

Old Westbury Gardens News

Clippings from the Gardens, Spring 2012



President's Letter

The beginning of a new season here at Old Westbury Gardens sometimes feels like the opening of a play on Broadway. The weekends in late April are previews. Then, starting in May, there are six performances each week, with our "theater" finally going dark in mid-December. And very much like a play, there is a tremendous amount of behind-the-scenes work that goes on long before the curtain rises on opening night.

During the off season, starting months ago when the pine trees and holiday decorations were being removed from the house and our gates were closed to the public, preparations for this spring's opening began. "The show must go on," as the saying goes, and we intended to be ready.

There was a budget to balance. There were meetings - with trustees, committees, auditors, sponsors, and vendors. There was a lot of writing - grant applications, gift acknowledgements, invitations, press releases, a calendar of events, and thank-you letters in every conceivable form from handwritten notes to e-mail blasts. We recruited and trained new interns and volunteers. We redesigned and updated our website.

There were musical events to plan, from the first note to be played by an April chamber group to the last note to be sung by a choral group in December. There were a large number of visits to schedule, running the gamut from the Girl Scouts to

schools to commercial shoots by fashion photographers and television and film crews. We had a house that needed quite a bit of cleaning, painting, and polishing. All 44 rooms received painstaking care. And then there were the ongoing challenges of trying to maintain the 200 acres of surrounding gardens and grounds, a task made more daunting than usual due to the aftermath of last year's hurricane.

Our show, Old Westbury Gardens, rightfully recognized as one of the most beautiful gardens in the world, is ready for our 2012 season. The lights have just flashed a few times, and the overture is about to commence. That's your cue to come for a visit. And we'll be happy to stamp your member's ticket again and again.



The LI Mozart Festival's Orchestre de Chambre Francais, one of many groups of performers in the show that is Old Westbury Gardens

Planned Gift

Recently, when a long time member of Old Westbury Gardens was revising her will, she made arrangements to include a gift to the Gardens. When asked about her reasoning, this donor (who wishes to remain anonymous) replied that she has known our chairman Mary Phipps for

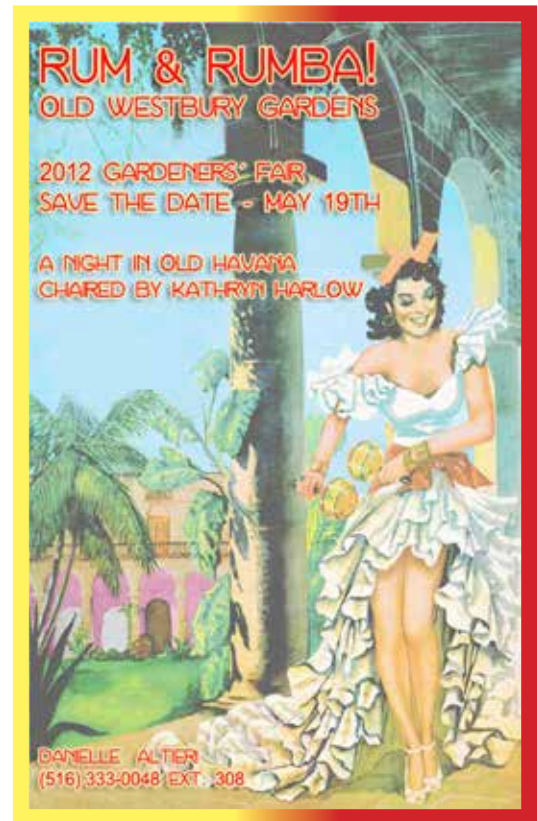
over 40 years. She has long appreciated the hard work that Mrs. Phipps has done here, and this was her way of showing support for a wonderful lady. If you share a similar sentiment for anyone at the Gardens, or if you simply would like to get more information about planned giving, please call Doreen Banks at 516-333-0048, ext.335.

Gardeners' Fair

This year's Gardeners' Fair on May 19 has an utterly original and fun-filled theme: A Night in Old Havana. The event's chairs, Kathryn and John Harlow, have had *mucho trabajo* in creating an authentication committee, finding a Cuban band, and trying to recreate the feel of a nightclub in Havana in the late 50s, just about the time Old Westbury Gardens came into being. The Auction Committees have been especially energetic in securing some amazing items. And there will be a cigar roller demonstrating his skills, underwritten by Peri and Martin Wenz.

Adding to the excitement are our honorees, Eduardo and Sherrill Canet who, having just visited Eduardo's family in Cuba, are perfectly suited for this evening's theme. The Canets have been great supporters of Old Westbury Gardens and are well known in the New York and Palm Beach communities.

For additional information about how you can contribute to this magical event, please contact Danielle Altieri, Events Coordinator, at 516-333-0048, ext 308, daltieri@oldwestburygardens.org.



Golf Outing to Benefit OWG

We're taking a change in course for this year's Old

Westbury Gardens Golf Outing. With some gracious help from club member Fred Carillo, who also happens to be the mayor of Old Westbury, the June 25th outing will be played at the Sebonack Golf Course in Southampton.

These magnificent grounds, designed by Jack Nicklaus and Tom Doak, include beautifully preserved natural contours and stunning views of the Great Peconic Bay and Cold Spring Pond. We especially wish to thank Jack Foley, who is returning again as our chairman, and Michael Keenan of Wells Fargo who will serve as our 2012 Golf Outing Honoree. Michael's support of Old Westbury Gardens' Environmental Education program has been outstanding. For more information, please call Danielle Altieri at 516-333-0048, ext.308.



Plant Sale

by Maura Brush

Every January and February, my mailbox overflows with plant and seed catalogs. Growers are always offering new colors, bigger fruits, and improved varieties. It is tempting to find a spot for each of these new selections. Although our many acres of gardens and borders offer a lot of space, I am limited in that not every plant is the right style, shape, or color for our landscape. That is why I get so much enjoyment out of ordering for our plant sale each year. All restrictions are lifted.

Our head grower, Scott Lucas, and I have selected the best offerings from our greenhouse: **begonias**, **salvias**, and **geraniums**. Scott's cuttings will provide home gardeners with the opportunity to buy the very same plants that will grace our summer borders. All of our favorite perennials will be available, with an emphasis placed on those that have really long bloom times like **Salvia** and **Yarrow**, and plants that thrive in the shade like **Astilbe** and **Lily of the Valley**.

Last spring, we offered

tomatoes for the first time. I have selected just three varieties this year, all selections that I trialed in the Vegetable Garden and found to be outstanding. **Green Zebra** is an unusual green tomato with yellow-gold and green stripes. It has a lemony-lime flavor and is wonderful in a salad with lemon and lime basil. Its bright color is appealing, and its flavor is fresh and tangy. **Harlequin Hybrid** was selected last year



because I couldn't resist the picture in the catalog. The upturned calyx on this tomato reminded me of a jester's hat. The plum-sized fruits are perfectly formed and the color is a deep and beautiful red. Because of the endless supply of sweet and juicy fruit that it yielded all summer long, I am growing it again this year. The final selection is my three-year-old daughter's favorite.

Chocolate Cherry has a deep, mahogany color that most of us associate with heirloom tomatoes. These cherry tomatoes grow in clusters of eight and provide incredible yields, which continue as late as October. The fruit can be gathered before fully ripe and then be allowed to ripen in the kitchen, thereby allowing for a gathering before a vacation weekend, heavy rain, or early frost. All three varieties will be grown in very limited quantities, so come early for the best selections.

This year, I have expanded our offering of small, woody plant material. Old Westbury Gardens may be identifiable by our herbaceous borders bursting with color. But well-placed shrubs act as the backbone in any garden. When shrubs are chosen wisely, they showcase the attributes of their garden companions and offer interest in multiple seasons. The selections available this year include **Beautyberry**, **Mock Orange**, and **Deutzia**. Each is wonderful on its own, but also works well when combined with annuals and perennials in a border.

Try to visit on Thursday, May 3, to take advantage of a special 20 percent discount for Old Westbury Gardens' members. On May 4-6, the usual 10 percent members' discount will apply.

Boxwood Blight

By Maura Brush

Dutch Elm Disease (DED) was first reported in the United States in 1928. The disease, which ravaged the elms of New England, spread slowly. It reached Detroit by 1950, Chicago by 1960, and Minneapolis by 1970. Elms, which are one of the most prevalent street trees in the United States, almost became extinct. Now boxwoods, the top-selling shrub in the country, are being threatened.

In October of 2011, samples of boxwoods with unusual symptoms were sent to the Plant Disease Information Office for examination. Exhaustive microscopic examination of the plant material led to the identification of boxwood blight. This blight is caused by a fungus (*Cylindrocladium pseudonaviculatum*) that was only recently identified. This is an extremely aggressive disease that not only affects boxwoods but also members of the boxwood family (Buxaceae). Since October, this blight has been identified

in New York, Connecticut, Rhode Island, Maryland, North Carolina, and Oregon.

In the days of the Dutch Elm Disease when most nursery stock was grown locally, the disease spread over the course of decades. But today, since plant material is grown and shipped all over the country, this disease may reach epidemic proportions within a mere matter of months if precautions aren't taken.

Boxwood blight spores are dispersed by splashing and can be carried over short distances by wind or wind-driven rain. Spores can also be dispersed over longer distances by humans (contaminated boots, gloves, equipment, etc.) or animals since the spores are quite sticky.

Here at Old Westbury Gardens we are acting with extreme caution. Our Boxwood Garden will undergo extensive soil preparation this year, and the irrigation system will be upgraded. But we will not purchase or plant any new boxwoods until we can be assured of healthy material.

EE at OWG

Old Westbury Gardens appreciates the sponsorship provided by Wells Fargo, Capital One, the Barker Foundation, and Verizon in support of our Environmental Education classes. But more funding is required to continue and expand this wonderful program. Anyone who is interested in underwriting opportunities, please contact Doreen Banks at 516-333-0048, ext. 335, dbanks@oldwestburygardens.org.

Peggie's Last Dog

Ever since she was a little girl, our founder, Peggie Phipps Boegner, always had a dog as a constant companion. Peggie's last dog was Tilly, a feisty little Yorkshire Terrier. Many visitors may recall seeing Tilly on the Old Westbury Gardens grounds, riding with Peggie on her golf cart, chasing the geese, or just rolling around on the grass enjoying the great outdoors. Tilly died on March 23, 2012, at the age of 13.



Spring, Behind the Wall

by Kim Johnson

In the Walled Garden's early history, the spring show was based on a large tulip display interplanted with a rainbow of colored pansies. In the past ten years we've branched out and expanded our spring palette. Now visitors can view a wide variety of spring bulbs during a longer period, from early hyacinths to mid-summer lilies. Many groupings of different bulbs overlapping and flowering together make for exciting combinations.

Since most of our favorite bulbs need a cold period to flower, they are planted out in fall. To insure that we get the numbers and colors that we need for our designs, we order our bulbs by August. In November, we remove the summer annuals to make room and do the bulb planting, the goal being to get all 7000 plus bulbs in by Thanksgiving before the top layer of soil freezes.



In early April, the spring annuals - pansies, violas, English daisies, linaria, and allysum - are planted in front of the borders. By the bee skep on the lower terrace, *Narcissus* 'Riot,' a daffodil like its namesake, has an impressive large pleated coral pink inner cup. *Muscari* 'Valerie Finnis' with powdery pale lavender blue tightly clustered grape like flowers, 6-8," is planted in front of it. Tulip 'Stunning Apricot' starts flowering a bit

afterward. T. 'Stunning Apricot' processes a dazzling deep coral apricot color with paler petal edges with a hint of warm raspberry glow. *Narcissus* 'By George.' bears soft yellow, overlapping rounded petals surrounding a peachy, pink cup that has a darker pink ruffled edge. Very unusual and eye-catching, it reaches heights of 14-16." In the upper terrace along the east and west walls there are large beds of tulip 'Temples Favorite', a majestic 30," it exhibits a huge orange goblet of a flower with a purplish flush on the outer petals. It pairs nicely with tulip 'Queen of Night,' a wonderful contrast that echoes the purple in 'Temples Favorite.' 'Queen of Night' is a dark maroon purple tulip as close to a black in a tulip that exists. On the lower terrace west corner, 'Hocus Pocus' is one of the tallest and latest flowering tulips. Elongated and almost lily shaped, the exterior petals are sulphur yellow brushed with buttercup yellow with a tiny pinkish flame.

Mid May into June begins the flowering of the ornamental onions. *Allium* 'Globemaster,' is the biggest of the alliums, forming a 8-10" deep lilac flower ball head at a height of up to 4.' *Allium* 'Ambassador' has 6-8" flower heads of dark rich purple, and the plants reach 3-4' tall. 'Ambassador' blooms later than the other alliums, flowering along with the roses. *Allium shubertii* produces volleyball size spidery purple flowers filled with star shaped florets. Most alliums make very interesting dried seed pods that can be saved and used in flower arrangements or creative botanical creations. In late May, *Camassia leichtlinii* 'Blue Danube' appears



in the back of the lower east borders with tall (30-36") spikes. The flower stalks produce many starry dark blue flowers with long upright sword like leaves. We mixed it in with *Allium* 'Purple Sensation,' which has numerous tiny little violet purple flowers tightly compressed to look like one gorgeous big round baseball size flower on 20-30" stems.

As you tour Old Westbury Gardens this spring, be sure to critique the dynamic combination of other bulbs and spring plants in the Cottage Garden, and drifts of other bulbs throughout the grounds. Make notes of your favorites so you'll know what to order later in the season. Do some exploring online, including bentandbeckysbulbs.com and johnscheepers.com. There will be more varieties and colors to choose from than may be accessible locally, and many companies offer volume discounts for

early orders. When researching different tulip and daffodils varieties, remember that even within a compressed spring there are early, mid, and late flowering varieties. There are choices that you



can make that may affect your design and what bulbs will flower better in combination with each other. We choose late flowering types in hopes of having displays continuing later into May.



UP

What's Off-Season

At right, Bob Thompson prepares stairway windows for painting

Above, Pete DeBlasi completes repairs to the Primrose Path trellis damaged during Hurricane Irene; at bottom right, Janice Bloom polishes a Dining Room chandelier



Foo for Thought

by Lorraine Gilligan

As regular visitors to Westbury House well know, the rooms here are filled with priceless treasures from around the world. These include magnificent paintings, great pieces of furniture, and wonderful collections of silver and porcelain, primarily from the 17th and 18th centuries. Amid all these other fascinating works of art in the Red Ballroom and Dining Room are some rather quaint and exotic looking ceramic dogs. What exactly are they? Called Foo (or Fu) Dogs, they originated in 5th century China as guardian lions. Often placed at the outside of temples and palaces, they were used to stare down evil spirits. Always displayed in pairs, the male imperiously holds an orb representing the world and the female restrains an infant guardian in the making.



The Foo Dog figures at Westbury House were produced during the Kangxi period (1662-1722) in China, an era of political stability and great creativity. Kangxi, the emperor, had a great porcelain factory in the northeast coastal city of

Jungdezhen. During this time, the recipe

for making porcelain and richly colored glazes improved, resulting in significant demand domestically and internationally. Queen Mary II (1662 -1694) filled one of her palaces with Kangxi porcelain and this created a collecting craze among the English aristocracy. On the continent, royalty in France, the Netherlands, Portugal, and Sweden amassed great collections of vases, figures, and tea and coffee settings.

American aristocracy, as embodied in the wealthy industrialists of the early 20th century, was also captivated by Kangxi porcelain. In 1915, John D. Rockefeller Jr. asked his father for a loan of over a million dollars to purchase porcelain, stating " I have never squandered money on horses, yachts, automobiles or other foolish extravagances...the money put into these porcelains is not lost or squandered." Other great collectors included J.P. Morgan, whose porcelain pieces were displayed at the Metropolitan Museum of Art in 1904 and were eventually purchased by Rockefeller, and Henry Clay Frick, whose collection is on display at his namesake museum in Manhattan.



Kudos to OWG

This March, in an article about historic homes in Arthur Frommer's Budget Travel Magazine, the Gardens was once again acknowledged as being among the finest tourist attractions in the country. Entitled *The 14 Most Beautiful Home and Garden Tours in America*, the piece presented a "guide to the country's most majestic homes and the must see gardens surrounding them." In addition to highlighting Old Westbury Gardens, some of the other notable recommended travel destinations included Monticello in Virginia, and Biltmore in North Carolina.

Portrait of Michael Phipps

This past fall, Old Westbury Gardens was invited by the National Sporting Library and Museum to participate in the inaugural exhibit of its new museum facility. Located in Middleburg, VA, the museum celebrates the history of equestrian and field sports. The Gardens loaned Raymond Neilson's 1933 Portrait of "Michael Phipps in the Templeton Polo Jersey with Spike," usually on view in Mr. Phipps's Study. Michael, the youngest of the three Phipps boys, was a renowned polo player, having led the Templeton team to U.S. Open Championships in 1932 and 1934. Michael was also an amateur painter. Two of his works, a self-portrait and painting of his pitbull Spike, are also displayed in Westbury House.



Michael had great regard for Raymond Neilson. A fellow native Long Islander who had studied with William Merritt Chase and George Bellows, Neilson was a well-known portraitist who taught at the Art Students League and the National Academy of Design.

Are You Stronger than a Rose Gardener?

By Lisa Reichenberger

Now more than ever, our society seems to be cognizant of the countless health and wellness advantages of exercising regularly. But mention "physical fitness" to a young person and any aura of excitement may immediately morph into a sigh of boredom. One way of getting kids away from the video games and interested in exercise may lie right outside your door. And it's a lot easier and cheaper than a membership at a gym.

Partnering with the national *Let's Move* initiative founded by First Lady Michele Obama, Old Westbury Gardens is participating in educating kids to the value of their own backyards. Our *Are You Stronger than a Rose Gardener?* event on June 6 focuses on fitness as a form of fun through emphasizing the strengthening



benefits of everyday gardening. This healthy hobby is celebrated as an activity that yields meaningful results in the body as well as the soil. Then children will run in a program we're calling the *Acre Race*, collecting facts along the way about the surprising environmental perks that can be provided by a single acre of land. Finally, *Gardener Relays* will dare even the most resilient competitor to conquer a course of obstacles utilizing common garden tools as obstructions. Question and answer quizzes will test players' knowledge of some astounding facts and figures about the everyday routines of our horticulture staff. So fill up your water bottle and get in the game.



Excerpts from *Titanic Tidbits*

By Vince Kish

Undoubtedly, the most famous event that occurred a hundred years ago in the spring of 1912 was the sinking of the RMS *Titanic*. Although no members of the extended Jay S. Phipps family were on board this ill-fated cruise, more than a few of the more famous individuals of that era who booked passage on *Titanic's* maiden voyage were friends or business associates of Jay. And certainly many more traveled in the same financial and social circles.

Writer, hotel owner, and inventor, John Jacob Astor IV, was heir to one of the richest fortunes in the world. Isidor Straus, owner of Macy's and Abraham and Straus, was also a one time member of the House of Representatives. Industrialist and engineer Washington Roebling II, whose namesake uncle built the Brooklyn Bridge, designed a racecar which ran second in the American Grand Prize Race in Savannah in 1910, (often confused with the Long Island race held on Motor Parkway because of the involvement of William K. Vanderbilt in both events). Astor, Straus, and Roebling all died in the disaster.

Margaret Tobin "Unsinkable Molly" Brown lived until 1932. She is buried in the Cemetery of the Holy Rood near St. Bridget's on Post Avenue in Westbury.

Some well known figures literally missed the boat. J.P. Morgan had reserved passage on *Titanic*, a ship he essentially owned since the White Star Line was a part of his International Mercantile Marine Company. However, business matters kept him in Europe. Henry Clay Frick, partner of Jay's father Henry Phipps and one-time President of Carnegie Steel, changed his travel plans when his wife sprained her ankle during a cruise in

the Mediterranean. Whether because of illness or a business related matter back in Pennsylvania, chocolate maker Milton Hershey returned to the U.S. earlier than originally planned, traveling via the German luxury liner *Amerika*. On its way back to Europe, *Amerika* was one of the ships that tried to warn the *Titanic* about icebergs. Robert Bacon, U.S. Ambassador to France, had booked passage for himself, his wife, and his daughter. But because diplomatic matters delayed his departure for a few days, it fell to the S.S. *France* to bring home the Bacons.

George Vanderbilt II, the owner of the Biltmore Estate in North Carolina, skipped the trip based upon a bad feeling his wife Edith supposedly had about the *Titanic's* maiden voyage. If so, it was a selective premonition, since they didn't cancel passage for their driver, Fred Wheeler, who went down with the ship. George's nephew, Alfred Gwynne Vanderbilt, drowned three years later during the sinking of the *Lusitania*.

The two ships closest to the *Titanic* at the time of the accident were the *Carpathia*, which picked up the 705 survivors, and the *Californian*, which, for whatever reason, didn't respond to the *Titanic's* distress messages. Both ships would eventually be sunk by German U-boats during World War I, the *Californian* in 1915, and the *Carpathia* in 1918.

An author named Morgan Andrew Robertson wrote a novel called *Futility* about a luxury liner that sunk in the North Atlantic after striking an iceberg, with great loss of life due to too few lifeboats. At first glance, Robertson seems none too creative, particularly given that he named the ship *The Titan*, except for the fact that he wrote the book in 1898.

(The complete *Titanic Tidbits* article is accessible at www.oldlongisland.com)

Mr. Constantine Sidamon-Eristoff

Mr. Constantine Sidamon-Eristoff died on December 26, 2011, at the age of 81. Mr. Sidamon-Eristoff's wife Anne is the sister of Howard Phipps Jr, who is the husband of Old Westbury Gardens Chairman, Mary Phipps.

In an extensive career as a lawyer and environmental advocate, Mr. Sidamon-Eristoff held a variety of influential positions in posts in and out of government, including as a member of the Board of Directors of the M.T.A., and as head of the NY Region for the E.P.A. He was also known for his work with Phipps Houses and as chairman of the board of trustees of Audubon, N.Y.

In memory of Mr. Sidamon-Eristoff, some new Hawthorn trees are being planted on the Primrose Path. These trees have snowy white flowers in the spring that give way to red fruits that persist into the winter, providing food for birds. The flowers are also a nectar source for both butterflies and bees.



Mr. Sidamon-Eristoff chatting with Walled Garden Supervisor, Kim Johnson

The Diane Wittingler Fund and The Volunteer Tree Fund

Donations to both funds have been received from March, 2011 through March, 2012 in memory of the individuals as follows:

Janet Antonius
Paul Arban
Sam Ashley
Barbara Balding
Justin Beard
Gloria Bellomo O'Connell
Jeanne Bottrill
John L. Brandon
Officer Geoffrey J. Breitkopf
Helena A. Butler
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Model Home

Recently, an interesting challenge was proposed to a team of photography students at University Campus Suffolk in Ipswich, England. Their assignment was to replicate a film still from *North by Northwest* by building a 1:25 scale miniature set and photographing it. The scene selected was a shot of a parked car in front of Westbury House just after Roger Thornhill (the Carey Grant character) is whisked inside. None of the students have ever been to Westbury House. And they had no other information to work with other than the still shot from the film. Even after seeing the image of the model, how these students did such a good job is a mystery worthy of Hitchcock.



Top left, the movie still, bottom left, the students' photo, bottom right, the scale model



Old Westbury Gardens News, Vol. 35, No. 1

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(1906-2006)
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