COMMENTS FROM THE EDITOR

This editor certainly hopes that everyone had a wonderful Thanksgiving with family and many friends. The summer quickly flew by and fall shown its glory with many autumn bloomers coming through to show us that winter is on its way. Harvest season is wrapping up, but that doesn’t mean a gardener's work is done. The last tomato has been picked and if the weather has smiled on you, maybe just a few squash remain. For many gardeners across North America, the growing season is over and it's time to put away the trowels and watering cans until next year. But did you know that now is still a good time to hit up your local garden center before the first hard frost and buy perennials on clearance. The stores have tons of sales on perennials that don't look very good, but they don't look very good just because it is the end of the season, not because there is anything wrong with them. If you plant them in the fall and even early winter, they will have the whole fall and winter to acclimate and get rooted. And in the spring they will be bigger. Almost all perennials, including herb, flowers and grass, are likely to be on sale in the fall. This editor calls “Home Depot” his ‘man cave’ and an occasional trip to Walmart will save bunches of money. Yes, all stores are wall to wall with Christmas decorations, however, if you look closely, you’ll find super cheap perennials still in the stores. This editor has found that planting the perennials in their pots, not necessarily where they will find home in the spring, helps the plants to burst forth with beauty when they are planted in just the right place later.

With that said, this editor took a trip, just an hour away, to Smith-Gilbert Gardens recently. This is a very interesting place and is hidden in Northern Georgia at 2382 Pine Mountain Road in Kennesaw, GA. The Gardens are open to the public on Tuesday – Saturday from 9:00 am to 4:00 pm. Closed on Sunday and Monday. Entrance fee is a mere $6 for seniors. So when you have nothing to do, plan a trip to Smith-Gilbert Gardens and enjoy the beauty of the season.

Dr. John Barnett, Landscape Design Editor
In 1880, Hiram Anderson Butler built the home that is the centerpiece of Smith-Gilbert Gardens, just outside of what was then called Big Shanty, now Kennesaw. The house is located on what was originally Cherokee land that was disbursed as Land Lot 178 through the 1832 Land Lottery. According to historical land records, Butler bought 160 acres on January 7, 1880 and began construction of the house, a single-level dwelling with five bedrooms and triple-layer solid brick walls measuring over 12” thick. The bricks are thought to have been fired in nearby Acworth and transported to Kennesaw. The style of the house has both Italianate and Greek Revival influences. The Butler family sold the house in 1913 and the property subsequently passed through six more private owners before being acquired in 2005 by the City of Kennesaw. Over time, parcels of the land were sold off, and the existing property now encompasses 13 acres. The property was added to the National Register of Historic Places in 1995. Prior to being acquired by the City of Kennesaw, the estate was owned by Robert R. Gilbert who purchased the property in 1970. During 35 years of ownership, Gilbert and Richard L. Smith added the extensive gardens and sculpture collection. Of note, Hiram Butler had an interesting past. During the Civil War, Butler played a role in the Great Locomotive Chase as he helped track down the Union raiders led by James Andrews that stole The General locomotive and attempted to destroy rail lines heading north to Chattanooga. Having received the rank of major for his service in the Confederacy, Butler worked for Western & Atlantic Railway, which ultimately became the Nashville, Chattanooga & St. Louis Railway. Western & Atlantic was the state of Georgia’s first chartered railroad.

Hiram Butler House - The beautiful home that graces Smith-Gilbert Gardens dates back to 1880 when railroad man, Hiram A. Butler, a longtime resident of Big Shanty (now known as Kennesaw), built the home based on Italianate and Greek Revival influences. Prior to being acquired by the City of Kennesaw, the estate was owned by Robert R. Gilbert who purchased the home in 1970. During 35 years of ownership, Gilbert and Richard L. Smith added the extensive gardens and sculpture collection. The home was added to the National Register of Historic Places in 1995. Seeing the variety of birds on the property, Gilbert and Smith began adding plantings to provide both protection and food for their new avian interest. These elements are particularly evidenced at the back of the home where bird feeding continues today. The “Ts-ung Tube XXII” sculpture by Jon Hudson provides bathing and drinking water for these colorful creatures. On your way to the Perennial Garden, note the “Magnolia Gate” and “Mushrooms” pieces, both crafted by sculptor Davis Wall.

Sculptures

There are at least 30 sculptures along the gardens. Smith-Gilbert Gardens has something for everyone: beautiful gardens, intriguing outdoor sculptures, Bonsai and, of course, the historic Hiram Butler House. Following are photos of some of the sculptures, the name of the sculptor, title and date it was completed.
David Wall
Magnolia Gate & 2 Benches
1980

Tom Suomalainen
Transformation
1990

David Wall
Mushrooms
1980

Walton Isherwood
The Great Oracle,
1998-2000

Grace Knowlton
Untitled
1981

Carl Andre Davidt
Around the Corner
1991

Kenneth Greenleaf
Dead Man
1981

John Payne
Two Indian Figures
1989

Gabriel Halevi
Untitled
1986

Frank Creech
Respite
1980

Howard Taikeff
Bust
1985

Carl Amdre Davidt
Man in the Moon
1981

Edward Chrisman
Untitled
1984

Kenneth Greenleaf
Clary Lake
1989

John Van Alstine
Unda
1995

Kenneth Greenleaf
Antiope
1987
Perennial Garden - The diversity of this horticultural experience had its seeds in the varied interests of Gilbert and Smith. Dr. Gilbert discovered his focus was with trees, shrubs, and other woody plants. Richard Smith enjoyed working with perennials and rock garden plantings. Located at one end of the perennial bed, Tom Suomalainen’s porcelain “Transformation” anchors this lovely herbaceous arrangement that is in constant color from spring into late fall. From daffodils to daylilies, from bearded iris to vivid asters, this perennial garden is a continually changing palette.

Knowlton Meadow - Inviting the visitor into the Woodland Entrance, this open space features two important sculptures. The whimsical painted ball by Grace Knowlton is untitled. “The Great Oracle” by Jon Isherwood is a few feet away from the portal to the mysterious trail leading to more hidden delights.

Conifer Garden - Created in 2002 and recognized by the Southeast American Conifer Society, this area of the Garden features conifers that are suitable for the Southeastern U.S. Most are dwarf or slow growing making them desirable for use in the smaller lots of today’s homes. The signs located by many of the plants give the botanical name and the year in which the plant was installed in the Garden. This gives an interested gardener an idea of form and growth rates for that particular specimen. Fifteen different classifications of daffodils are scattered throughout the Garden as companion plantings. Smith-Gilbert is a proud member of both the American Conifer Society and the American Daffodil Society.

Woodland Walk Entrance - A few feet into this shady area reveals the presence of a Hosta collection donated by the Georgia Hosta Society. Along with many other shade-loving perennials (Hellebores, Epimediums, Jack-in-the-Pulpit), groups of these plantings are scattered throughout the Garden. A short distance past the Hosta collection are “Two Indian Figures” striding through the trees. Constructed by John Payne, they are fanciful representations of how adults might appear to children.
The Mulberry Bowl and Respite Sculpture - Originally imported into this country for the silk trade, Mulberry trees have escaped into the environment and naturalized. Bent by an unknown cause, this particular tree frames a favorite focal point at Smith-Gilbert, “Respite” by Frank Creech.

Japanese Maple Grove - While the Garden has many Japanese Maple specimens scattered throughout the grounds, this section has a wonderful concentration of these smaller growing trees. Impressive for their texture, form, and seasonal color, Smith-Gilbert is home to over 30 varieties of this very popular ornamental. Just a short distance down the path is “Bust” by Howard Taikeff, who engaged a New York City street person as his model. Walking a bit further, one encounters “Clary Lake” by Kenneth Greenleaf. A delightful blend of wood and metal, this piece is one of five at Smith-Gilbert by this sculptor.

Cedar Field and Rose Garden - A handsome Eastern Red Cedar stands as a sentinel in the middle of this grassy expanse, but he is not lonely. Surrounded by lovingly cared for roses, visitors will appreciate their fragrance and beauty from May through late summer. The dates on the signs are the year in which the rose was first hybridized, bred, or found in nature. Like pearls on a necklace, several contemporary sculptures ring the grassy area beyond. Most noteworthy are Ed Chrisman’s piece “Untitled” and “Antiope” by Kenneth Greenleaf. Davidt’s “Man in the Moon” is a colorful period to the statement in this area.

Camellia Garden - Proceeding further on the trail, take the gray slate path to your left and enter our newest addition. Given in memory of the donor’s parents, these camellias are at their best during the fall and winter months. As these plantings mature, this ‘room’ will be an attraction on its own. Cut from a single piece of red granite, Las Mesas Tree by Jesus Bautista Morales is interesting from every view. From one perspective, the rock appears to be vertical.

Garden Birthplace - Heading towards the Carriage House, observe “Woman and Dog” by Marcia Pels. At this point, you are at the heart of the Garden. Shaded by an ample pecan tree, Smith and Gilbert began their labor of love here. At the edge of this space are five prayer flags inscribed with messages that are meant to bring happiness, long life, and prosperity to those in their vicinity. The colors represent the elements of earth, water, fire, cloud, and sky. As the soft cloth tatters in the breeze, printed prayers float into the world on gentle winds.
Rock Garden - Following your senses of sight and sound, look and listen as water plays its melody. Moving by Linda Cunningham’s “Transformation,” stroll into Richard Smith’s favorite spot. In developing this woodland setting, Smith and Gilbert were inspired by the Royal Botanical Garden in Edinburgh, Scotland. Nestled among Cryptomeria, you are invited to rest a moment in the Japanese-influenced Tea House.

Crossing to Safety - Allow Marcia Pel’s “Bird in Hand” to entice your feet over the narrow stone bridge and to the other side of the water feature. Travel upslope through a native understory of oak and hickory. This area of the Garden, including the water feature, was developed in the early 1990’s and is a beloved site for respite and tranquility.

Bonsai Garden - A favorite among visitors and staff, our bonsai collection is a particular source of pride. Replicating small scaled scenes, these dwarfed trees are a delight and wonder to all. Careful watering, pruning, and concern are necessary in order to train these plants to survive in confined conditions. Our Bonsai Garden is the only one of its kind displayed publicly in the state of Georgia.

Edible Garden
Dedicated to dirty hands and happy hearts, this garden is a space for playful learning. It features paths winding through sensory plantings to please the senses, an “A to Z” bed (with plantings starting with each letter of the alphabet), vegetable beds, and whimsical elements like chime arbors, bubble pools and animal topiaries.

Bonsai Garden
Many in garden clubs love bonsai specimens. Here are just a few of the plants in the Bonsai Garden.
When you are in the North Georgia area, plan to stay a while and visit these awesome gardens. Your time spent will make memories forever. Smith – Gilbert Gardens may be little known to many people, even those who live nearby. Within just an hour or so from Lindale/Rome, it was one great trip and enjoyed by this editor very much.
Keep Your Ears Open
LANDSCAPE DESIGN SCHOOL

There are still plans in the making for another Landscape Design School in Georgia. Dates still have not been set and confirmed. Many have asked about the next Landscape Design School and be sure that more information will be included in Sowing Seeds of Knowledge Reaps Conservation with Beauty: Landscape Design newsletter as soon as possible.

YOU WILL NOT WANT TO MISS THE NEXT CLASSES!

Objectives of the Landscape Design Study Program
1. Develop a greater sense of appreciation, pride, and knowledge about our private and public gardens.
2. Become better educated to make changes in our surroundings so that they will be more beautiful, useful, and convenient, ecologically sound, and easily maintained.
3. Stimulate interest in all phases of landscape design, including community planning that will affect all of our lives.
4. Develop a contingent of qualified Landscape Design Consultants to serve in such decision-making areas of public life as providing leadership, educational programs, scholarships, awards, and promoting better landscape design.

Landscaping for the Holidays

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