
Bugbane, *Actaea simplex* 'Brunette'
Butterfly Weed, *Asclepias tuberosa*
Common Lilac, *Syringa vulgaris*
Coneflower, *Echinacea* 'Aloha'
Coneflower, *Echinacea* 'Hot Papaya'
Coral Bells (Alumroot), *Heuchera* 'Plum Pudding'
False Indigo, *Baptisia* 'Pink Lemonade'
Giant Hyssop, *Agastache* 'Blue Fortune'
Grape Hyacinth, *Muscari armeniacum*
Hyacinth, *Hyacinthus orientalis* 'Carnegie' and *Hyacinthus orientalis* 'Fairy White'
Japanese Pachysandra, *Pachysandra terminalis*
Korean Spice Viburnum, *Viburnum carlesii*
Meadow Clary Sage, *Salvia pratensis* 'Rose Rhapsody'
Obedient Plant, *Physostegia virginiana* 'Miss Manners'
Obedient Plant, *Physostegia virginiana* 'Pink Manners'
Pink Turtlehead, *Chelone lyonii* 'Hot Lips'
Purple Coneflower, *Echinacea purpurea* 'Merlot'
Purple Coneflower, *Echinacea purpurea* 'Rubinstern'
Silver Butterfly Bush, *Buddleja alternifolia* 'Argentea'
Swamp Milkweed, *Asclepias incarnata* 'Cinderella'
Sweet Pepperbush, *Clethra alnifolia* 'Ruby Spice'
White Butterfly Bush, *Buddleja davidii* 'White Profusion'
Wild Ginger, *Asarum canadense*

LAWN BEDS

Apple Mint, *Mentha suaveolens*
Chinese Wisteria, *Wisteria sinensis*

NORTH BEDS

Adam's Needle, *Yucca filamentosa*
Carnation, *Dianthus caryophyllus*
Chinese Peony, *Paeonia lactiflora* 'Krinkled White'
Clematis, *Clematis* 'Etoile Violette'
Climbing Rose, *Rosa* 'New Dawn' and *Rosa* 'William Baffin'
Common Lilac, *Syringa vulgaris*
Formosa Lily, *Lilium formosanum*
Giant Ornamental Onion, *Allium giganteum*
Gold Band Lily, *Lilium auratum* 'Gold Band'
Golden Hop, *Humulus lupulus* 'Aureus'
Irish Juniper, *Juniperus communis* 'Hibernica'
Martagon Lily, *Lilium martagon* 'Sunny Morning'
Oneleaf Onion (American Garlic), *Allium unifolium*
Oriental Lily, *Lilium* 'Casa Blanca' and *Lilium* 'Muscadet'
Peony, *Paeonia officinalis*
Periwinkle, *Vinca minor*
Snakeroot, *Eupatorium rugosum* 'Chocolate'
Sweet Autumn Clematis, *Clematis paniculata*
Sweet Pea, *Lathyrus odoratus*

PAVILION BEDS

Baby's Breath, *Gypsophila paniculata*
Bearded Iris, *Iris germanica*
Bluebeard, *Caryopteris x clandonensis* 'Dark Knight'
Camass, *Camassia leichtlinii* subsp. *suksdorfii* 'Blue Danube'
Colewort (Giant Sea Kale), *Crambe cordifolia*

English Rose, *Rosa* 'Claire Austin' (Ausprior)
False Indigo, *Baptisia sphaerocarpa* x *alba* 'Carolina Moonlight'
Forget-Me-Not, *Myosotis sylvatica*
Lady's Mantle, *Alchemilla mollis*
Mary Shrub Rose, *Rosa* 'Ausmary'
Meadow Sage, *Salvia pratensis* 'Swan Lake'
Oneleaf Onion (American Garlic), *Allium unifolium*
Oriental Poppy, *Papaver orientale*
Ornamental Onion, *Allium aflatanense* 'Purple Sensation'
Panicle Hydrangea, *Hydrangea paniculata* 'Tardiva'
Pink Frosting Hyacinth, *Hyacinth orientalis* 'Fondant'
Pink Knock Out Rose, *Rosa* 'Radcon'
Rugosa Rose, *Rosa rugosa* 'Pierette Pavement'
Serbian Bellflower, *Campanula poscharskyana* 'Blue Waterfalls'
Siberian Bugloss, *Brunnera macrophylla*
Snow-in-Summer, *Cerastium tomentosum*
Speedwell, *Veronica peduncularis* 'Waterperry Blue'
Tree Peony, *Paeonia suffruticosa* and *Paeonia suffruticosa* 'White'

POOL BEDS

Aromatic Aster, *Symphyotrichum oblongifolium* 'Raydon's Favorite'
Asiatic Lily, *Lilium* 'Butter Pixie,' *Lilium* 'Cancun,' *Lilium* 'Crimson Pixie,' and *Lilium* 'Navona'
Autumn Joy Stonecrop, *Sedum spectabile* 'Autumn Joy'
Balloon Flower, *Platycodon grandiflorus* 'Mariesii'
Bear's Breeches, *Acanthus hungaricus*
Bee Balm, *Monarda* 'Marshall's Delight'
Blazing Star, *Liatriis spicata*
Bloody Cranesbill, *Geranium sanguineum* var. *striatum*
Blue False Indigo, *Baptisia australis*
Boltonia (False Aster), *Boltonia asteroides* var. *latisquama*
Calamint, *Calamintha nepeta* subsp. *nepeta*
Camass, *Camassia quamash* 'Orion'
Candytuft, *Iberis sempervirens*
Carol Mackie Daphne, *Daphne x burkwoodii* 'Carol Mackie'
Catmint, *Nepeta* spp.
Catmint, *Nepeta x faassenii* 'Dropmore'
Chrysanthemum, *Chrysanthemum rubellum* 'Clara Curtis'
Colewort (Giant Sea Kale), *Crambe cordifolia*
Columbine, *Aquilegia canadensis*
Coneflower, *Echinacea purpurea* and *Echinacea purpurea* 'White Swan'
Cranesbill, *Geranium* 'Brookside'
Culver's Root, *Veronicastrum virginianum* 'Albo-rosea'
Cushion Spurge, *Euphorbia polychroma*
Garden Phlox, *Phlox paniculata* 'Bright Eyes'
Gas Plant (Dittany), *Dictamnus albus*
Giant Pincushion Flower, *Cephalaria gigantea*
Grape-Leaf Anemone, *Anemone tomentosa* 'Robustissima'
Green Mound Boxwood, *Buxus microphylla* var. *japonica* 'Green Mound'
Hairy Loosetrife, *Lysimachia alata* 'Fireworks'
Hoop Petticoat Daffodil, *Narcissus bulbocodium conspicuosus*
Japanese Anemone, *Anemone x hybrida* 'Honorine Jobert'
Japanese White Iris, *Iris sibirica* 'Snow Queen'
Lamb's Ears, *Stachys byzantina*
Large-Cupped Daffodil, *Narcissus* 'Professor Einstein'
Leichtlin's Lily, *Lilium leichtlinii*
Lilac Sage, *Salvia verticillata* 'Purple Rain'
Madonna Lily, *Lilium candidum*
Mallow, *Malva alcea* var. *fastigiata*
Musk Mallow, *Malva moschata* f. *alba*
Newport Blue Boxwood, *Buxus sempervirens* 'Newport Blue'
Obedient Plant, *Physostegia virginiana* 'Vivid'
Nettle-Leaved Mullein, *Verbascum chaixii* 'Album'
Patrinia, *Patrinia scabiosifolia*
Pink Diamond Tulip, *Tulipa* 'Pink Diamond'

Red Hot Poker, *Kniphofia pyromania* 'Backdraft'
Rose Campion, *Lychnis coronaria* 'Alba'
Round-Headed Leek, *Allium sphaerocephalum*
Russian Sage, *Perovskia atriplicifolia*
Sea Lavender (Statice), *Limonium latifolium*
Shasta Daisy, *Leucanthemum x superbum* 'Alaska'
Smooth Phlox, *Phlox glaberrima*
Speedwell, *Veronica spicata* 'Goodness Grows'
Spiderwort, *Tradescantia* 'Zwanenburg Blue'
Spiked Speedwell, *Veronica spicata* 'Royal Candles' and *Veronica spicata* 'Minuet'
Summer Ice Daphne, *Daphne x transatlantica* 'Summer Ice'
Tatarian Aster, *Aster tataricus*
Variegated Iris, *Iris pallida* 'Variegata'
White Ornamental Onion, *Allium giganteum* 'Alba'
Yarrow, *Achillea clypeolata* x A. 'Taygetea'
Yellow Flag Iris, *Iris pseudacorus*
Yellow Loosetrife, *Lysimachia punctata*

SOUTH BEDS

Bigleaf Hydrangea, *Hydrangea macrophylla* 'Blue Bird'
Black Cohosh, *Actea racemosa*
Climbing Hydrangea, *Hydrangea anomala* subsp. *petiolaris*
Common Lilac, *Syringa vulgaris* and *Syringa vulgaris* 'Monge'
Cranesbill, *Geranium macrorrhizum* 'Ingwersen's Variety'
Dutchman's Pipe, *Aristolochia macrophylla*
Hosta, *Hosta plantaginea*
Japanese Hydrangea Vine, *Schizopragma hydrangeoides* 'Roseum'
Japanese Pachysandra, *Pachysandra terminalis*
Manchurian Lilac, *Syringa pubescens* subsp. *patula* 'Miss Kim'
Rodgersia, *Rodgersia aesculifolia*
Shieldleaf Rodgersia, *Astilboides tabularis*
Smooth Hydrangea, *Hydrangea arborescens* 'Annabelle'
Vera Verde Hosta, *Hosta* 'Vera Verde'

SUNDIAL BED

Creeping Jenny, *Lysimachia nummularia* 'Aurea'
Japanese Boxwood, *Buxus microphylla* var. *japonica*
Woolly Thyme, *Thymus lanuginosus*

TRIANGLE BEDS

Blue Point Juniper, *Juniperus chinensis* 'Blue Point'
Cyclamineus Daffodil, *Narcissus* 'Winter Waltz'
English Lavender, *Lavandula angustifolia* 'Munstead'
Grape Hyacinth, *Muscari armeniacum*
Hyacinth, *Hyacinthus orientalis* 'Blue Jacket'
Lavender, *Lavandula x intermedia* 'Provence'

UPPER TERRACE BEDS

Hosta, *Hosta* sp.
Hyacinth, *Hyacinthus orientalis* 'Blue Jacket'
Lily of the Valley, *Convallaria majalis*
Peony, *Paeonia officinalis*

THROUGHOUT THE GARDEN

Long-Spurred Violet, *Viola rostrata*
Wild Petunia, *Ruellia humilis*

Note: Plant list as of fall 2023. Plants are subject to change. For an up-to-date plant list, contact horticulture@bard.edu or call 845-758-7179.

Help Save Blithewood

Blithewood Garden, located in the heart of the Hudson River National Historic Landmark District, is a nationally significant Beaux-Arts gem. Blithewood represents an important milestone in the American Picturesque movement, but the garden, built in 1903, shows its age more with each passing year. Weather and water have taken a toll on the garden's infrastructure, from frost cracks in the masonry and shifting marble steps to the rotting bases of the pavilion's wooden columns. In November 2016, the Friends of the Landscape and Arboretum Program at Bard joined forces with the Garden Conservancy, a national not-for-profit dedicated to saving and sharing American gardens, to develop an action plan for Blithewood Garden. We are working together to raise funds to rehabilitate and save this beautiful and well-loved Hudson Valley landmark.



FRIENDS OF BLITHEWOOD GARDEN

Scroll through more than 100 years of garden history at Blithewood Garden: [Structured Beauty](https://omekalib.bard.edu/exhibits/show/blithewoodgarden/), an online exhibition at omekalib.bard.edu/exhibits/show/blithewoodgarden/ blithewood-at-bard.

Become a Friend of Blithewood Garden

The Friends of Blithewood Garden is a volunteer working group whose mission is to rehabilitate and preserve Blithewood Garden for public education and enjoyment. Toward that end, we are addressing repairs to the garden's architectural elements, such as the pavilion, pergolas, terra-cotta balustrades, and stucco walls. Our goal is to cover the cost of repairs and endow the garden for the future. Please join us and donate today to help keep Blithewood beautiful for another 100 years!

JOIN US TODAY!

To join Friends of Blithewood Garden, visit bardian.bard.edu/register/blithewood.

For more information, email us at arboretum@bard.edu or call 845-758-7179.

Special thanks to Bessina Harrar '84 and Helene Tieger '85
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Indigenous Land Acknowledgment

In the spirit of truth and equity, it is with gratitude and humility that we acknowledge that we are gathered on the sacred homelands of the Munsee and Muhheaconneok people, who are the original stewards of the land. Today, due to forced removal, the community resides in Northeast Wisconsin and is known as the Stockbridge-Munsee Community. We honor and pay respect to their ancestors past and present, as well as to future generations, and we recognize their continuing presence in their homelands. We understand that our acknowledgment requires those of us who are settlers to recognize our own place in and responsibilities toward addressing inequity, and that this ongoing and challenging work requires that we commit to real engagement with the Munsee and Mohican communities to build an inclusive and equitable space for all.