BEST PUBLIC GARDENS IN CONNECTICUT – GCA VISITING GARDENS COMMITTEE

**BELLAMY-FERRIDAY HOUSE & GARDEN** www.ctlandmarks.org/bellamy-ferriday

9 Main Street North, Bethlehem, CT 06751 (203) 266-7596

The Bellamy-Ferriday House & Garden embodies the dramatically different passions of two

extraordinary individuals: Rev. Joseph Bellamy (1719-1790) and Miss Caroline Ferriday (1902-

1990). Rev. Joseph Bellamy built the house in two stages, in 1754 and in 1767. The 100- acre

farmstead with numerous outbuildings remained in the family until 1868. The property went

through several owners, introducing until it was purchased by Carolin Ferriday’s parents, Henry

and Eliza Ferriday, in 1912. The family updated the house and Mrs. Ferriday began reshaping

the outdoor spaces by designing a formal parterre garden, introducing a wide variety of fragrant

trees, shrubs and perennials, sweeping lawns and evergreens. Caroline continued the

stewardship of the property and under her care the rose and lilac collections grew and the

property was further defined as a breathtaking combination of natural and man-made beauty.

Today the plant collection includes historic roses, peonies, lilacs, and numerous perennials, as

well as unusual specimens of trees, and flowering shrubs.

**BARTLETT ARBORETUM & GARDENS** www.bartlettarboretum.org

151 Brookdale Road, Stamford, CT 06903 (203) 883-4052.

This 93 acre arboretum and garden contains over 2000 plants and nine display gardens

including The Conifer Garden, the Heisinger Wildflower Garden, the Mehlquist Garden

(rhododendrons and azaleas), the Nut Tree Collection, the Bartlett Magnolia collection, the

Perennial Border, the Overlook Lawn, the Pollarded Tree Display, the Secluded Garden (low

maintenance annuals and perennials) and the Witches'-Broom Collection.

**BRUSH HILL GARDENS** www.brushhillgardens.com

Barbara Paul and Charles Robinson, 88 Clark Rd., Washington, barbarapaulrobinson@me.com

MUST CONTACT FOR TOUR

The gardens have evolved over 40 years, beginning in 1971 when the Robinsons first acquired

their 1750’s clapboard farmhouse in the hills of Litchfield County in northwestern Connecticut.

As they began to restore the derelict farmhouse, Barbara began to “tidy up” the surrounding

landscape. Barbara’s early plan of “low maintenance” ultimately succumbed to her growing

passion for plants. Originally a banker, Charlie turned to painting and established Brush Hill

Studios. Theirs is very much a gardening partnership: Charlie sculpts the land, designs and

builds all the garden structures and opens new “canvases” for Barbara to paint her plants upon.

**BUTLER-MCCOOK HOUSE AND GARDEN** www.ctlandmarks.org/butler-mccook

396 Main Street, Hartford, CT 06103 (860) 522-1806

For 189 years the Butler-McCook House & Garden was home to four generations of a family

who participated in, witnessed, and recorded the evolution of Main Street between the American

Revolution and the mid-twentieth century. The house’s exterior looks much as it did when it was

built in 1782. The McCook family’s garden oasis was designed by famed landscape architect

Jacob Weidenmann, the designer of Bushnell Park, and lovingly cared for by the McCooks over

one hundred years. It is the only surviving domestic commission by Weidenmann. It features

beds filled with peonies, roses and iris.

**CONNECTICUT COLLEGE ARBORETUM** www.conncollege.edu

270 Mohegan Avenue, Box 5201, New London, CT 06320 (860) 439-5020

The plant collections are divided into four divisions. The 20 acre Arboretum (between Williams

St. and Gallows Lane), specializing in trees and shrubs native to eastern North America and

hardy in New London, cultivates nearly 300 kinds of woody plants and features the The Nancy

Moss Fine Native Azalea Garden, the Josephine Hooker Shain Mountain Laurel Garden, the

Lincoln and Lillian Dauby Gries Conifer Collection, and the Edgerton and Stengel Wildflower

Gardens. The Caroline Black Garden (located across from the main college entrance on Route

32, is a mature collection of ornamental trees and shrubs from all over the world. An 8500

square foot greenhouse permits a tropical and cactus collection.

**ELIZABETH PARK CONSERVANCY** www.elizabethparkct.org!

1561 Asylum Avenue, West Hartford CT 06117 860-231-9443

Opened to the public in 1897, Elizabeth Park is the horticultural park of the Hartford park

system. Because of its gardens, it has been called the, “Flower of New England Parks.” The

rose garden is the heart and soul of the park and is the first public rose garden in the country,

opened in 1904. Theodore Wirth, using his training from his work in Paris and London created a

true botanical park with Victorian formal gardens, which comprise a large variety of flowers,

shrubs, and trees with a country vista as a backdrop. Elizabeth Park is 101 acres located in both

West Hartford and Hartford, Connecticut.

**FLORENCE GRISWOLD MUSEUM** www.florencegriswoldmuseum.org

96 Lyme Street, Old Lyme, CT 06371 (860) 434-5542

Florence Griswold opened her timeworn family home to artists. The group was known as the

Lyme Art Colony and Miss Florence’s boardinghouse became the center of Impressionism in

America. Miss Florence was a keen gardener, and had what is characterized today as a

“grandmother’s garden”, in which masses of flowers were informally arranged in bordered beds

close to home. She was constantly in search of new and unusual plants. Today varieties of

hollyhocks, iris, foxglove, heliotrope, phlox, cranesbills and day lilies are among the many

perennials that make up the garden.

**GLEBE HOUSE MUSEUM AND THE GERTRUDE JEKYLL GARDEN**

[www.theglebehouse.org](http://www.theglebehouse.org)

49 Hollow Road Woodbury, CT 06798 (203) 263-2855 CONTACT FOR TOUR

Set in the picturesque Litchfield Hills in historic Woodbury's village center, the Glebe House

Museum, birthplace of the Episcopal Church in the New World and graced by the only extant

American garden planned by England's most venerated designer. It offers the visitor a glimpse

of Revolutionary War era Connecticut. In 1926, the famed English horticultural designer and

writer was commissioned to plan an "old fashioned" garden to enhance the newly created

museum. After the rediscovery of the plans in the late 1970s the project was begun in earnest

and is now being completed according to the original plans.

**HARKNESS MEMORIAL STATE PARK** www.ct.gov/deep

275 Great Neck Road, Waterford, CT 06385 (860) 443-572

The gardens at Harkness surround a 1906 Roman Renaissance Revival-style mansion once

owned by millionaire philanthropists Edward and Mary Harkness. The 200+ acres were a

working farm and the mansion was the Harkness’ summer home. From 1918 to 1929, Beatrix

Farrand (landscape designer and one of the founders of the American Society of Landscape

Architects) redesigned the West Garden and created and installed the East Garden, the

Boxwood Parterre and the Alpine Rock Garden. The garden design combines Farrand’s

innovative use of plant material with Mrs. Harkness’ color preferences and extensive collection

of Asian garden statuary. The estate was left to the State of Connecticut in 1950. Beginning in

the mid-1990s, extensive restoration work was done on the Mansion and the gardens, and

today the property looks much as it did in the 1930s. The gardens are now fully restored with a

loggia, water features, paths, wrought iron fencing, statuary, benches and hundreds of

perennials, annuals and shrubs. The site also includes dozens of mature beach and maple

trees, a cutting garden and a greenhouse.

**HARRIET BEECHER STOWE CENTER** www.harrietbeecherstowe.org

77 Forest Street, Hartford, CT 06105 (860) 522.9258

Harriet Beecher Stowe (1811–1896) was born in Litchfield, CT, the daughter of a prominent and

influential Congregational minister, the Reverend Lyman Beecher. Today she is best known as

the author of Uncle Tom’s Cabin, which helped galvanize the abolitionist cause and contributed

to the outbreak of the Civil War. In 1873, Harriet and her husband Calvin purchased and moved

into the painted brick “cottage” on Forest Street in Hartford. (A year later, Samuel Clemens,

better known as Mark Twain, and his family moved into an elaborate house just across the lawn;

the two families were friendly and often visited each other). On this urban site you’ll find eight

distinct gardens, including the woodland garden, the blue cottage garden, the wildflower

meadow, a high Victorian texture garden, antique rose garden, formal color-coordinated

gardens, and more. The site includes Connecticut’s largest magnolia tree and a 100+-year-old

dogwood believed to be from Stowe’s time.

**HILL-STEAD MUSEUM AND SUNKEN GARDEN** www.hillstead.org

35 Mountain Road, Farmington, CT 06032 (860) 677-4787

Hill-Stead is one of the nation’s few remaining representations of early-20th-century Country

Place Estates. From 1898 to 1901, pioneering young female architect Theodate Pope (1867–

1946) transformed 250 acres of thin-soiled, rocky New England farmland into a picturesque

landscape. The house served as a showcase for the family’s collection of French Impressionist

paintings, furnishings and decorative arts. Landscape designer Warren Manning assisted the

family with the overall landscape conception, which includes miles of stone walls, transplanted

mature trees, a walking garden, a Sunken Garden and a working dairy and orchards. After WW

II Beatrix Farrand, was charged to develop a plan to transform the original design into

something structural yet informal. The result – which we see today is a garden of lyrical beauty,

with height and drama. Plants along the brick paths around the summer house start as low,

fragrant swirls of annual verbena, heliotrope and lavender, then increase in height to 5-foot

stands of rue, giant Solomon’s seal, boltonia and lilies. Visitors are greeted with drifts of blooms

in blue, pink, salmon and white – colors influenced by the Impressionist paintings in the house.

**HOLLISTER HOUSE GARDEN** www.hollisterhousegarden.org

300 Nettleton Hollow Road, Washington, CT 860-868-2200 MUST CONTACT FOR TOUR

or email to book office@hollisterhousegarden.org

Beautifully situated on a sloping, terraced site in the rolling hills of Litchfield County in

northwestern Connecticut, Hollister House Garden is an American interpretation of such classic

English gardens as Sissinghurst, Great Dixter and Hidcote, formal in its structure but informal

and rather wild in its style of planting. Begun in 1979 by George Schoellkopf and Ron Johnson,

the garden since that time has evolved under George's direction into a unique synthesis of the

formal and the natural, the right angles of paths, walls and hedges melting seamlessly into the

lush surrounding landscape, which forms a magnificent backdrop to the garden’s exuberant

plantings.

**NEW LONDON COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY AND SHAW MANSION**

[www.newlondonhistory.com](http://www.newlondonhistory.com)

11 Blinman Street, New London, CT 06320 (860) 443.1209

Shaw Mansion, built 1756, has been the home of the New London County Historical Society

since 1907. It was modified by the great-grandson of the builder, Dr. Nathaniel Shaw Perkins,

when he inherited it in 1845. Thus the portrayal of a formal “Victorian” garden in front of the

house and a colonial garden in the rear of the house. A centerpiece of that is a summer house

built as a “gentleman’s folly” around 1792, on a granite ledge behind the Mansion where it

captured the view and the breezes off the Thames River.

**OGDEN HOUSE AND GARDEN** www.fairfieldhs.org

1520 Bronson Rd., Fairfield, CT (203) 259-1598

The gardens connected to this carefully restored 1750 saltbox are of particular interest to both

historic garden enthusiasts and lovers of wildflowers. The Ogden House retains its beautiful

situation overlooking Brown’s Brook in the fertile Mill River Valley. An 18th century-style kitchen

garden behind the house is laid out symmetrically with raised beds. The garden features herbs

typical of those used at the time, and is generously maintained by the Fairfield Garden Club. A

bridge across the brook leads to a trail planted with native Connecticut wildflowers and shrubs.

Ogden House is listed on the National Register of Historic Places. In 2008, Ogden House

underwent extensive renovation to restore its original quality and make it sound for future

generations.

**OSBORNE HOMESTEAD MUSEUM & KELLOGG ENVIRONMENTAL CENTER**

www.ct.gov.deep/kellogg

Department of Energy & Environmental Protection 500 Hawthorne Avenue, Derby, CT 06418

(203) 734.2513

The Osborne Homestead Museum was originally a simple farmhouse built around 1840.

Frances Eliza Osborne (1876-1956) inherited the family house and at age of 31, in 1907,

decided to assume her father’s business responsibilities after his sudden death. In 1919,

Frances married Waldo Stewart Kellogg, a New York architect with a degree from Cornell

University. An accomplished businesswoman and conservationist who was dedicated to

preserving land for future generations, Mrs. Osborne Kellogg deeded her **350-acre property** to

Connecticut before her death in order to form a state park. The Museum’s grounds are

landscaped with formal flower gardens, ornamental shrubs, and flowering trees, providing

visitors with an endless pageant of color from spring through autumn.

**PROMISEK AT THREE RIVERS FARM** www.promisek.org

694 Skyline Ridge Road, Bridgewater, CT 06752 (860) 350.8226

Founded in 1977 and centered on the 300-acre Three Rivers Farm, Promisek is a Catholic

educational and environmental organization. The historic garden at Promisek was designed by

noted landscape architect **Beatrix Farrand** (1872–1957). By the time Promisek purchased the

property in 1978, the walled garden had been overtaken by decades of overgrowth, but the

hardscape remained. Promisek members cleared the brush to reveal flagstone pathways and

stone around the garden. A local resident and garden historian researched and rediscovered

Farrand’s garden plan. Today, a team of garden volunteers maintains the garden. The beds

along the stone-walled perimeter contain perennials in pink, purple, white and blue, with a few

surprises like a maroon dahlia. The inside beds feature roses in pinks and reds edged with a

lacy fringe of fragrant annuals.

**ROSELAND COTTAGE** www.historicnewengland.org

556 Route 169, Woodstock, CT 06281 (860)928-4074

Roseland Cottage depicts the summer life of a prosperous family in mid-19th-century America.

Built in 1846 in the newly fashionable Gothic Revival style. The entire complex, with a boxwood

parterre garden, an icehouse, garden house and a carriage barn with a private bowling alley,

reflects the principles of writer and designer Andrew Jackson Downing. Beautifully situated on

the village green, Roseland Cottage has survived virtually unchanged, with its original Gothic

furniture, embossed Lincrusta Walton wall coverings, and coral-pink exterior.

**STANLEY WHITMAN HOUSE** www.stanleywhitman.org

37 High Street, Farmington, CT 06032 (860) 677.9222

Stanley-Whitman House is a living history center and museum that teaches through the

collection, preservation, research, and dynamic interpretation of the history and culture of early

Farmington. Located in the historic village of Farmington, the museum facility is centered on a

ca. 1720 National Historic Landmark house, furnished with period antiques to reflect the

everyday activities of Colonial life in Connecticut. Surrounding the house are period raised bed

gardens, an apple orchard, and heritage stone walls.

**SUNDIAL GARDENS** www.sundialgardens.com

Brault Hill Road, Higganum, CT 06441 (860) 345-4290.

An 18th century farmhouse is surrounded by striking formal gardens including a Persian-style

knot garden, an 18th century style garden with geometric walkways, and a topiary garden with

boxwood, roses and ivy garlands surrounding a fountain.

**THANKFUL ARNOLD HOUSE MUSEUM** www.haddamhistory.org

14 Hayden Hill Road, Haddam, CT 06438 (860) 345.2400

The Wilhelmina Ann Arnold Barnhart Memorial Garden was designed and dedicated in 1973.

The garden was given in memory of Wilhelmina Ann Arnold Barnhart by her father Isaac Arnold,

the benefactor of the Thankful Arnold House. The original garden design was created by Sally

Marvin of Bloomfield, Connecticut and featured an orchard, berry beds and bench garden. The

gardens were redesigned in the late 1980s in the Colonial Revival style with granite-edged beds

and gravel paths. Most of the garden is now devoted to herbs used for cooking, medicine,

dyeing, fragrance and other household uses, with a small bed featuring vegetables common in

gardens in the early 1800s and a few old-fashioned annuals.

**WEBB-DEANE-STEVENS MUSEUM** www.webb-deane-stevens.org

211 Main Street, Wethersfield, CT 06109 (860) 529.0612

The Webb-Deane-Stevens Museum’s three 18th-century houses — the 1752 Joseph Webb

House, the 1769 Silas Deane House (both National Historic Landmarks) and the 1789 Isaac

Stevens House — sit on their original sites in the center of Wethersfield’s Historic District. Soon

after the Connecticut Society of Colonial Dames acquired the Webb House in 1919, they began

planning improvements. In 1921, landscape architect Amy Cogswell was hired to be in charge

of the project of installing an “old fashioned” garden. The Webb House garden was a

prototypical example of the genre, containing classical elements, quaint arbors, and a wide

assortment of “old fashioned” flowers. Ms. Cogswell specified mainly hardy perennials, such as

roses, with a few brightly-colored annuals to bring the garden to life throughout the summer and

fall months. Her plan called for 99 different plants, including hollyhocks, larkspur, pinks,

foxglove, peonies, and phlox. Some of these plants actually date to the colonial period, while

others simply seem old fashioned. Over the decades, renovations and additions to the facilities

resulted in major alterations to the garden. By the 1970s, little remained of Amy Cogswell’s

original design. In 1996, her original design was rediscovered in the archives, and in 1999, the

Colonial Dames began restoring the garden based on the plans.

**WEIR FARM NATIONAL HISTORIC SITE** www.nps.gov/wefa

735 Nod Hill Road, Wilton, CT 06897 (203) 834.1896

Weir Farm National Historic Site, the only National Park Service site dedicated to American

painting, was home to three generations of American artists. Julian Alden Weir, a leading figure

in American art and the development of American Impressionism, acquired the farm in 1882.

Today, the 60-acre farm, which includes the Weir House, Weir and Young Studios, barns,

gardens, and Weir Pond, is one of the nation’s finest remaining landscapes of American art. The

landscape of Weir Farm National Historic Site has several interesting features, including a

colonial revival Sunken Garden, terraced lawns which were once the site of numerous

vegetable gardens, and the Weir Garden, which was created in 1915 and features a fountain,

sundial and a rustic cedar fence. With assistance from local garden clubs and volunteers, the

National Park Service has preserved and restored these gardens to appear today just as they

did to Weir and the other artists that made this farm their home.