THE
BIRMINGHAM
BOTANICAL SOCIETY

A BRIEF HISTORY

By Carolyn Green Satterfield
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May you enjoy the preview
into the Birmingham Botanical Gardens

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Poised on the brink of a new century, we have a rare vantage point. As we look forward to our future, we can also look back to our beginnings. It is a perfect time to record our history as a gift to future generations. This is our garden journal for the next generation of dream keepers.

In our midst, we have found the perfect author. Historian Carolyn Green Satterfield, Ph. D., a past Auxiliary president and longtime board member, is already part of the story. Her commitment as a volunteer to this project echoes a theme that weaves throughout our history.

In 1960, Birmingham Mayor James W. Morgan established the Birmingham Botanical Gardens and commissioned the first master plan. The Birmingham Botanical Society, Inc., a nonprofit corporation, was founded in 1964 as “a membership organization to support and improve the Gardens.” We provide volunteers, funding, and support staff to help maintain and develop the Gardens. We receive and administer gifts, and promote horticulture and education. In 1967, the Women’s Auxiliary was organized as the Society’s fund-raising arm to supplement garden maintenance expenses.

The history of the Birmingham Botanical Society is a lively, colorful story full of people who quickly recognized the enormous potential of the young Birmingham Botanical Gardens. Over the years thousands of volunteers have donated their time, talents, funds, energy, enthusiasm, and vision. Members of the Federated Garden Clubs of District Three, neighborhood garden clubs, plant societies, local civic and related industry groups, master gardeners, and individuals from all walks of life have contributed richly to this story.

The first master plan provided the impetus and direction that inspired the conservatory, floral clock, Japanese Gardens, chert parking lot, early Garden Center, first gardens, and plant collections. From the beginning, one project often overlapped the next. The Gardens grew to include additional meeting rooms, the Gatehouse Gift Shop, and the Horace Hammond Memorial Library.
In the late 1970s, with funds raised by the Women’s Auxiliary, the Birmingham Botanical Society hired landscape architect Robert E. Marvin and Associates of Waterboro, South Carolina, to create a second master plan for the Gardens. The goal of this master plan was that “its implementation will improve the quality of life for both residents and visitors of the City of Birmingham and that a more complete, healthy human being may be the result of experiences that combine the two most valuable resources of the South—its people and its natural environment.”

This master plan inspired a major capital campaign. With these funds we created a dramatic new sweeping entry to the Gardens and improved circulation routes throughout. We added a garden entrance plaza and expanded the Garden Center to include more meeting rooms, offices, a larger gift shop, and a restaurant. Following Robert Marvin’s “room concept,” we relocated some gardens, renovated others, and designed new gardens. Carefully selected to enhance specific sites, a budding sculpture collection began to grace the Gardens.

Still, we needed more space “to develop a program of education and scientific research in the fields of botany and ornamental horticulture, floriculture, and arboriculture,” as envisioned by our founders and stated in our Articles of Incorporation. So in the early 1990s, Robert Marvin returned to site our education wing and update our master plan. We then embarked on the journey that has led to the Mary M. Blount Education Complex, with classrooms, seated lecture hall, expanded library, herbarium, plant diagnostic, and tissue culture labs.

In 1997, the Birmingham Botanical Society Board updated our mission statement and adopted long-range goals. We merged the former Women’s Auxiliary into its parent Society. This streamlined our organizational structure and placed all fund-raisers under one umbrella. We updated operating procedures, strengthened our support staff, increased our membership, broadened our financial base, and began a public relations initiative. New committees emerged to promote development, education, volunteers, plant collections, and design review. We wanted to have a voice in our political future, and began to move toward privatization.

Now we have undertaken to put our story in words. This brief history of the Birmingham Botanical Society shares the purpose of our master plan “to tie the past to the future.” The vision of this master plan still sustains and guides us. As we prepare to meet the challenges ahead, we can draw strength from our past achievements. After all, a garden is never finished. As we approach the new millennium, let’s celebrate and share our story.

Shelley G. Lindstrom, 1999
Table of Contents

Preface
Chapter I  The Way It Began .............................................1
Chapter II  The Way It Was ...........................................18
Chapter III The Way It Became ......................................42
Chapter IV  The Way It Could Be ....................................61
Endnotes ........................................................................79
Appendix .........................................................................83
  1999 Birmingham Botanical Society Executive Committee .......83
  1999 Birmingham Botanical Society Board .........................84
  Society Presidents ......................................................85
  Auxiliary Presidents ......................................................86
  Ida Callier Burns Volunteers of the Year ..........................87
  Sculptors .....................................................................88
  Landscape Architects, Designers, and Architects ...............89
  1999 Society Staff ..........................................................90
  1999 City Employees/ Dates Work Began .........................90
  1999 Corporate Associate Program Contributors ..............92
  Major Donors to the Mary M. Blount Education Complex ....93
  Major Donors to the Beatty Hanna Horticulture Center .......95
Index ..............................................................................96
Prior to 1960, a Birmingham “Botanical Garden” was only an idea. That year Birmingham Mayor James W. Morgan spearheaded the movement to establish the Gardens on 69 acres east of the city’s zoo in Lane Park, on the south side of Red Mountain. “Morgan was interested in developing the city he loved, and the city would not have developed the same way without him,” explained James A. Head, former chairman of the campaign to locate the zoo at Lane Park. Despite objections from the Park and Recreation Board, Mayor Morgan went to Montreal to inspect the greenhouses at the Montreal Botanical Gardens and ask their curator, Dr. Henry E. Teuscher, to design a master plan for Birmingham. Morgan envisioned Birmingham's Gardens as “the biggest attraction of this type in the Southeast.”

Dr. Teuscher’s design included a conservatory with three aluminum and clear-span, curved-eave, glass houses totaling 306 feet in length with the center portion 33 feet high. Later, the north wing held some 60 varieties of camellias, and the south wing
became the desert house. With $150,000 available for this project, local architect Charles McCauley was selected to execute the design concept. Teuscher's master plan also consisted of 24 different garden areas which included a nursery, pond, bird sanctuary, 330-car parking area, lecture hall, information center, band shell, and lookout point.²

In the spring of 1961, the mayor's plan for an independent board of trustees to control the future of the Gardens was submitted to the Park and Recreation Board. Then the plan was abandoned, submitted again, taken under advisement, and approved, only to be rescinded by the Board and vetoed by the mayor. An agreement was finally reached, and by September 1961 the mayor headed the Lane Park Committee. His Conservatory Advisory Committee consisted of Claude Lawson, Herbert Warren, Mrs. Horace Hammond, and Ollie Frazer, while Hugh Comer served as chairman. They broke ground for the Conservatory, with Welborn Construction Company making the low bid of $161,000.³
At the 1964 meeting with the Downtown Action Committee for development of the Gardens are DAC members James S. Crow and Harry Hoile with Mel Wallace, Mrs. Horace Hammond, Jack McSpadden, and Dr. Lee Turlington.

When the Conservatory opened on December 18, 1962, the display amazed streams of visitors. A life-size mill with a waterwheel propelled by a bubbling brook was surrounded by 12,000 plants of 100 different varieties, ranging from a philodendron to a coffee tree. Carl F. Mattil, a city horticulturist, became the Gardens’ first director. Despite money squabbles, plants came from botanical gardens in Frankfurt, Germany; Montreal and Niagara, Canada; and Asheville, North Carolina. Large crowds continued to enjoy seasonal displays at the Conservatory, with chrysanthemums in the fall and poinsettias in the winter as favorites.¹

On April 1, 1963, Mrs. Horace Hammond gave to the city a floral clock valued at $15,232 to grace the front of the Conservatory. Garden clock inventor John Clark, of Scotland and Ontario, designed the clock with a 26-foot-diameter face and an overall dimension of 40 x 60 feet. The face of the clock, planted with 5,000 flowers against a background of crushed white marble, had an hour hand 9 feet...
Mrs. Horace Hammond dedicated the floral clock to the Gardens in April 1963.

long and a minute hand stretching over 12 feet toward floral Roman numerals. The dedication date, April 4, 1963, was planted in flowers at the top of the clock, and the words Tempus Fugit, “time flees,” were inscribed at the bottom.

The next month began with the first Fiesta, coordinated by the Federated Women’s Garden Clubs. This two-day plant sale on May 2 and 3, 1963, raised money for a horticultural building at the Gardens. This was the beginning of these annual fund-raisers, which have since expanded into a major production. By September, Melbourne D. Wallace, a horticulturist from Brigham Young University, became the assistant to director Carl Mattil. Due to budget constraints the city moved its nursery from George Ward Park to the Botanical Gardens until the city built its nursery in Spain Park in the early 1970s. When Mattil left the Gardens to head up the nursery, Wallace became the Gardens horticulturist.

After extensive rains during April 1964, an old skeleton, possibly 100 years old, was unearthed at the Gardens. This discovery recalled former uses of the area. Springs in the southern sector had attracted
Indians, and arrowheads were frequently found there. Could the skeleton have been from the massacre of a small Indian family in the 1850s? William Pullen, Sr., William Pullen, Jr., Mrs. Jesse H. Hickman, the Eubanks family, and Joseph Byars were some of the early title-holders of the land from 1822 to 1874. During the 1870s, Dr. George Eubanks and Dr. Charles Whelan operated a “pest house” there.  

In the late 19th century, the City of Birmingham paid $29,000 for 200 acres to be used as a paupers’ cemetery. Nearly 5,000 bodies were buried there; the last internment was in 1909. In 1910, a tent-city tuberculosis sanitarium was established in the northeast portion of the area. In 1929, the city property was named Lane Park, in honor of A. O. Lane, who was mayor when the land was purchased. The bones found in 1964 may have been associated with any one of these former owners or inmates.

At the encouragement of Jimmy Morgan, the Park Board appointed the Botanical Gardens Advisory Committee. By the end of October 1964, the Park Board established “the Birmingham Botanical Society, a membership organization to support and improve the Gardens.” For continuity, and due to his enthusiastic support, Dr. Lee F. Turlington, who had been president of the Conservatory Advisory Committee, became the first Society president. The executive committee also included Mrs. Hugh Comer, vice-
The first Sidewalk Art Show at the Gardens brought over 35,000 visitors.

An illuminated fountain, donated by John E. Meyer and designed by architect Charles H. McCauley, became a reality in December 1965.
president; Mrs. Hugh Kaul, secretary; Tom McClellan II, treasurer; and Mrs. Horace Hammond, membership chairman. Others were Mrs. Harvey Hooks, Charles Headley, Jack McSpadden, and Fritz Woehle, the Society’s architect. Membership categories included $10 for regular, $500 for life, and $1,000 for associate life memberships.”

The Society inherited what the Conservatory Advisory Committee had accomplished: an air-conditioned state-of-the-art conservatory, parking lots with a chert road circling in a figure eight through the Gardens, a widened Cahaba Road with turn lanes and a paved entrance, a floral clock, and the orchid collection of the late Gordon Sholes of Homewood. Dr. Turlington, a surgeon and gynecologist, was “a camellia aficionado who also loved roses and spent a lot of time in his greenhouses,” recalled his daughter Lula Rose Blackwell. “He was particularly interested in the Conservatory and the correct care for the camellias growing there.”

Having inherited the “smallest public gardens that one could drive through,” Dr. Turlington and the Society adopted the Conservatory Advisory Committee’s proposals for a reflecting pool with a fountain and a Japanese Garden, and launched several new projects. In early May of 1965, the city’s 14th annual Sidewalk Art Show moved from Woodrow Wilson Park to the Gardens for the first time. Seventeen blooming acres were set aside for paintings hung from clotheslines and tables decked with sculpture, jewelry, wood-carvings, and basket weaving. While artists sketched their subjects, over 35,000 visitors came to view the art, see puppet shows, and listen to live music.

The illuminated reflecting pool and fountain, proposed for the entrance of the Conservatory below the floral clock, became a reality in December of 1965. Cox Engineering submitted the low bid of $19,372 for the oval pool which measured 70 x 30 feet. It had 16 fan-type sprays and a center spray that forced water 15 feet into the air. Underwater blue, red, and green lights illuminated the sprays in a pattern that changed every three minutes. Morgan found a donor in John E. Meyer, president of the Meyer Foundation.

Meanwhile, the major project of the Society and Federated Garden Clubs was to establish a Japanese Garden. The dying wishes of Katie Parsons, a Japanese mother of four children who had returned to her Japanese home with an incurable brain tumor, became public knowledge after her husband returned to Birmingham. Former Mayor Jimmy Morgan, a representative of the Park Board, responded to Parsons’s plea to develop an avicultural garden in his wife’s memory, dedicated to the children of Alabama. With a site already proposed and public interest increasing, Morgan launched an initiative to locate donors. Soon the Federated Garden Clubs of Jefferson County agreed to back the project, naming Mrs. Arthur Black as manager of the fundraiser. Mrs. Black’s efforts produced $34,451. Support also came from the Birmingham Audubon Society and the Birmingham chapter of the National
Japanese Gardens, sketched by architect Masaji "Buffy" Murai, are many gardens, each telling a different nature story.
Association of Accountants, as well as from the city’s children and its public. The Park and Recreation Board also contributed $22,776 in the form of heavy equipment, labor, and plant material.¹³

In the midst of the Japanese Gardens development, Dr. Turlington asked his friend and neighbor William Ransom Johnson Dunn, Jr., to become president of the Society. A construction company executive, Dunn had been involved with the Birmingham Botanical Gardens’ growth as “chairman of the African Violet Society, but felt he needed to know more. Therefore, he traveled to other gardens and was on a first-name basis with the heads of the Brooklyn and Longwood gardens,” recalled his wife, Beverley.¹⁴

Local architect Darcey Tatum worked with Masaji “Buffy” Murai, a Japanese architect from St. Louis, “to develop the finest Japanese Garden in the nation.” Six hundred tons of rock came from Oak Mountain, and earth was moved to create mounds, a waterfall, a lake, and an island. After four weeks, the allotted funds were gone, while the garden was only halfway completed. The Society then asked the public for $50,000 to finish the job. Art Rice, chairman of the Birmingham Association of Home Builders, supervised the teahouse addition to the Gardens. The Shades Valley Rotary Club assisted with the Friendship Walk, which was to be bordered by cherry trees, bonsai, and stones, with a lantern as its focal point.¹⁵

A result of U.S. Senator John Sparkman’s negotiations with his longtime friend, the Japanese ambassador, was that the Japanese Trade Association gave the New York World’s Fair Teahouse, tatami mats, bamboo ceilings, and shoji screens to
The Ceremonial Teahouse was moved from the 1965 World's Fair in New York to the Birmingham Japanese Gardens.

Birmingham. Fritz Woehle flew to New York and "found mass confusion around the teahouse site. Since Japan had not paid taxes on sales during the Fair, the government had closed off the area and was breaking up everything. The truck driver and I quickly took down whole teahouse walls at one time. Since there were no nails, we could pull the pegs out of intricate parts. We did this disassembling in less than a day, went out the way we entered, and 'illegally' took the teahouse," recalled Woehle. "In reassembling it, we had only our pictures, but it worked out fine." ¹⁶

Even though Leroy Osborne, Sr., cut the cost of the transportation, completion of the project was estimated at $100,000. The public was fascinated with the teahouse addition, and one early donation of $10,000 came from Mr. and Mrs. Claude Grayson. By the spring of 1966, only $17,500 was needed to complete the work. Albert Mills, chairman of the Birmingham Downtown Improvement Association, along with Jack McSpadden and Jimmy Morgan, agreed to support a fund drive. A media blitz also helped raise the needed funds. ¹⁷

While finances for the Japanese Gardens were in limbo, Dunn thought of another way to increase interest and funds in the Gardens. At a Founder's Luncheon on February 10, 1967, he and the Society established the Birmingham Botanical Society Women's Auxiliary. Mrs. C. W. Walter, a neighbor of Dunn, was elected president, an
Architect Murai at the Japanese Gardens

Scenes at the Japanese Gardens: (top right) a bridge and (above) one of the seven falls of the Seven Virtues Waterfalls, which flows into Long Life Lake.
office to be held for two years. Auxiliary dues were $3. One of the immediate projects that the Auxiliary assumed was to escort groups through the incomplete Japanese Gardens. Average weekly attendance on those tours during the month of August was 7,300, which included 1,900 visitors from outside the state. Clearly, the new Japanese additions and docent tours significantly increased attendance and public awareness.  

During the final stages of the Japanese Gardens construction, the Dunns invited the Japanese ambassador to lunch at their home. Dunn told him that to increase support for the Gardens, the newspaper had held a contest for the naming of the area. However, when the ambassador learned the chosen name, he explained that it was the name of a celebrated Japanese prostitute. Hence, the Japanese Gardens went unnamed.

A Festival of Arts salute to Japan increased interest in the Gardens. The Coca-Cola Bottlers of Japan presented twelve Japanese cherry trees. As a result of many concerted efforts, on May 6, 1967, the Japanese ambassador officially opened the collection of modified Japanese-style gardens, which covered 7½ acres, and participated in a tea ceremony in the reconstructed teahouse. The Birmingham Japanese Gardens was listed with the Brooklyn and San Francisco gardens as noteworthy, but the Japanese consul of New Orleans observed that “Birmingham is bigger and better.”

With the Japanese Gardens firmly established, Dunn embarked on other innovative practices that are continued today. “He felt a need for an annual meeting of the membership to get the group together and hear a guest speaker,” said Mrs. Dunn. “For the first dinner and lecture, which was held at The Club, I bought a new dress.”

President Dunn encouraged the Women’s Auxiliary to organize a spring Fiesta plant sale and fund-raiser. Virginia Bissell and Margaret Brungart were the first co-chairmen in 1969. The Third District of the Federated Garden Clubs supported the project as well. Five large tents filled with an array of unusual gardening equipment
The first Fiesta of the Auxiliary in 1969 raised $4,500. Sitting on the fountain wall are Mrs. C. O. Glasscock, chairman of the hostesses; Mrs. Newton Brungart, co-chairman; Mrs. C. W. Walter, Auxiliary president; and George Gambrill, staging consultant.

and plants captured the buyers’ fancy. The first Auxiliary Fiesta made $4,500, which was designated for the construction of a horticultural building at the Gardens.22

Dunn also supported Rena Webb in her desire to establish the Touch and See Nature Trail near the Rhododendron Garden. Braille signs and guide ropes aided the blind along the trail where a large felled oak tree, pine needles, maple leaves, and other items were accessible. The trail encouraged visitors to use their senses of touch and smell. In the spring of 1969, the Touch and See Nature Trail, one of seven in the nation, opened to the public.23

During the 1970s other gardens were also dedicated. The Dogwood and Lily Gardens at the Cahaba Road entrance displayed varieties of dogwoods and lilies planted around benches and paths. Mrs. Paul Frank Boon, chairman of the Iris Garden, and Alfred Brush, president of the Birmingham Area Iris Society, dedicated the Iris Garden in the spring of 1969. When the crape myrtle was selected as the city’s official flower in 1971, a crape myrtle garden was established, incorporating the 250 plants that Kmart had given earlier to the Gardens. Added to the Conservatory were two fruit-bearing cocoa trees from the Chocolate Manufacturers Association of the USA.24

In preparation for the city’s centennial in 1971, a “crash program” began. “Since the Gardens are one of the main attractions in Birmingham,” noted Mel Wallace, “we
Construction of the Garden Center building is underway.

At the first meeting held in the new Garden Center building was Mrs. William C. Kearney, director of District III of the Federated Garden Clubs; Mrs. John M. Strange, Garden Center chairman; and Mrs. James Durden, president of the Garden Clubs of America.
need to beautify the entrance areas, finish work in the established gardens, and add curbs and gutters.” A narrated introductory film or slide show of the Gardens was also proposed, if money were available.25

Even with these developments and activities in progress, the foremost goal of Dunn and the Board was to raise funds for a Garden Center building. Committee members included Mrs. John M. Strange, chairman of the building committee; Mrs. Frank Dixon, finance chairman; Mrs. Howard Nelson; and Mrs. Felton Wimberly, Jr. After diligent efforts spanning two decades, the Third District of the Federated Garden Clubs gave the city $200,000 for the building. The city chose Charles H. McCauley as architect. At the dedication of the new structure in 1971, Don Hawkins, president of the Park Board, honored Mrs. Strange by announcing that the auditorium had been named for her. The Rotunda was given by Mila Brain Hendon to honor John Franklin Hendon.26

Along with garden dedications came the addition of the Frances Spain Hodges Room to the Garden Center building. Funding for the room came from the 1972 Fiesta proceeds and gifts from her children, Chapline Hodges, III, and Ellen Hodges.

Children, sister, and father of Frances Spain Hodges gathered for room dedication: Chap Hodges, III, Mrs. W. C. McDonald, Jr., Frank Spain, and Ellen Hodges Weatherford.

Architect Charles McCauley was involved in the early building plans at the Gardens.
Weatherford; her sister, Peggy Spain McDonald; and her father, Frank Spain. Mrs. Hodges had served the Gardens as its second Auxiliary president. The Hodges Room originally had sliding glass doors which opened onto a terrace. The room is still used for meetings and luncheons.27

Dunn brought Dick Lighty, chairman of garden studies at the University of Delaware and geneticist at Longwood Gardens, to assess the Birmingham Gardens’ situation. Lighty suggested 26-year-old Gary Gerlach for director. Gerlach had received his M.S. degree in Administration of Public Lands and Gardens under Lighty, and had just completed his U.S. Army obligation. Gerlach was one of four applicants interviewed by the Jefferson County Personnel Board. In September 1971, Gerlach became the director of the Gardens. “After a year, Lighty returned and gave Gerlach a vote of confidence,” remarked Beverley Dunn. Acting director Mel Wallace continued as assistant horticulturist for the Park Board.28

Because of a heart attack, Dunn resigned his presidency, which had lasted from 1966 to 1972. He served the longest of any president, before or since. During his six-year tenure, Dunn built on Morgan’s and Turlington’s visions, and encouraged growth
of the Gardens in other innovative directions.  

Thus, from its beginning, the Birmingham Botanical Gardens attracted crowds with the development of the largest conservatory in the Southeast, seasonal displays, floral clock, illuminated fountain, Japanese Gardens, and Garden Center building. An independent board, separate from the Park Board, accommodated the growth and offered advice. Top priorities were increasing membership, adding gardens, and completing the master plan—worthy goals that remain relevant today. The vision, ingenuity, and dedication of Mayor Jimmy Morgan established the Gardens, the independent board, and the Birmingham Botanical Society. With the accomplishments of presidents Turlington and Dunn, and the later addition of the Auxiliary, the Birmingham Botanical Gardens was well on its way to becoming the greatest Botanical Gardens in the Southeast.

![Garden Center building](image)

The Garden Center building, designed by Charles McCauley, was completed in 1971.
CHAPTER TWO

The Way It Was

Before Billy Dunn retired as president, he presented long-range plans for the development of the Gardens. He delineated the purpose, staff positions, and job descriptions needed to fulfill his concepts. With the arrival of director Gary Gerlach and the election of James H. McCary, III, as Society president in 1973, the Gardens continued to move forward. McCary served as vice president of investments at Southern Life and Health Insurance Company. “Jim always gardened but didn’t know any of the names of flowers,” Lynette McCary said. “He called everything a ‘petunia.’ He was really interested in a vegetable garden, to show people how best to grow them. Jim also gave fruit trees to line the bank of the vegetable garden. It was not unusual to find him raking leaves in the Gardens or working in the greenhouse. He insisted that I get involved too, so he put me in charge of membership.”

When the Garden Center was completed, the city built a gate connecting it to a small stone structure that housed a gatekeeper. His task was to collect admission fees, but those were not enough to pay his salary, so the city stopped charging admission. Later, the Society requested the use of the little building beyond the gate to sell garden items—hence the name “Gatehouse Gift Shop.” Due to the combined efforts of the Society and the Auxiliary, the Gatehouse Gift Shop opened during McCary’s tenure as president and while Mrs. Mack A. Rikard was Auxiliary president. Gift shop committee included Mrs. P. M. Benton, chairman; Mrs. L. H. Amberson, co-
chairman; Allen D. Collins, treasurer; and Mrs. Kirk Parler, manager. Proceeds from the sales continue to be reinvested in the Gardens.

The Horace Hammond Memorial Library was established in 1973. Members of the Third District of the Federated Garden Clubs gave a nucleus of books at a book fair. They purchased horticultural books selected by director Gerlach, which were already on the shelves, and donated them back to the library. Ida Burns was the first volunteer to begin cataloging. Mrs. Raymond Worshan was hired through a CETA program to type and classify the books. “She was a high school librarian, a professional,
and taught me everything I needed to know in about a day,” remembered Ida. In a short time, the Hammond Library became the largest public horticultural library in Alabama. Today it is part of the Jefferson County Public Library System.3

Outside, the weathered entrance gate to the Japanese Gardens was replaced by the Torii Gate. Torii means “Gateway to Heaven.” Funded by the Women’s Auxiliary, the 15-foot-high gate still greets visitors today.4

Mrs. T. Felton Wimberly, Jr., a knowledgeable gardener, served as Society president from 1976 to 1977. She had been actively involved in raising money for the Garden Center building. “Mrs. Wimberly told Jody Hamre and me that one of the people she solicited was Mervyn Sterne, founder and president of Sterne, Agee Investment Company,” recalled Mary Carolyn Boothby. “He told her to first seek money from First National Bank and then come back to him. She did, and after getting $25,000 from the bank, Sterne did the rest.” Weesie Smith remembers Margaret Tutwiler Wimberly as “a wildflower person, and chairman of that garden. She brought in the architect for it.”5

“She also believed in the importance of being scientific at the Gardens, and was instrumental in developing the herbarium, a dried plant collection,” recalled Shelley Lindstrom. Burgess Steeves was also instrumental in establishing the herbarium. Mounted specimens in the herbarium cabinets helped document plants in Alabama and in local gardens for any season. The new herbarium, long since expanded, is housed in the new 1999 education complex.6
Above: The original Gatehouse Gift Shop got its name because of the gate connecting it to the Garden Center.

Left: The Torii Gate welcomes visitors to the Japanese Gardens.

Ida Burns helped establish the Horace Hammond Library at the Gardens in 1973, and she still shelves books today.
While Mrs. Wimberly served as Society president, the nation celebrated its bicentennial. Of the many events at the Gardens, one in particular is still evident today. In 1976, the Gardens planted a 3-foot-tall Eastern Sycamore sapling that sprang from seeds that had traveled to the moon and back on Apollo 14 in 1971. In 1998, the “Moon Tree” measured 84 feet tall, growing across from the entrance to the Alabama Woodlands Garden.  

Margaret Wimberly and C. W. Walter invited their banker friend Stan Mackin to tour the Gardens with them. They explained their goals and asked Mackin to serve as president from 1978 to 1979. “I thought the request somewhat strange at first,” remarked Mackin. “Even though I had lots of bulbs and flowers at home, I had never paid much attention to the Gardens before, but they sold me on them. I think the real job they wanted me to do was to raise money. The momentum was good, and they had accomplished a lot by creating an environment ready for growth. We grappled with the future of the Gardens, the lack of money, and started the movement going which ended up later as the Gardens’ first major capital campaign. It was a gratifying experience.”

Mrs. Tom Tartt Brown, who had served as Auxiliary president from 1977 to 1979, moved into the Society presidency for
a year. Virginia’s knowledge, help with fund-raising, and expanding membership were vital. Today she remains active at the Gardens.

Winn Brooks, a retired engineer for Hayes Aircraft, became president of the Society in 1981. That year a garden was dedicated to noted flower arranger and garden enthusiast Beth McReynolds. Her style drew on Japanese and English elements combined with Southern plant material. The small glade outside the Hodges Room became the Beth McReynolds Memorial Garden. Given by her friends and pupils, and designed by landscape architect George Gambrill, the garden included some plants from her own garden. With the recent renovations, it has been relocated.9

Brooks’s interests centered around bonsai. As president of the Bonsai Society, he had some 200 small displays of bonsai in his home. Wanting to share this ancient sculptured plant form with the public, Brooks became the architect of the Bonsai com-

The McReynolds Garden reflected the plants that she loved to use in her famous flower arrangements, captured here in the Arthur Stewart painting.
plex at the Gardens. “He went at it wholeheartedly, researching it and finding the money to complete the complex,” recalled Andy Rector. “He called the complex ‘the best and biggest in the world.’ ” It is still a fascinating part of the Japanese Gardens.30

From 1982 to 1983, Dr. John A. Floyd, Jr., senior horticulturist of Southern Living, served as Society president. The Auxiliary provided the money to bring noted landscape architect Robert Marvin of South Carolina to the Gardens to formulate the second master plan. Floyd’s goal was to help obtain the money for the second master plan, and convince Frances Blount to chair the fund-raising. This was the first comprehensive renovation since the Gardens had been established in 1962. Forty of the original 67 acres had been developed. At the heart of the master plan was the construction of a new headquarters building with about 22,000 square feet. The plan also showed a redesigned entrance, parking area, and path and road system which led to the relocation and renovation of some gardens and the addition of new ones.11

“A garden is never finished, thus the master plan will give direction for future ideas,” explained Marvin. “My plans are designed around the room concept, which suggests that each garden is a room within a house and maintains its identity while being physically connected.” The master plan committee changed throughout its seven years of operation, but members included Mary Carolyn Boothby, chairman; Frances Blount, head of solicitation; and Rose Steiner, public relations. Other participating members were Jody Hamre, Virginia Brown, Dale Carruthers, Dr. John A. Floyd, Jr., Dot Ireland, Jan Elliott, Gary Gerlach, Jewrette Johnson, Leo Karpeles, Jr., Ed Lawrence, Carolyn Satterfield, Tom Williams, J. E. Starbuck, Lucile Tutwiler, C. W. Walter, Weesie Smith, Bobbe Kaul, and Fay Ireland.12

John C. Carraway, architect for the new Garden Center building, had to work around the 1971 contemporary-style columned Rotunda. By changing the entrance location and creating a traditional-style addition that featured pediments, arched mullioned windows, limestone-capped columns, ornamental railings, and an arcade and balcony, he designed a magnificent structure. The gray, stuccoed facade blended with the surroundings and opened onto a landscaped sculpture plaza and gardens instead of the parking lot.13

Different Birmingham landscape architects were hired to create a variety of designs within the bounds of the master plan. They completed most of the gardens
The Way It Was

Architect John Carraway designed a Classical-style Garden Center building and used the plaza and bridge to connect with the gardens.

before the Center opened. The cost of the entire project was estimated at $5 million. City bond money provided $2 million while the remainder came from corporate and private donors. Ten percent of all money raised went into a maintenance endowment fund to ensure the continuing beauty of the Gardens.¹⁴

“With the strengths and commitment of Frances Blount, we did not need a professional fund-raiser,” Floyd explained. “We would go together on our daily pursuit of $3 million. On one of our trips, she needed to stop at Vogue Cleaners. This was before cell phones, so while she was in the cleaners, she called Hugh Kaul and asked him if he had decided to give to the master plan. He did. She got $200,000 from him while she was at the cleaners,” recalled Floyd with a chuckle. “Kaul felt it was important to see that the Gardens was able to grow and be as nationally recognized as the wildflower garden. Frances Blount made it easy for me to be president,” Floyd concluded.¹⁵

Blount raised money for both the new building and the new gardens. The minimum gift for a room or garden that was to be named was $60,000. “When Jamie French and Beverley Dunn agreed to donate the Rose Garden,” continued Floyd, “they were the first major corporate donor and a signal to the corporate community. We saw the Federated Garden Clubs and the Society come together when we asked for a $300
pledge from every one of the 1,200 Society members and from the Federated Garden Clubs. We were impressed when more than half of the total members responded favorably. The massive project unified us and made us think of the possibilities.”

Not all the money came from corporate or membership giving. “The Fern Society gave the lighting in the auditorium; all the steel in the building came from an anonymous source with Federated Garden Club ties; and the Cabaniss Walk in the formal garden, designed by Tommy Holcombe and Kerry Wood, is marked by bronze initials placed in a small section of the walk. We also discovered the real strength not only from the Society but from the city as well, because our portion of the bond issue had the highest percentage passage of any on the list. This confidence spilled over to the employees too,” Floyd noted.

In 1981, Floyd was instrumental in establishing A Garden for Southern Living designed by Norman Kent Johnson with a flowering border created by landscape architect Fred Thode of South Carolina. Located near the Cahaba Road entrance, this garden demonstrates a low-maintenance plan for small pocket gardens and was the first continuous Southern flower border on public display in the mid-South. The gazebo herein was an original Southern Living design, and the garden continues to be a photographic resource for the magazine. Floyd remains active on the Society board and continues to help where needed. He was extremely pleased when the Birmingham Botanical Gardens was named one of the magazine’s top Readers’ Choices for 1996, that the Alabama Symphony Orchestra gave outdoor summer concerts at the Gardens, and that 374 couples were married in the Gardens during his presidency—more than one wedding per day.

In 1984, Mrs. F. Donald Hamre became Society president and served three years. Like Virginia Brown, she had just completed her two-year presidency of the Women’s Auxiliary and was very knowledgeable of the needs and direction ahead for the Gardens. Jody Hamre was also a landscape designer. She worked with Carolyn D. Tynes and Mary Carolyn Boothby to create the Enthusiast and Vegetable Gardens. Jody has continued to be an active board member and to design garden areas. At present she is completing the landscaping for the lateral area that runs from the entrance gates to the plaza.
At the 1986 groundbreaking for the new Garden Center are Park and Recreation president Shelley Stewart, president Jody Hamre, and Mayor Richard Arrington, Jr.

“While I was president, we moved into trailers because of the construction on the new Garden Center structure,” Hamre recalled. “Those were tight quarters, but we continued our master plan goals. One of the important things we strived for was to bring together all the landscape architects in Birmingham to discuss the various room concepts in the Gardens. We asked them to list the first, second, and third garden preferences they wished to design. We were able to include all landscape architects in garden renovations and creations. This drew the community together. We dedicated four new gardens: The relocated Iris and Lily Gardens, the Walter Overlook, and the Wildflower Garden.” Hitachi, the Japanese sister city to Birmingham, gave two granite lanterns of the ancient traditional friendship design. A lantern weighing four tons was placed in the Japanese
Gardens at the converging point of Cahaba and Lane Park Roads. It still lights the way as a welcome to guests, and signals the terminus of the Gardens.\(^{19}\)

There were also occasional but temporary setbacks. Freezing winter temperatures, reaching as low as six below zero in January 1985, caused thousands of dollars in damage and resulted in hundreds of dead and ruined plants in the greenhouse. Because of a power failure, the pilot light went out on the greenhouse boiler, resulting in frozen and burst pipes creating damage inside six greenhouses and in the Conservatory.\(^{22}\)

When Leo M. Karpeles, Jr., was Society president in 1987, he was involved in the planned construction and implementation of the expansion. As general manager of Inverness and a vice president of Taylor and Mathis, he had the right credentials to meet the task ahead of him. “I reviewed the plans and dealt with the specifications,” said Karpeles. “Gary Gerlach and Dr. Ed Lawrence worked with me to ensure that we got things right. It was amazing to me that we didn’t even have money when we started, and we weren’t sure from where it was coming. My job was to keep the work within the budget. Fund-raisers like Frances Blount and Virginia Brown were the real heroines.”\(^{21}\)

Dedications continued. The Lawler Entrance Gates, Hess Camellia Garden, Thompson Enthusiast Garden, and the Turlington Camellia Solar House were all donated in 1987. It was not uncommon to see Leo Karpeles and future Society president Hubert Goings in their suits sweeping out an entrance area before a dedication ceremony.

Mrs. Wallace Boothby, Jr., served as president of the Society from 1988 to 1989. “I remember going to Jefferson State Junior College with Jody Hamre to Dr. John Floyd’s horticultural classes
for years," recalled Mary Carolyn. "We had our college degrees, but those classes for our landscape designing degrees were really fun. Jody was president of the Women's Auxiliary, and she asked me to attend one of the membership meetings. I heard from the treasurer report that they had $60,000 in the bank. I couldn't believe it and asked Jody about it. She said, 'I want you to become a member and be in charge of spending it.' That money became the seed money for the whole master plan, which I think was Jody’s idea, because it brought Robert Marvin to the Gardens after a thorough search."²²

Highlighting Mary Carolyn’s presidency was the opening and dedication of the new Garden Center expansion in February 1988. The Classical lines of the new structure welcomed the guests. Cutting the ribbons were Mayor Richard Arrington, Jr., Park and Recreation Board Director Melvin Miller, and Park and Recreation Board President Dr. Shelley Stewart, along with Gary Gerlach, Mary Carolyn Boothby, Leo Karpeles, and Dean Lawrence Gipson.²³
The new $2 million Garden Center included three new meeting rooms, an orientation room, administrative offices, a gift shop, a restaurant, a caterers' kitchen, a service area, and a new lobby. Frances Gorrie worked with designer Bob Moody to coordinate the interior design. Major donors included Mr. and Mrs. Houston Blount; The Linn-Henley Charitable Trust, which funded the Annie Linn Henley Study; Mrs. Frank Spain and family, who renovated the Frances Spain Hodges Room; the Hill Crest Foundation, which gave the Orientation Room; the Shades Valley Rotary Club, Fern Society, and Third District of the Federated Garden Clubs, which renovated the Ruth B. Strange Auditorium; and Dorothy Gray Moore, who presented the banquet-size, antique Persian floral Kerman rug for the Ireland Room. Another special donation came from Beverly and George Perrine, who gave the urn and weekly floral arrangements that welcome guests to the Garden Center.24

Outside the Garden Center, landscape architects Charles Greiner and Alex Vare designed the plaza which included pavers and cobblestones that had been salvaged from the Birmingham downtown of yesteryear. It was named for Frances Dean Blount in appreciation for her extraordinary efforts in raising $3 million to renovate the gardens surrounding the Center. On the plaza was the Granite Garden, three separate sculptures by Jesus Moroles of Texas. They begin with ballards and end with S-shaped curved columns that spout out water. The Granite Garden was given by Mr. and Mrs. Arnold Steiner and the National Endowment for the Arts. The plaza also has special trees such as the Shumard oaks donated by Fay Ireland to honor her thirteen grandchildren. Leading to the plaza is the Harry Lauder's Walking Stick distinguished by its twisted limbs and winter catkins.25

With the new Center came new gardens, making a total of 22 formal gardens and the 7½-acre Japanese
At the "Granite Gardens" are sculptor Jesus Moroles between Arnold and Rose Steiner, and Michael and Alison.

Standing at one of the Shumard Oaks named for Fay Ireland's thirteen grandchildren are Glenn, William, Mary, and Andrew Ireland.

Landscape architect Robert Marvin successfully designed the second master plan.
Elizabeth MacQueen and Charles Parks of Delaware, local artists Cordray Parker, Frank Fleming, Leah Cobb Webb, and others. The elegant night and festive auction resulted in the acquisition of many new treasures by both guests and the Gardens.

In addition to designing gardens with Jody Hamre, Mary Carolyn Boothby has remained an invaluable spokesperson on the Society board. "As a community enterprise, the Gardens has been a force for bringing together many diverse groups and individuals," summarized Mary Carolyn. "It serves as a good example of what can be accomplished by volunteers who have been willing to work selflessly and devotedly together. Those who are mentioned here are but a few of those who contributed time, thought, and hard work along with the generous gifts. The named and the anonymous have made it all possible."

Hubert W. Goings, Jr., Chairman of the Board of Engel Realty, followed as Society president for one year in 1990. "Mary Carolyn knew I had interests in gardening," explained Goings. "She said we needed a male to keep the Society from looking like a wives' club. The ladies knew so much
more about their goals for the Gardens than I did. However, my friend, former president Leo Karpeles told me I could handle whatever came up. It was an enjoyable year."

Goings jumped on the fast track. Less than one month after taking office, he presided over the Society’s 25th anniversary. The Silver Celebration Anniversary Party drew a sell-out crowd. Highlighting the reception and dinner was John Floyd’s audiovisual presentation of the Gardens’ development, a gift from *Southern Living*. 39

Goings also participated with the city in selecting a restaurateur for the new facility. Khosrow Nasser, formerly of Iran, was chosen. Café de France, with elegant hunter green and brass decor, soon earned a three-star rating. 31

Mrs. Lee B. Chapman, a landscape designer, became Society president in 1991. Karen had been the liaison between architect Robert Zion of New Jersey and LaVona and Billy Rushton for the design of their European garden. This charming area featured latticed fences, a gravel terrace, and a canopy of boxed linden trees. The
Rushton Pavilion has been relocated with Zion’s assistance and features a slate wall with water feature that connects to a water pool. Karen also worked with Dr. Ed Lawrence in the Bog Garden to create a variety of wetland habitats. The Abroms Rhododendron Species Garden opened, wherein species from around the world are tested. “Robert Marvin returned to update his master plan,” recalled Karen. “We had workshops and studies with him to make sure we were still on target.”

The second Sculpture Auction added Utah sculptor Gary Price’s Interlude to the Gardens. A gift from Katherine Reynolds Ireland, the impressive pair of herons spray water into a pool by the Water Wall in the Hill Garden. Pauline Carroll and Bill Ireland added an oversize bronze rabbit called Hare Wearing a Collar by Frank Fleming to the Vegetable Garden. For the dedication, Karen added a whimsical touch by planting broccoli and kale for the rabbit to eat. Twenty-five botanical needlepoint squares designed by Marilyn Milstead and worked by 16 members of the Mountain Brook Chapter of the American Needlepoint Guild were also donated to the Gardens. They have been hung behind the reception desk.
Reviewing master plans are Melvin Miller, head of the Park and Recreation Board, president Karen Chapman, and landscape architect Robert Marvin.

As a result of the second sculptor auction, two pieces were added to the Gardens: (left) Interlude donated by Katherine Ireland pictured here with Bill Ireland, and (right) Hare Wearing a Collar enjoyed by Pauline and Cristy Carroll with Bill Ireland.
Disaster struck the Gardens on Good Friday, March 29, 1991, when severe straight-line winds snapped and uprooted more than 1,052 trees. What once had been stately oaks and evergreens now lay in tangled masses of debris among the blooming azaleas and bulbs. The worst damage occurred in the Hess Camellia Garden, the Rhododendron and Fern Glade, and the nationally acclaimed Kaul Wildflower Garden. Some 200 panes of glass in the Conservatory were broken. The costs of clearing 1,500 damaged trees was $146,000 and took months to complete. Belgium draft horses were brought in to replace heavy machinery that was further ruining plant life. Volunteers helped once the gardens were cleared. Landscape Services planted over 100 trees to help restore the canopy. Rotarians under Dr. Ed Lawrence’s supervision replanted 120 trees and helped in the cleanup.\textsuperscript{34}

Tragedy struck again a month later in the Japanese Gardens when vandals severed the head from a 14th-century statue of Buddha. The Asian Art Society of the Birmingham Museum of Art had given the 500-year-old sculpture. When the head was found, it was reattached.\textsuperscript{35}
The 1991 Good Friday storm caused unbelievable damage to plant life in the Gardens and the Conservatory.
Cordray Parker's Nike (Winged Victory) was given by Margot and Edgar Marx and their children.

Good fortune smiled on a totally different headless sculpture. Cordray Parker was commissioned by the Society to sculpt a piece for an art-in-the-garden project. Philip Morris, head of the Society's sculpture committee, wanted a high-quality work that would express the themes of man and nature. Parker’s Winged Victory in its fragmented form reflects the Classical mood of the Hill Garden in which it is placed, while its contemporary thrust makes it a dynamic work of art. Margot and Edgar Marx, Edgar, Jr., and Katharine Marx donated the piece in memory of Margot’s father, Simon Kessler, who died when he was fifty. “As a child I walked with my father through that wooded area before there was a Botanical Gardens,” recalled Margot. “We felt the Nike was the perfect statue to celebrate his memory because his business was women’s fashions, and the statue with its flowing garment faces toward his home.”

The next year brought Mrs. Fred W. Murray, Jr., to the Society presidency. “Mary French got me involved with the Gardens,” Allison explained. “At lunch she told me
she was interested in starting a docent program and asked me to work with her on it. We revived the program and formatted the docent booklet. We got many of our docents from the Junior League and took them on a Dart bus around the Gardens, with Gary Gerlach giving the history and highlights.\(^\text{37}\)

"That year, 1992, was the worst year for me. My husband had a heart attack, one daughter was studying outside the country, and my other daughter was planning a wedding. I was pulled every which way," remembered Allison. Nevertheless, special garden events continued. Herb Day at the Gardens, chaired by Winyss Shepard, brought noted guest speakers. At another event, Japanese floral arranger Martha Neese of South Carolina gave a demonstration. She was an assistant grand master of the Ohara School of Ikebana

and had taught several local people. *Echo*, the larger-than-life nymph sculpted by James Barnhill of North Carolina, was placed by a pool in A Garden for *Southern Living* in honor of Emory Cunningham. Time, Inc. dedicated the bronze for the spot in the gardens that Emory liked.\(^\text{38}\)

N. Thomas Williams had served on the Society board for many years. "C. Whitty Walters recruited me because he wanted some old pipe from Southern Natural Gas, and I was an executive vice president with them," said Williams. "We had used pipe available, and he wanted us to donate it for a drainage line starting under the road in the Gardens and ending at the creek in the Japanese Gardens. It was arranged, and I became a member of the board. I noticed the finances were a mess. Some of the records had been kept on the back of an envelope. So I became treasurer and brought in an audit team to locate all the money and set up a new accounting system. After five years
as treasurer, I became president of the Society.  

“Mary Carolyn Boothby, Jody Hamre, John Floyd, and Frances Blount had started the seed money for an endowment at the Gardens with 10 percent from the Garden Center fund. I wanted to grow that, and it happened by chance when we were given the Perley and McAvoy bequests,” continued Williams. Those two estate donations were the first of their kind and came unsolicited. Today they are valued at more than $1,141,553.  

While Williams was president, the Julia W. Barber Alabama Woodlands Garden was dedicated in September 1993. It stretches over 6 acres to the Japanese Gardens and features native plant material. Through the persistence of Doug Moore, a new teahouse and pavilion costing over $200,000 used some wood from the original but unstable 1965 New York World’s Fair Teahouse and materials from Japan. Built in Japan by Kazunori Tago, one of fifty remaining shrine designers, the teahouse was disassembled and rebuilt in the Gardens. Dr. Wendell Taylor funded the main gate to the cultural center, and periodically Japanese representatives plant trees commemorating the friendship between Birmingham and Japan.  

Mrs. Wilmer Poyner, III, who had served as Auxiliary president from 1991 to 1993, was selected as Society president in 1995. She had actively served the Gardens “in whatever way they needed me,” Carol explained. “I had been a docent, worked on Fiesta, led trips to the Atlanta Flower Show, helped with the sculpture auction, and did a whole bunch of
things, but nothing spectacular. The year I led the Atlanta Flower Show trip, we only made 19 cents.”

During Carol’s two-year term as Society president, the Great Chefs Series began, with Leah McKinney as chairperson. “We brought in Frank Stitt, who captivated the crowds with his herb and cooking demonstration,” remembered Leah. “Using his demonstration recipes, Bottega restaurant catered lunch. That night, Stitt was honored at a dinner and silent wine auction. We needed a way to raise money for operating funds, and that venture was designed to provide it.”

The second phase of garden development culminated around Robert Marvin’s master plan with the dedication of new gardens. The Garden Center facility more than doubled in size and usage while the number and variety of gardens increased and improved with relocation. Society presidents were more professionally associated with the Gardens, and women, often landscape designers, took the helm as well. The Auxiliary dropped the word “women’s” from its name and bylaws, thus opening its volunteer organization to men. As the financial picture was clarified and the endowment established, the Society undertook such successful fund-raisers as the Sculpture Auction and Great Chefs Series. Despite natural disasters, the Gardens were repaired with professional and volunteer care.
CHAPTER THREE

The Way It Became

As individual gardens grew according to Robert Marvin’s master plan, they took on names reflecting those who had dedicated them. In the 1960s, the Horace Hammond Floral Clock and the Meyer Foundation Illuminated Fountain had enhanced the entrance to the Conservatory. Over the next two decades, more than a dozen new gardens were dedicated.

The first new garden slated to be built as part of the new master plan, and the first dedicated, was the Iris Garden. Fay and Bill Ireland began the process in May of 1986. Garden designers Norman Kent Johnson and John Tate included crescent-shaped terraces and gazebos, which display a mass of diminutive crested iris and vernal iris planted beneath a large hickory tree. Today, iris selections include German bearded, Siberian, Dutch, Japanese, and Louisiana irises. Japanese irises with yellow flags, Italian bugloss, lamb’s ears, and blue fescue line the outside edges of a pool in the center of the garden. Terraces are planted with lovely herbaceous borders compatible with the iris. Peonies, phlox, loosestrife, sedum, Stoke’s aster, coral bells, columbine, Japanese anemones, and Russian sage in cool colors surround the borders. The bands of border color complement the irises, which begin to bloom in April and continue into June.¹

Fay Ireland worked in the Iris Garden every week she was in town to prepare for the dedication the following year. “I’d rather be digging in the garden than get dressed up to go to lunch with the ladies,” said Fay with a smile. “I had help from the Iris Society, staff gardener Larry Harper, volunteer Nancy Curtis, and others. The Auxiliary donated all the new irises. Following English garden designs, we added perennial borders, boxwood, Indian hawthorn, and wild hydrangeas.” The South Gazebo in the Iris Garden was given by the James C. Lee, Jr., family and by Elizabeth Lee Frommeyer in memory of Elizabeth Turley Lee and James Coleman Lee. The North Gazebo donated by Dorothy L. Renneker honors the memories of Sam B. and John H. Renneker.²
Legend

1. The Garden Center
2. The McReynolds Garden
3. The Rubenstein Pavilion
4. The Frances Dean Blount Plaza
5. The Hill Garden
6. The Dunn Formal Rose Garden
7. The Ireland Old Fashioned Rose Garden
8. The Formal Garden
9. The Floral Clock
10. The Conservatory
11. The Thompson Enthusiast Garden
12. The Bruno Vegetable Garden
13. The Hess Camellia Garden
14. The Burlington Camellia Solar House
15. The Kaul Wildflower Garden
16. The Fern Glade
17. The Touch and See Nature Trail
18. The Jemima Lily Garden
19. The Iris Garden
20. The Magnolia Collection
21. The Cottage
22. A Garden for Southern Living
23. The Lawler Gates
24. The Barber Alabama Garden
25. The Japanese Gardens

A. The Torii
B. The Zen Garden
C. A ribbon of river gravel
D. The Dragon's Head Stone
E. The stone bridge
F. The Falls of the Seven Virtues
G. The Turtle Rock
H. The Bridge of Accomplishment
J. The Circle of Life
K. Two large granite boulders
L. The Bonsai House
M. The Teahouse

26. Sonat Lake and Lane Path Entrance

Early Botanical Gardens map marked with gardens
Dedicated in June 1986, the Jemison Lily Garden was a gift from John S. Jemison, Jr., in memory of his mother, Margaret P. Jemison. Designed by landscape architect Jay Starbuck, the Jemison Lily Garden incorporated the daylily collection that had been established in 1968 near the Lane Park Road entrance. A wooden arbor covered with yellow jessamine introduces visitors to the garden and to the special bed of daylilies developed by Alabama hybridizers. There blooms Mel Wallace’s Grand Amen with light orange petals, Richard Webster’s award-winning Wanda Faye in soft yellow, and Smoke Rings in melon with a dark purple eye. On the other side are the miniature Donn Fischer Memorial Cup winners and Annie T. Giles Award winners. Growing at the top of the garden are the Stout Medal Award winners, the highest awards given by the American Hemerocallis Society. The Presidential Cup Award recipient, a ruffled yellow daylily bred by Julia Hardy, called Perennial Pleasure, blooms in that section. The Jemison Lily Garden has recently been redesigned by the Day Lily Society.\(^1\)

Part of the Jemison Lily Garden is The Overlook, which honors Arline Ford Walter and Charles Whitten Walter. It includes Oriental hybrids with large fragrant, owl-shaped blossoms and Asiatic hybrids of white, pink, red, yellow, and orange flowers. Also adding color are the magic lily, spider lily, and lily-of-the-valley.\(^4\)

The wildflower garden was an old garden that grew with time and volunteer talent. Barbara Orr Kaul, Weesie Smith, Margaret Wimberly, and Sue Kinner began the wild-
flower garden in 1966. With Swiss landscape architect Zenon Schreiber, they turned an old rock quarry with eroding banks and tangles of privet and honeysuckle into a naturalistic treasure. “Margaret Wimberly found a picture of Schreiber’s work in a garden book,” recalled Weesie Smith. “We liked his designs and called his New York office. They told us we couldn’t afford him. Of course, we were determined to get him, and we did. Physically limited with steel leg braces and crutches, Schreiber directed the building of the garden, rock by rock and plant by plant. He developed beds and pathways that harmonized with the original contours of the site.”

Today, springtime coaxes pure white, daisy-like blossoms of bloodroot from its forest floor. Lavender-blue phlox, apple-blossom-pink wild geraniums and foam flowers, bright yellow eared coreopsis, and red fire pinks produce a rainbow of color, shapes, and texture. Other spring bloomers include mayapple, white trillium, and shooting stars. Herbaceous and native plants such as native azaleas, mountain laurel, oakleaf hydrangea, and wild sweet crabapple also grow in abundance. The pageant of color continues through the summer and fall, when scarlet blossoms of cardinal flowers, white flowers of cohoosh bugbane, and pink blooms of fringed bleeding hearts contrast with evergreen leaves of galax and partridgeberry.

Schreiber’s design and dedicated volunteers such as Bobbe Kaul, a charter member of the Botanical Society, worked together to create an ever-changing monument to native beauty. The Kaul Wildflower Garden was dedicated in 1986. It is nationally recognized and continues to greet visitors with its changing palette of native color.
Three more gardens were dedicated in 1987. The Nettie Hess Camellia Garden was given by her family and friends. Landscape designer Carolyn D. Tynes incorporated related shrubs and trees with camellias that had been planted by the Birmingham Camellia Society twenty years earlier. Carolyn arranged deciduous azaleas, rhododendrons, flowering dogwoods, wax myrtles, and Southern magnolias with white, pink, salmon, and red camellias. A low hedge of tea plants serves as a windbreak. The centerpiece of the garden is a sunken circular lecture terrace shaped like a camellia blossom. In the middle of the terrace is a small pool where water surges through an old millstone found on-site. Seasonal pansies, tulips, Lenten roses, ferns, and caladiums surround the pool.6

The Lucille Ryals Thompson Enthusiast Garden was a gift from her husband, Hall, and their five children: Judith, Hall, Jr., George, Michael, and Lisa. Landscape designers Mary Carolyn Boothby, Jody H. Hamre, and Carolyn D. Tynes demonstrated how a homeowner can arrange a modest backyard with trees, shrubs, flowers, and vegetables. Wooden fences, yaupon and Nellie R. Stevens hollies, and Japanese cleyera provide privacy and a sense of enclosure. A boxwood hedge defines the lawn area while a brick walk and herbaceous border lend direction and color. Rectangular beds make up the vegetable garden, and espaliered fruit trees complete the backdrop. Compost bins, a cold frame, and a toolhouse are useful inclusions.7

The Turlington Camellia Solar House honors the memory of Dr. Lee F. Turlington, first Society president. Designed by Louis Joyner, a senior editor of *Southern Living*, and funded by Southern Progress Corporation, the solar greenhouse combines below-surface temperatures, sunlight storage in the brick floors, and concrete block walls. The designer utilized deciduous trees, a hillside, and a southern exposure for optimum heat exchange. At the same time, the Olivia Turlington Miller Sasanqua Circle was dedicated by her family and friends. The Miller Sasanqua Circle is located in the Hess Camellia Garden.¹⁹

Along with these gardens, the Lawler Entrance Gates on Cahaba Road were dedicated in 1987. Jim Cooper of South Carolina designed the large French ornamental wrought iron gates that had been forged at the Lawler Machine and Foundry Company. Sandra Goode Lawler and Stanley D. Lawler gave the gates in memory of their fathers, Edward Goode and Delmas Lawler, who started the Lawler Foundry in 1933.¹¹

Three additional gardens were dedicated in 1988. The Annette Bickford Ireland Old-Fashioned Rose Garden was given in her memory by her family. Designed by Robert Kirk, the garden demonstrates the variety of ways old-fashioned roses can be grown around arbors and in beds. Victorian-style fencing divides the garden into three fragrant rooms with arbors that shade the benches.¹²
The Lucille Ryals Thompson Enthusiast Garden was a gift from her husband and children.
L/R: Granddaughters Caroline and Lucy Thompson

Stan Lawler opens the Lawler Entrance Gates, designed by Jim Cooper.
Dorothy Steiner stands at one of the Twin Arched Gates, dedicated to the memory of Bernard S. Steiner.

Left: Dot Ireland enters the Ireland Old-Fashioned Rose Garden through the distinctive Moon Gate. Right: The Old-Fashioned Rose Garden was given in memory of Annette Bickford Ireland. Family members include Rucker Agee, Robin Sulzby, and Mae Jones.
The Formal Rose Garden is given in memory of the second Society president, William R. J. Dunn, Jr.

More than 50 types of roses found wild around the world and in cultivation before 1867 are in the garden. Some favorites are the China roses with banana-like fragrance; damask roses with clover-like scent; Gallica or French roses, which include the apothecary rose. Others are the moss roses, which are similar to cabbage roses; Bourbon roses, which are a cross between the China and a variant of the damask roses; and Rugosa roses, the fruits of which are used to make rose hip jelly. The York and Lancaster roses from the English War of Roses are also there. 13

Two distinctive gates are part of the Ireland Old-Fashioned Rose Garden: the Moon Gate, given by Dorothy T. Ireland and the late William Comer Ireland, and the Twin Arched Gates honoring the memory of Bernard S. Steiner and given by his wife. Perennials and shrubs line the latticed walls that lead from the gates into the garden rooms. Also in the garden is the Vaulted Arbor, given by Joy Ray in honor of her mother, Alberta Wiegand Ray, and in memory of her father, Earlston Emanuel Ray, and her sister Kathy Ray. 14

Next to the Old-Fashioned Rose Garden lies the Formal Rose Garden, given in memory of the Society’s second president, William Ransom Johnson Dunn, Jr., by his family. Since 1963, the Formal Rose Garden has been the focal garden in the original layout of the Birmingham Botanical Gardens. It was redesigned and embellished by Robert Kirk with a rose hedge and a wrought iron railing. The beds showcase five
types of modern roses. The hybrid tea roses include the prize-winning Peace rose; the fragrant, dark red Mister Lincoln; and the strongly scented Chrysler Imperial. Floribunda roses bloom profusely from spring until frost, and serve well as hedges. The grandiflora rose beds contain many All American Rose Selections, such as Queen Elizabeth and Love. Hybrid polyanthas bloom abundantly, and China Doll is a favorite. In the miniature rose section, Cinderella and Red Imp are two roses introduced by Dutch nurseryman Jan de Vink.\textsuperscript{15}

On Christmas Eve of 1988, Beverley White Dunn was surprised by her children and grandchildren with a family dedication of the Rose Garden Pergola. This columned pergola with rose trellises, which separates the Formal and Old-Fashioned Rose Gardens, was originally designed and built by Thomas Brooks. Urns at either end of the pergola were given in honor of Jeanne Cunningham by her husband, Emory. Another addition to the Rose Garden was a delicate metal topiary tempietto by artist Mario Villa of New Orleans. It stands in the center of the Formal Rose Garden in honor of the Dunn grandchildren.\textsuperscript{16}
Orchids have found a home at the Gardens too. Frances Blount asked Charles Ireland for a major donation to the Gardens in 1984. He responded with a substantial contribution, and challenged the Alabama Orchid Society and Botanical Society to match it. The monies were designated to construct a special 100- x 40-foot glass orchid greenhouse, divided into sections to provide correct temperatures. In 1987, the late Charles Ireland’s award-winning collection of over 3,000 quality plants arrived at the Gardens. Included in Ireland’s diverse collection are hybrids from every continent except Antarctica: dendrobium, with tall cane-like plants and small fragrant flowers; catteyas (cormage type) in brilliant shades of yellow, pink, purple, and white; cymbidiums; phaleanopsis vandas; and peristeria.17

In December 1988, Ann Samford Upchurch and her children: Katherine Takvorian, Virginia Collier, and Sam Upchurch, Jr., dedicated the Orchid Display Room to honor Ann’s mother, the late Mrs. Frank P. Samford. Charles Greiner and Bill Sorensen designed the orchid habitat to display three broad categories of orchids. Epiphytic orchids, which obtain nutrients and water from the air and from the surface of trees, cling to tree branches. Terrestrial types, which gather water and food from their root systems in soil, grow on rock ledges jutting from a waterfall. Lithophytes combine the growing characteristics of the others and live on columns of black lava rock. Throughout the display room hang both large and diminutive specimens in wonderful shapes, sizes, and colors. The combined gifts of the Charles Irelands, the Upchurches, the Orchid Society, and the Botanical Society have resulted in a display of one of the finest collections of orchid species and hybrids in the world.18

![Caroline Ireland with the award-winning orchid collection of her late husband, Charles Ireland](image1)

![At the Orchid Display Room, given in memory of Mrs. Frank P. Samford, are great-granddaughters Shannon, Kit, and Jeanne Upchurch.](image2)
The Hill Garden, designed by Edah Grover and Lois Harrison, was given in memory of Maye Leigh and Nelson Page Hill. It includes many aspects, and donors are front: Simmie Kayser, Jean Williamson, Ann Cochran, Jane Head Johnson, Jane Hill Head; back: Mildred and Edward Mauldin, Dot and Al Naughton, Leo Kayser, Jr.

Several families gave special gifts that created the Hill Garden. The garden itself was given in memory of Maye Leigh and Nelson Page Hill by their daughter, Jane Hill Head, and by grandchildren Beverly P. Head, III, Jane Head Johnson, Nelson Head, and Leigh Hill Allison. Landscape architects Edah Grover and Lois Harrison designed this activities garden, which has been used for every kind of event from weddings and dinners to saluting the Festival of Arts. Several entries and stairways led into the area, but the most dramatic is from the belvedere atop the Garden Center bridge. The addition of the Nike sculpture below the Belvedere enhances the garden as well.¹⁹

The focal point of the rectangular Hill Garden is the Garden Wall with its black slate water wall center. Audible sounds of water falling into the pond below are soothing. This wall honors the memory of George and Margaret Cochran, and was given by their children and grandchildren, George Lightfoot Cochran, Toby and Camey; Jean Cochran Williamson, John, Jr., Wendy Martin, and Margaret Brooke; Ann Cochran; and James Terry Cochran, Dan and Gina. Reeds and grasses in the pond create a natural setting for the great heron sculpture.²⁰

South of the Garden Wall is the rectangular Kayser Lily Pool, where still water mirrors the water wall. Charles Thomas, president of Lilypons Water Gardens in Maryland, gave a seminar on planting a water garden to include day- and night-bloom-
ing lilies, lotus, papyrus, fish, and snails. The pool and seminar were gifts of Simmie and Leo Kayser, Jr.  

Another focal point is a glass-roof gazebo from England that visually links the Classical Garden Center lines with the Victorian Conservatory. Coral vine and annuals in various-size pots near backless benches soften the white metal glass structure. Mallie and Glenn Ireland, II, honored Katharine Reynolds Ireland with this gift.  

The hardscape of the garden is composed of dark slate pavers set into scored concrete. Crushed limestone around the bases of Japanese zelkovas and symmetrical rows of Vitex agnus-castus contrast with zoysia lawn accents. The West Entry Gates designed by George Gambrill were cast at the Naughton Foundry. Dot and Al Naughton and Mildred and Edward Mauldin gave the gates in memory of their parents, Mildred Sadler Preuit and Florence and Thomas Joseph Naughton.  

A vegetable garden had been part of the Gardens since 1973, but with the implementation of the second master plan, it needed renovation. Bruno’s, Inc. made this possible. Designed by Mary Carolyn Boothby, Jody H. Hamre, and Carolyn D. Tynes, the fruit and vegetable beds became teaching sources for city children who had not seen watermelons and cotton grow. Some fruits and vegetables were left unharvested to show the entire life cycle of the plants. The visitor could also see unusual vegetables, new varieties, and new planting techniques. Arbors and fences with trailing vines enclosed the area, yielding a room-like effect.  

A badly eroded hillside was redesigned as the Herb Terrace, and the correct soil composition and drainage were installed. The Herb Association of the Birmingham Botanical Gardens planted medicinal, culinary, aromatic, and cosmetic herbs. Here, the profusion of color and aroma enhance the blue corn, Chinese artichokes, chicory, and other exotic vegetables in the garden below. The improvement of the Herb Terrace is a result of work by the Herb Association and its champion, Mary Jean Morawetz. Continuing to correct the wash area were members of District III of the
Bruno's, Inc. donated the Vegetable Garden, a teaching garden designed by Mary Carolyn Boothby, Jody Hamre, and Carolyn Tynes. L/R: Ronald, Lee, Angelo, and Joe Bruno.

The Herb Terrace emerged from an eroded, clay hill and was transformed by the Herb Association of the Birmingham Botanical Gardens.
Federated Garden Clubs. They also contributed bulbs, sunflowers, and coneflowers to the new area designed by David Snider and named the Garden Clubbers’ Meadow Garden. Nearby is a miniature orchard whose branches of dwarf apple varieties are supported by a low fence. In contrast to the scarecrow in the vegetable garden, Frank Fleming’s oversize sculpture of the Hare sits in the orchard.25

Rhododendrons have always had their place in the Gardens. When Mrs. Harvey Hooks was president of the Rhododendron Society in 1972, she asked Irvin T. Nelson, a noted landscape artist, to design the 3 1/2-acre garden. In 1975, Mrs. George T. Curry, president of the Crestline Garden Club, became chairman of that garden and made the revival of the garden “her project.” Through her leadership the neglected area was transformed with the addition of 2,500 rhododendrons, azaleas, and companion plants. She adapted the rocky terrain to form a pool and waterfall with the help of noted nurseryman Beaty Hanna. For their volunteer efforts in resurrecting the rhododendron garden, the Crestline Garden Club was awarded the Kellogg Medal for Civic Achievement.26

The Rhododendron Species Garden was dedicated in May 1991 by Judy and Harold Abroms in honor of their grandchildren, Justin, Alyza, and Lila Berman; Michelle, David, and Sarah Abroms; and Rebecca, Michael, and Julia Genz. It also contains an
arbor swing in memory of Andy Abroms. The plants in this garden are species, therefore botanically distinct and a genetic resource. Landscape designer Norman Kent Johnson organized the rhododendrons according to their region of origin. In the China bed are those from Tibet, Manchuria, Szechwan, and Yunnan. A stream with pools meanders around plants from Japan, Eurasia, Taiwan, Korea, and North America.27

The master plan also called for a native woodlands area. In September 1993, the 6-acre Julia W. Barber Alabama Woodlands was given by her family. Landscape architect Robert Kirk created a habitat for 200 species of birds, butterflies, damselflies, reptiles, amphibians, squirrels, chipmunks, cottontail rabbits, and bats. The plantings and landscaping used natural elements so that brush piles become homes for the animals. Along with dead timber, a 250-foot boardwalk, and the pond, there are varieties of native trees, flowering shrubs, berries, and wildflowers that provide color throughout the year. Numerous animals and insects also live there. This garden is a valuable environmental teaching resource and has evolved under the leadership of Becky Smith.28
The Julia Barber Alabama Woodlands, designed by Robert Kirk, is an ecological teaching garden. Barber grandchildren and great-grandchildren are Leslie Hicks, Fritz Woehle, Jr., Kay Woehle, Jane Hicks, Kathryn Porter, Boots Ludington, Jay Porter, and Katie Porter in front.

The Chenoweth Conservatory Entrance and water clock with Frank Fleming sculptures are designed by Jay Starbuck. L/R seated: Dr. and Mrs. Arthur Chenoweth; standing: Frank Fleming and Babs Chenoweth Shelton
The Bog Garden was devised by landscape designer Karen Chapman and Dr. Ed R. Lawrence, who was the Society’s project manager at the Gardens during the construction of the Garden Center building. As liaison between the Society and its contractors, Dr. Lawrence truly knows what’s both above and below ground. “My real love was establishing a bog garden in the 4 acres of privet covering the northeastern section of the Gardens, which had once been a part of a WPA quarry,” explained Lawrence. They took the natural creek bed to regulate the water and planted a variety of wetland plants such as cattails, swamp mallow, hibiscus, and cardinal flower. In 1995, the Sunny Bog and Meadow were dedicated to Dr. Lawrence. Also in the Bog Garden are the Margaret Johnston Elliott Gazebo and the outdoor classroom.

There are other gardens of interest. The Susan Hulsey Woods, given by William Hansell Hulsey in honor of his wife, covers 2 acres planted with Oriental forest trees. It offers a buffer between the formal Alabama Woodlands and part of the Japanese Gardens. The Fern Glade, designed by landscape architect Charles Greiner, contains worldwide representatives of hardy ferns, some of which are evergreens, deciduous, miniature, or head-high plants. A synoptic garden for serious fern study is also located there. The devoted Fern Society has steadfastly planned, maintained, and improved the Fern Glade under the leadership of Ginny Lusk. The Chenoweth entrance to the Conservatory designed by Jay Starbuck includes a redesigning of the Hammond clock, which was severely damaged in the 1991 storm. The result is a water clock with each hour designated by a woodland creature sculpted by Frank Fleming.

Separating the Conservatory, clock, and formal garden from the entrance road is a large, beautiful wrought iron gate and fence designed by George Gambrill. This was given in 1988 by Lura Fowlkes Lanier in memory of her mother, Lura Brown Fowlkes.
Other additions are the Crape Myrtle Garden designed by Michael Kirk—a gift from the Birmingham Beautification Board; the Sonat Lake and Lane Park Road Entrance; the Magnolia Garden; the Dahlia Garden; the Hosta Garden; the Enabling Garden; six greenhouses and several lath houses; and the Everett Holle water urns that provide a north/south axis to the Formal Garden.

The second master plan gave the Gardens direction and significance. It also encouraged major gifts that have allowed significant garden creation and development. Besides an ever expanding collection of flowers, shrubs, and trees, the Gardens also contains numerous award-winning plants and focal points consisting of sculpture, gazebos, gates, bridges, water urns, and arches. Whether garden room or structure, each is a testimony to the dedicated work of volunteers, landscape architects, sculptors, and benefactors.
Toward the last part of the twentieth century, the Society embarked on a new organizational plan and completed the education facility. Mrs. Frank Lindstrom, Jr., Society president from 1997 to 1998, helped accomplish these plans. Shelley had served as Fiesta chairman and Auxiliary treasurer, and had helped write the original docent manual. She had also served as the part-time Director of Education at the Gardens from 1987 until 1994. As Education Director, one of her initial projects was the Garden Gates Plant Propagation Workshops for fifth graders in the Birmingham city schools. Field trips to the Gardens, along with teacher workshops, resulted in Grow Lab classroom gardens, which reinforced the objectives of the science
curriculum. Zoogarden, Over the Rainbow, and Sunday Strolls are other early examples of Shelley’s successful education programs that are still offered.

As Society president, Shelley also announced the first endowed lecture series named for Virginia Beeland Spencer and gifted by Bill Spencer. Meanwhile, capital campaign efforts to build a new education wing continued. “While Carol Poynor was president,” Shelley remembered, “Winyss Shepard was selected as chairman of the education building committee, and she was involved in all complex issues.” Assisting Winyss were committee members Mary Carolyn Boothby, Virginia Brown, Karen Chapman, Jan Elliott, Gary Gerlach, Robert Glaze, Jody Hamre, Norman Johnson, Ed Lawrence, Carol Poynor, Arnold Steiner, Frances Blount, John Floyd, Shelley Lindstrom, Allison Murray, Becky Smith, and Tom Williams. By April 1995, in cooperation with the Mayor’s office and the Park and Recreation Board, the commit-
The Way It Could Be

Audrey Ann Wilson, 1999 education director, shows how to plant seeds.

tee had chosen architect Richard Sprague, later a principal with Henry Sprott Long & Associates, Inc., to design the new structure.

A fund-raising committee was then established. Frances Blount, chairman of fund-raising for the 1988 Garden Center addition, asked Kacy Ireland Mitchell and
Temple Tutwiler to head the new committee. "They were natural choices because the Ireland and Tutwiler families have been part of the leadership and donor groups at the Gardens from its earliest days," said Frances. In 1995, the Linn-Henley Charitable Trust made the single largest donation—$250,000—and added a challenge to the Board of Trustees to raise a minimum of $25,000 from 100 percent of its members. With 100 percent participation, the Board gave more than the required amount by raising over $40,000. The new 280-seat, sloped-floor lecture hall bears the Linn Henley name. That same year the family foundations of Hugh Kaul, Robert Meyer, and Susan Mott Webb, and the Southern Progress Corporation responded with sizable gifts. The large octagonal lobby was designated as the Southern Progress Lobby.  


Several garden clubs also responded. District III of the Federated Garden Clubs led the way, as it had earlier for the first Garden Center building. Snippers, Red Mountain, and Little Garden Clubs followed suit. The Children's Outdoor Learning Center includes a teaching greenhouse given by Virginia Spencer.

The Spencers, with support from the Orchid Society, also donated the Tissue Culture Laboratory in the Education Complex, located on the second-floor research
area. The lab is equipped to propagate and study rare and delicate plants. Near that lab is the Margaret T. Wimberly Herbarium, given by her son and his wife, Mr. and Mrs. Tom Wimberly, III, of California. It houses dried plant specimens for documentation, plant identification, and research.

Also located in this research area is the C. Beaty Hanna Horticulture and Environmental Center, the first center of its kind in Alabama. The nucleus of the center is the plant diagnostic laboratory. Staffed by Auburn employees from the Alabama Cooperative Extension System, the lab is equipped to study diseases, insects, and water quality problems that affect plants in our area and to recommend appropriate treatments. John Floyd, Don Newton, Louise Wrinkle, and Omar “Tut” Touchstone spearheaded the campaign among friends of horticulturist Hanna to match the lead gift of Landscape Services, Inc.¹

The research area has potential for use by medical schools for information on file or on actual plant material. Schools may bring students on field trips to participate in special workshops. The Birmingham Botanical plant collection serves as a breeding source for others around the country and preserves a broad base of germ plasm for genetic research. In conjunction, several gardens are used to test new plants for

Virginia Spencer shows architectural sketches of the Children's Outdoor Learning Center.
Construction began under Shelley Lindstrom’s presidency and ended during Mary Jean Morawetz’s term.

Taking part in the groundbreaking for the Education Complex are Steve Jones, director of Alabama Cooperative Extension System; County Commission president Gary White, president Shelley Lindstrom, City Council representative Bill Johnson, and director of the Gardens Gary Gerlach.
U.S.D.A. compatibility in this climate zone. The Fern Glade was recently selected as one of five test garden sites in the nation. The AARS Rose and American Hemerocallis Display Garden and the Orchid Rescue site are other examples.

Kacy Mitchell and Temple Tutwiler received the big news in the Gardens’ gift giving history in 1996. “I was leaving town for one of my children’s graduations when I received a call on my car phone,” remembered Kacy. “It was Temple. He had just shown Sam and Mary Blount around the proposed area for the education wing and was looking for a $100,000 donor. I nearly wrecked the car when he said they were going to give a million dollars with a matching challenge. That was a huge windfall, and the Society Board more than met the matching requirement. Temple and I found that many of the donors represented first-time contributors to the Gardens. We saw this as a good sign. Corporations and individuals viewed the Society as faithful and capable stewards of the Gardens.” Temple recalled, “Every socioeconomic group we asked to contribute responded favorably.”

Unfortunately in 1996, the Society and architect Rick Sprague received bad news from the subsoil geological tests for the new wing. “An underground sinkhole had been discovered, which would require almost as much construction below ground as
above ground," summarized Winyss Shepard, Education Complex committee chairperson. This subsoil complication delayed the project for a year as architectural plans were redesigned to relocate the structure, requiring another city approval. Revised plans placed the Education Complex on solid ground and required removal of the Hendon Rotunda and replacement of the Rushton Pavilion. "Fortunately, the revised plans produced a better integrated building," noted Winyss.⁶

Architect Sprague explained, "My hope was that the new Neoclassical-style Education Complex would complement John Carraway's addition of 1988. For that reason I chose the stucco exterior, arched windows, balconies, colonnades, and gabled roof accenting the entrance that were reflected in Carraway's building. Since the new education addition covers 30,000 square feet and rests on the old front of the Garden Center, the main entrance was moved back to the center of the building to face onto the parking lot and Lane Park Road."⁷

With city and building committee approval, construction began in July 1998 and was completed in the summer of 1999. Other major donations to the Education Complex include $1 million from the City of Birmingham and $250,000 from the Jefferson County Commission led by Commissioner Gary White. These funds were vital to the completion of the building. Individual donors such as Ellen Hodges Powell, who gave the monies to refurbish the Hodges Room, once again honoring the memo-

The 1998 Fiesta chairman under the big tent are Virginia Smith, Sue Ellen Lucas, and Sallie Johnson.
ry of her mother, were also significant to the overall plan.

While the capital campaign was underway, Shelley was concerned about Society and Auxiliary duplication of fund-raisers, programs, and personnel. “We felt that by merging the Auxiliary with its parent organization and by consolidating and computerizing one set of books and bank accounts, we could maximize our interests and strengthen our structure,” she explained. “In March of 1997, the Auxiliary voted to merge with the Society, and we were on our way. Slaughter Hanson Advertising agency designed a new logo, letterhead, and photography. Endowed accounts held by the Community Foundation of Greater Birmingham are the Birmingham Botanical Society Maintenance Fund, the Bruno Vegetable Garden, Herb Garden, Jemison Lily Garden, Kaul Wildflower, McAvoy, and Perley funds, and we continue to solicit other contributions.”

With merger came growth. The need for a paid support staff to ease some of the demands on the volunteers became clear. A full-time office manager and directors of development, education, and volunteers were added to coordinate fund-raising, administration, programs, and Society finances. The Society’s Executive Committee became the decision-making body, and the Board of Directors became the policy-making body that runs the Society. The Board of Trustees is the caretaker of the Society’s garden maintenance foundation and is composed of Society past presidents. Because the new education wing triples the size of the library, a librarian has also been hired. The Board authorized the first official audit of the Society, and account books have been computerized.

In 1998, the Society folded many of the Auxiliary’s fund-raisers into its own agenda. January began with the annual Society meeting including a lecture, awards, elections, and a cocktail dinner that filled the rooms with members. In March, Sakura in the Japanese Gardens highlighted Japanese cultural demonstrations and celebration of the cherry blossom festival. The Bulb Fund sponsored by District III of the Federated Garden Clubs was reflected in the new spring bulbs blooming at the Gardens.

April always means Fiesta time at the Gardens. Sallie Johnson, Sue Ellen Lucas, and Virginia Smith co-chaired the 1998 event, which began with a wine and cheese preview and patron party and continued with crowds buying plants that ranged from connoisseur items to everyday perennials. Housing plants in a 60- x 250-foot tent, the 1998 Fiesta achieved the largest turnout ever, and netted the most profits to date, over $72,000. The 1999 Fiesta co-chairs, Kathryn Porter, Vandy Wade, and Melanie Barnes, continued the success by making over $80,000. Once again, Fiesta claimed its place as the largest money raiser of the Gardens.

Summer brought the groundbreaking ceremony for the Mary M. Blount Education Complex, which doubled the size of the existing Garden Center building. With gold-
en shovels in hand, Sam and Mary Blount, Gary Gerlach, Melvin Miller, Art Grayson, Sandra Little, Bill Johnson, Steve Jones, Winyss Shepard, Gary White, and Shelley Lindstrom broke ground before a cheering crowd of Society members, city and county representatives, and guests.

Also during the summer, the "Garden Variety of Shakespeare" performed plays at the Gardens. This successful outdoor venture was a cooperative effort of the Ground Floor Theatre group and the Botanical Society. By attracting a different audience to the Gardens, the Society is able to reach more people. The program is in its third year.

The Society offered over thirty adult and children's workshops in 1998. These included family programs in the potting shed, naturalist programs, children and adult classes, and teacher workshops. Using plants to dye cloth, collecting and identifying plants, and selecting flower and foliage to create
gifts were a few of the programs offered.

As school began, the fall calendar of the Society was full. A new function was the Family Harvest Day, headed by Amy Ager with co-chair Kimberly Bean. This event brought over 200 children and families to the Gardens the last Sunday afternoon in September. One of the most popular events at Harvest Day for the children was making “tussie-mussies” with the help of the Herb Society.  

Another popular 1998 event was the second annual Great Chefs Series. Using the theme “A Taste of New Orleans,” chairperson Kathy Whatley and co-chair Peggy Rafield arranged a tasting which included a cooking demonstration by Chef Susan Spicer of New Orleans. The event netted over $23,000.

Fall Fiesta, begun in 1993 with Fay Ireland selling perennials and Nancy Curtis selling hostas, initially made between $2,000 and $3,000. In only five years, the one afternoon event has grown in the variety of plants offered. At the 1998 Fall Fiesta, chairperson Jane Martin with Susan Whatley and Janet Taylor as co-chairpersons, grossed over $13,000. On another Sunday afternoon in October, the Alabama Symphony presented a free concert entitled “A Thousand and One Nights,” which was attended by 1,400 people of all ages.
HollyDay Magic is a Christmas craft workshop that has attracted capacity crowds for over a decade. Children come in droves to make holiday decorations using natural materials. Headed by Jeanie Sherlock and Carol Carter, the 1998 monetary contribution to the Gardens from this event was over $900.

“A gift from the Gatehouse is a gift to the Gardens” is the familiar quote that reflects the philosophy of the Gatehouse. In 1988, when the new Garden Center building included space for a gift shop, the Gatehouse took on a whole new venue. Philippa Bainbridge was the volunteer in charge. She enlisted friends Frances Gorrie, Mary Bledsoe, Jean Barnett, and Margaret Elliott to go to market to broaden the scope of saleable items linked to the Gardens. Jewelry, vases, accessories, and even Beanie Babies were added to the standard collection of gardening books and flowers. In 1996, Louise Walton became volunteer in charge, and two part-time paid employees were added. Each year the Gatehouse contributes money back to the Society; in 1998, the amount was $35,000. The new Gatehouse location in the 1999 renovations places the shop near the front door and easily accessible for greater sales.13

Before the year was over, the Society sponsored several educational trips. Cherry Parmer, Japanese Gardener, went to the International Symposium of Japanese Gardens in Tokyo and Kyoto. Board members Rebecca Cohn, Norman Johnson, and

Preparing for Fall Fiesta are 1998 chairman Jane Martin and past chairman Angie Meadows.
Carol Carter and Jeanie Sherlock brought children to the Gardens for HollyDay Magic.

Using natural plant materials the children make "HollyDay Magic."

The Society is functioning well in its new combined structure. In the spring of 1999, Glorious Gardens, chaired by Holly Sibley with Ellen Rhett as co-chair, took visitors to six beautiful gardens and raised $22,000. The Sculpture Auction, with Cameron Crowe as head and Rhonda Lusco as assistant, is an additional fund-raising attraction in the fall. Glorious Gardens and the Sculpture Auction rotate every other year with the Great Chefs Series.
Volunteers are still the strength of the Society in the library and potting shed, at fund-raisers and educational functions, and as docents. Since 1993, the Birmingham Botanical Society has annually recognized one individual as Volunteer of the Year. Named the Ida Callier Burns Award for the first winner, the award reflects an excellent role model. Ida helped establish the Horace Hammond Library at the Gardens in 1972 and has been volunteering ever since. In 1991, she received the Alabama Volunteer of the Year Award for Arts and Humanities. In 1998, the Society appointed her Librarian Emeritus for her lifetime achievements. Although 96 years old, she is a wonderful mentor to Mindy Bodenhamer, the new librarian, and remains a dedicated volunteer. Not only has she been a substantial individual donor to the Education Complex, she has also recognized the Society as a major beneficiary in her will. Other Society members recognized as Volunteer of the Year since 1993 are: Fay Belt Ireland, Philippa McClellan Bainbridge, Rose Hurt Steiner, Louise Walker Goodall Smith, and Douglas I. Moore.

Leading the Society into the twenty-first century is Mrs. Richard B. Morawetz, who became president in 1999. She has served the Gardens as Herb Day coordinator, Fiesta chairman, Auxiliary secretary, and president of the Herb Association of the Birmingham Botanical Gardens. A lecturer and writer, Mary Jean was co-creator of the
The first Volunteer of the Year, Ida Burns, with the architect's renderings of the new Horace Hammond Library.

Docents show children herbs for the first time.
quarterly magazine *The Joy of Herbs*.

The primary focus of Mary Jean's first year was on the education facility, securing pledges and preparing for the openings. Coordinating opening celebrations for the Mary M. Blount Education Complex on August 28 and 29, 1999, were Rose Steiner and Sallie Johnson. The Saturday opening included teachers, principals, superintendents, and representatives from environmental, ecological, and biodiverse natural history. Major donors were greeted Sunday with a champagne welcome, followed by a luncheon, tours of the building, dedication ceremony, and lecture by Katy Moss Warner, Horticultural and Environmental Director at Walt Disney World.¹⁴

From its founding in 1964, the Birmingham Botanical Society has been served by eighteen presidents. During its 35 years of existence, the 67 1/2 acres have been developed to include over 30 designated gardens, incorporating rock quarries, creeks, eroded hillsides, and marshy sections. The building facilities have changed from a horticulturist's cottage to include the Conservatory (1962),

![Image of Mrs. Richard B. Morawetz](image)

Mrs. Richard B. Morawetz was the Society president from 1999 to 2000.

![Image of group](image)

At the Society new members luncheon are L/R: hostess Louise Wrinkle, president Mary Jean Morawetz, with new members Shirley Smith and Bob Fleenor.
Garden Center I by Charles McCauley (1971), Garden Center II by John Carraway (1988), and the Education Complex by Richard Sprague (1999). Additional expansion of these facilities has also occurred as money has become available.

However, the history of the Gardens is more than facility expansion and growing gardens. It has involved the city and county, corporations and people, students and teachers, parents and children in activities that teach. During 1998, 200,000 visitors enjoyed their garden experiences; over 1,200 meetings were conducted; and over 6,500 children and adults participated in educational programs. With the addition of the Mary M. Blount Education Complex, the Society, a volunteer organization, will be better equipped to fulfill its mission—receiving and administering resources for the promotion of knowledge and the appreciation of plants and the environment.

But this is not the final chapter because there are necessities and dreams to fulfill. The almost 40-year-old Conservatory has been in desperate need of renovation. The hope to privatize the Gardens has become a dream for decades. The desire to have more trained personnel throughout the Gardens has been a longtime goal. These are but a few of the needs and wants that would add to the way the Gardens could be.
CHAPTER 1

8. Ibid.; a golf range was also once located there.
10. Ibid., Sep. 24, 1964; interview with Mrs. William C. Blackwell.
19. Interview with Mrs. Dunn.
21. Interview with Mrs. Dunn.
28. Interviews with Mrs. Dunn and Mr. Gerlach.
29. Ibid.

CHAPTER 2


5. Interviews with Mrs. Wallace J. Boothby, Jr., and Mrs. Lindsay C. Smith.

6. Interviews with Mrs. Frank Lindstrom, Jr., and Mrs. Lindsay C. Smith.


8. Interview with J. Stanley Mackin.


10. Interview with Andy Rector; *Shades Valley Sun*, July 20, 1983.


12. Ibid.; *Shades Valley Sun*, Nov. 13, 1985; plaque listing 1987 project committee is under the plaza bridge.

13. Ibid.

14. Ibid.

15. Interview with Dr. John A. Floyd, Jr.

16. Ibid.

17. Ibid.

18. Ibid.


21. Interview with Leo M. Karpeles, Jr.

22. Interview with Mrs. Wallace Boothby, Jr.


25. Ibid.

26. Ibid.; BBG brochures.


28. Interview with Mrs. Boothby, Jr.

29. Interview with Hubert W. Goings, Jr.


36. Ibid., BBG Scrapbook, Spring 1991; interview with Mrs. Edgar Marx.

37. Interview with Mrs. Fred W. Murray, Jr.


39. Interview with Tom Williams.


42. Interview with Mrs. Wilmer Poynor, III.
43. Interview with Leah McKinney.

CHAPTER 3
1. BBG Iris Brochure.
3. BBG Lily Brochure.
4. Ibid.
5. Interview with Mrs. Lindsay C. Smith.
7. Ibid.
12. BBG Old-Fashioned Rose Brochure.
13. Ibid.
15. BBG Formal Rose Brochure.
18. Ibid., Dec. 21, 1988; BBG Orchid Brochure.
20. Ibid.
21. Ibid.
22. BBG Newsletter, August/September 1989.
23. BBG Hill Garden Brochure.
24. BBG Vegetable Garden Brochure.
27. BBG Rhododendron Species Garden Brochure.
28. BBG Alabama Woodlands Brochure.
29. Interview with Dr. Ed Lawrence.

CHAPTER 4
1. Interview with Mrs. Richard B. Shepard.
2. Interview with Mrs. William Houston Blount.
3. A list of donors who gave $1,000 and above is included in the appendix.
5. Interviews with Mrs. Guy Mitchell and Temple Tutwiler.
6. Interview with Mrs. Shepard.
7. Interview with Richard Sprague.
8. Interview with Shelley Lindstrom.
9. Interview with Mrs. James M. Johnson.
10. Interview with Amy Ager.
11. Interview with Kathy Whatley.
12. Interview with Jane Martin.
13. Interview with Mrs. A. Brand Walton.
14. Interview with Mrs. Arnold Steiner.
Appendix

BBS Executive Committee: L/R: Mrs. Donald Hamre, Mrs. Frank Lindstrom, Jr., Mrs. David M. Smith, Charles Clayton, Jr., Mrs. James Johnson, Mrs. Eugene Sherlock, Mrs. Richard Morawetz, and Mrs. Lawrence Whatley

1999 BIRMINGHAM BOTANICAL SOCIETY EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

President
President Elect
Vice President of Administration
Vice President of Fund Raising
Secretary
Treasurer
Immediate Past President
Development
Education
Gardens
Membership

Mrs. Richard B. Morawetz
Mrs. C. Lawrence Whatley
Mrs. James M. Johnson
Mrs. Donald Y. Menendez
Mrs. Richard B. Shepard
Mrs. Winfield S. Fisher, III
Mrs. Frank E. Lindstrom, Jr.
Mr. Charles Clayton, Jr.,
Mr. Fred Murray, Jr.
Mrs. Eugene Sherlock
Mrs. F. Donald Hamre
Mrs. David M. Smith
1999 BIRMINGHAM BOTANICAL SOCIETY BOARD

Mr. Eddie Aldridge
Mrs. A. Jack Allison, Jr.
Mrs. Samuel R. Blount
Mrs. Wallace J. Boothby, Jr.
Mrs. Tom Tartt Brown
Mrs. D. Joseph Burns
Mrs. Robert Carter
Mrs. Lee B. Chapman
Mr. Charles Clayton, Jr.
Mrs. Jeffrey Cohn
Mrs. John P. Cooney
Dr. Walter B. Evans
Dr. John Alex Floyd, Jr.
Dr. Robert P. Glaze
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Mrs. Richard E. Simmons, Jr.
Mrs. David M. Smith
Mrs. William E. Smith, Jr.
Mr. William M. Spencer, III
Mrs. Arnold Steiner
Mr. Douglas Stockham
Mrs. Alexander Vare
Mrs. A. Brand Walton
Mrs. John N. Wrinkle
BBS presidents: L/R: Dr. John Floyd, Jr., Tom Williams, Stan Mackin, Mrs. Frank Lindstrom, Jr., Mrs. Richard Morawetz, Mrs. Wallace Boothby, Jr., Leo Karpeles, Jr., Mrs. Donald Hamre, Mrs. Fred Murray, Jr., Mrs. Lee Chapman, and Hubert Goings, Jr.

SOCIETY PRESIDENTS

1964-1965    Dr. Lee F. Turlington
1976-1977    Mrs. T. Felton Wimberly, Jr.
1978-1979    J. Stanley Mackin
1980         Mrs. Tom Tartt Brown
1981         Winn Brooks
1982-1983    Dr. John Alex Floyd, Jr.
1984-1986    Mrs. F. Donald Hamre
1987         Leo M. Karpeles, Jr.
1988-1989    Mrs. Wallace J. Boothby, Jr.
1990         Hubert W. Goings, Jr.
1991         Mrs. Lee B. Chapman
1992         Mrs. Fred W. Murray, Jr.
1993-1994    N. Thomas Williams
1995-1996    Mrs. Wilmer Poynor, III
1999-2000    Mrs. Richard B. Morawetz
Auxiliary presidents: L/R: Mrs. Donald Hamre, Mrs. William Satterfield, Mrs. Paul Boon, Mrs. William Ireland, Mrs. Houston Blount, Mrs. Tom Carruthers, Mrs. Richard Shepard, and Mrs. Arnold Steiner

AUXILIARY PRESIDENTS

1967-1969    Mrs. C. W. Walter
1969-1971    Mrs. Chapline Hodges
1971-1973    Mrs. Jack Kidd
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1975-1977    Mrs. Paul Frank Boon
1977-1979    Mrs. Tom Tartt Brown
1979-1981    Mrs. William Houston Blount
1981-1983    Mrs. F. Donald Hamre
1983-1985    Mrs. William Ransom Ireland
1985-1987    Mrs. Thomas Carruthers
1987-1989    Mrs. Arnold Steiner
1989-1991    Mrs. Richard B. Shepard
1991-1993    Mrs. Wilmer S. Poynor, III
1993-1995    Mrs. William Hughes Satterfield
1995-1996    Mrs. C. Lawrence Whatley
Volunteers of the Year: L/R: Philippa Bainbridge, Fay Ireland, Rose Steiner, and Doug Moore

IDA CALLIER BURNS VOLUNTEERS OF THE YEAR

1993   Ida Callier Burns
1994   Fay Belt Ireland
1995   Philippa McClellan Bainbridge
1996   Rose Hurt Steiner
1997   Louise Walker Goodall Smith
1998   Douglas I. Moore
SCULPTORS

Tim Ard, “Bear”
Ruby Levier Bailey, “Little Girl,” 1919
James Barnhill of North Carolina, “Echo”
Jessie Beesley of Tennessee, boy in fountain
Pierre Breton, “Dancing Nymphs,” 1890-1930
Jim Cooper of South Carolina, Lawler Wrought Iron Gate
Frank Fleming, “Hare Wearing a Collar,” clock sculptures, “Frog on Lily Pond”
Jesus Bautista Moroles of Texas, “Granite Garden”
Brad Morton, clock hands
Cordray Parker, “Nike”
Gary L. Price of Utah, “Interlude”
Mario Villa of New Orleans, “Topiary Tempietto”
Jerry Wallin, birdbath
LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTS, DESIGNERS, and ARCHITECTS

Lafayette Beamon
Blaylock, Barber and Cooper
Mary Carolyn Boothby
Thomas Brooks
Winn Brooks
John Carraway
Karen Chapman
John Clark of Scotland and Ontario
Steve Davis
George Gambrill
Cortez George
Gary Gerlach
Charles Greiner
Edah Grover
Jody Hamre
Lois Harrison
Tommy Holcombe
Norman Kent Johnson
Louis Joyner
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Robert Kirk
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Charles McCauley
Robert Marvin
Carl Mattil
Masaji Murai
Irvin T. Nelson
Zenon Schreiber
David Snider
Richard Sprague
Bill Sorenson
Jay Starbuck
Thruston Sumner
Kazunori Tago
John Tate
Henry E. Teuscher
Fred Thode
Carolyn D. Tynes
Alexander Vare
Kerry Wood
Robert Zion
1999 SOCIETY STAFF

Director of Development  Diana Pool
Director of Education   Audrey Ann Wilson
Director of Library     Mindy Bodenhamer
Director of Volunteer Services Marie Lichtman
Office Manager          Lockett LaGroue
Bookkeeper              Marsha Smithers

1999 CITY EMPLOYEES and DATES WORK BEGAN

Director                    Gary Gerlach, 1971
District Horticulture Supervisor Linda F. Emerson, 1985

Formal and Old Fashioned Rose gardens
Alabama Woodland, and Plaza  Myra Davis, 1992
Iris, Lily, and Crape Myrtle gardens Larry Harper, 1971
Bog, Vegetable, Herb, Orchard, Formal,
and Hill gardens             Marty Martin, 1994

Formal Plaza, Sonat Lake,
Butterfly garden, and parking lot Lane Nevra, 1990
Japanese Gardens
Rhododendron and Species gardens, Fern Glade Cherry Parmer, 1993
Wildflower and Camellia gardens James Parrish, 1993
Horticultural Specialty Groover Scott Lawrence, 1971 to 1998
Taxonomist                  Gregg Clark, 1992
Greenhouse Workers          Melanie Johns, 1984
Ted Snow, 1982 and
Roderick Robinson, 1990
Permanent Laborers          Gary Bailey, 1988; Frank Grant, 1990;
Charles Pierce, 1992; Bill Smith, 1994;
Jerald Wilson, 1996
Security Guards             Joe Bouchillon, 1985;
James Childs, 1997; John White, 1997
Garden Center Staff         Frankie Harris, 1987; Alicia Andrews, 1989;
Paulette Kelly, 1994
Society staff: L/R: Marsha Smithers, Audrey Ann Wilson, Lockett LaGroue, Mindy Bodenhamer, Diana Pool, and Marie Lichtman

City employees: L/R: Marty Martin, Linda Emerson, Cherry Parmer, Larry Harper, James Parrish, and Myra Davis

City employees: L/R: Frankie Harris, Paulette Kelly, Gary Gerlach, Joe Bouchillon, and Alicia Andrews

City employees: L/R: Frank Grant, Bill Smith, Jerald Wilson, Gary Bailey, and Charles Pierce
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*As of July 12, 1999
Index

Abroms, Andy, 57
Abroms, David, 56
Abroms, Harold, 56
Abroms, Judy, 56
Abroms, Michelle, 56
Abroms, Sarah, 56
Abroms Rhododendron Species Garden, 34
African Violet Society, 9
Ager, Amy, 71
Alabama Orchid Society, 52, 64
Alabama Power Company, 64
Alabama Symphony, 71
Allison, Leigh Hill, 53
Amberson, Mrs. L. H., 18
American Needlepoint Guild
Mountain Brook Chapter, 34
AmSouth Bank, 64
Annual Fund-Raisers, 69
Arrington, Richard, Jr., 29
Bainbridge, Philippa, 19, 75
Barber Alabama Woodlands Garden, 40, 57
Barnes, Melanie, 69
Barnett, Jean, 72
Barnhill, James, 39
Bean, Kimberly, 71
Benton, Mrs. P. M., 18
Berman, Alyza, 56
Berman, Justin, 56
Berman, Lila, 56
Birmingham Area Iris Society, 13
Birmingham Association of Home Builders, 9
Birmingham Audubon Society, 7
Birmingham Botanical Society Establishment, 5
Birmingham Botanical Society Women’s Auxiliary, 10
Birmingham Camellia Society, 13
Birmingham Downtown Improvement Association, 10
Black, Mrs. Arthur, 7
Blackwell, Lula Rose, 7
Bledsoe, Mary, 72
Blount, Frances, 24, 25, 28, 30, 40, 52, 62, 63
Blount, Mary, 67, 70
Education Complex, 69, 75, 77
Blount, Mr. and Mrs. Houston, 30
Blount, Sam, 67, 70
Boddenhamer, Mindy, 75
Bog Garden, 34, 59
Bonsai Society, 23
Boon, Mrs. Paul, 13
Boothby, Mrs. Wallace, Jr. (Mary Carolyn), 20, 24, 26, 28, 29, 32, 40, 46, 54, 62
Brooks, Thomas, 51
Brooks, Winn, 23
Brown, Mrs. Tom Tartt (Virginia), 22, 24, 28, 62
Brungart, Margaret, 12
Bruno’s, Inc., 54
Bruno Vegetable Garden, 32, 69
Brush, Alfred, 13
Burns, Ida, 19, 64
Volunteer of the Year Award, 75
Byars, Joseph, 5
C. Beaty Hanna Horticulture and Environmental Center, 65
Cabaniss Walk, 26
Carraway, John C., 24, 78
Carroll, Pauline, 34
Carruthers, Dale, 24
Carter, Carol, 72
Chapman, Mrs. Lee B. (Karen), 33, 34, 59, 62
Children’s Outdoor Learning Center, 64
Clark, John, 3
Coca-Cola Bottlers of Japan, 12
Cochran, Ann, 53
Cochran, Camey, 53
Cochran, Dan, 53
Cochran, George, 53
Cochran, George Lightfoot, 53
Cochran, Gina, 53
Cochran, James Terry, 53
Cochran, Margaret, 53
Cochran, Toby, 53
Cochran Garden Water Wall, 32, 53
Cohn, Rebecca, 72
Collier, Virginia, 52
Collins, Allen D., 19
Comer, Hugh, 2
Comer, Mrs. Hugh, 5
Community Foundation of Greater Birmingham, 64, 69
Conservatory Original Design, 1
Conservatory Advisory Committee, 2
Cooper, Jim, 47
Cox Engineering, 7
Crape Myrtle Garden, 13, 60
Crowe, Cameron, 74
Cunningham, Emory, 39, 51
Cunningham, Jeanne, 51
Curtis, Nancy, 42, 71
Daniel Corporation, 64
Day Lily Society, 44
de Vink, Jan, 51
Dixon, Mrs. Frank, 15
Dogwood Garden, 13
Dunn, Beverley, 9, 16, 25, 51
Dunn, William Ransom Johnson, Jr., 9, 10, 18, 50
Dunn Formal Rose Garden, 25, 32, 50
Elliott, Jan, 24, 62
Elliott, Margaret, 72
Margaret Johnson Elliott Gazebo, 59
Enabling Garden, 60
Eubanks, Dr. George, 5
Family Harvest Day, 71
Federated Women’s Garden Clubs, 4
District III, 12, 15, 19, 30, 54, 64, 69
Fern Glade, 36, 59, 67
Fern Society, 26, 30
Fiesta, 4, 12, 13, 69
Fleming, Frank, 32, 34, 56, 59
Floyd, Dr. John A., Jr., 24, 25, 26, 28, 33, 40, 62, 65
Fornal Garden, 60
Fowlkes, Lura Brown, 59
Frazer, Ollie, 2
French, Jamie, 25
French, Mary, 38
Friendship Walk, 9
Frommeyer, Elizabeth Lee, 42
Gambrill, George, 23, 54, 59
Garden Center, 15, 17, 18, 20, 24, 27, 29, 30, 41
Garden Gates Plant Propagation Workshops, 61
Garden Party and Sculpture Auction, 32, 41, 74
Garden Variety of Shakespeare, 70
Gatehouse Gift Shop, 18, 72
Genz, Julia, 56
Genz, Michael, 56
Genz, Rebecca, 56
Gerlach, Gary, 16, 18, 24, 28, 29, 39, 62, 70
Gipson, Dean Lawrence, 29
Glaze, Robert, 62
Glorious Gardens, 74
Goings, Alpha, 32
Goings, Hubert Jr., 28, 32
Good Friday 1991 Storm, 36
Jefferson County Commission, 68
Jemison, John S., Jr., 44
Jemison, Margaret, 44
Jemison Investment Company, 44
Jemison Lily Garden, 13, 27, 44
Endowment, 69
Johns, Melanie, 74
Johnson, Bill, 70
Johnson, Jane Head, 53
Johnson, Jewette, 24
Johnson, Norman Kent, 26, 42, 57, 62, 72
Johnson, Sallie, 69, 77
Jones, Steve, 70
Joyner, Louis, 44
Karpes, Laide, 32
Karpes, Leo, Jr., 24, 28, 29, 33
Kaul, Hugh, 25, 64
Kaul, Mrs. Hugh (Barbara), 7, 24, 44, 45
Kaul Wildflower Garden, 25, 27, 36, 44, 45
Endowment, 69
Kayser, Leo, Jr., 54
Kayser, Simme, 54
Kayser Lily Pool, 32, 53
Kessler, Simon, 38
Kinner, Sue, 44
Kirk, Michael, 60
Kirk, Robert, 47, 50, 57
Lane, A. O., 5
Lanier, Laura Fowlkes, 59
Lauder, Harry, 30
Lawler, Delmas, 47
Lawler, Edward Goode, 47
Lawler, Stanley D., 47
Lawler Entrance Gates, 28, 47
Lawler Sandra Goode, 47
Lawrence, Ed, 24, 28, 34, 36, 59, 62
Lawson, Claude, 2
Lee, Elizabeth Turley, 42
Lee, James C. family, 42
Leigh, Maye, 53
Lighty, Dick, 16
Lindstrom, Mrs. Frank, Jr. (Shelley), 20, 61, 62, 70, 74
Linn-Henley Charitable Trust, 30, 64
Little, Sandra, 70
Lucas, Sue Ellen, 69
Lusco, Rhonda, 74
Lusk, Ginny, 59
Mackin, Stan, 22
MacQueen, Elizabeth, 32
Magnolia Garden, 60
Martin, Jane, 71
Marvin, Robert, 24, 29, 34
Marx, Edgar Jr., 38
Marx, Katharine, 38
Marx, Margot and Edgar, 38
Mattil, Carl F., 3, 4
Mauldin, Edward, 54
Mauldin, Mildred, 54
McAvoy Endowment, 40, 69
McCary, James H., II, 18
McCary, Lynette, 18
McCauley, Charles, 2, 15, 78
McClellan, Tom, III, 7
McDonald, Peggy Spain, 16
McKinney, Leah, 41
McReynolds, Beth, 23
Beth McReynolds Memorial Garden, 23
McSpadden, Jack, 7, 10
Meyer, John E., 7
Meyer, Robert, 64
Meyer Foundation Illuminated Fountain, 42
Miller, Melvin, 29, 70
Miller, Olivia Turlington
Sasanka Circle, 47
Mills, Albert, 10
Milstead, Marilyn, 34
Mitchell, Kacy Ireland, 63, 67
Moody, Bob, 30
Moon Gate, 50
Moore, Dorothy Gray, 30
Moore, Doug, 40, 75
Morawetz, Mrs. Richard B. (Mary Jean), 54, 74, 75
Morgan, James W., 1, 5, 7, 10, 17
Morales, Jesus, 30
Morris, Philip, 38
Murai, Masaji (Buffy), 9
Murray, Mrs. Fred W., Jr. (Allison), 38, 39, 62
Nasser, Khosrow, 33
National Association of Accountants, 7
National Endowment for the Arts, 30
Naughton, A. L., 54
Naughton, Dot, 54
Naughton, Florence, 54
Naughton, Thomas Joseph, 54
Nece, Martha, 39
Nelson, Irvin T., 56
Nelson, Mrs. Howard, 15
Newton, Don, 65
Osborne, Leroy, Sr., 10
Parker, Cordray, 32, 38
Parks, Charles, 32
Parler, Mrs. Kirk, 19
Parmer, Cherry, 72
Parsons, Katie, 7
Perley Endowment, 40, 69
Perrine, Beverly and George, 30
Porter, Kathryn, 69
Powell, Ellen Hodges Weatherford, 15, 68
Strange, Mrs. John M., 15
Tago, Kazunori, 40
Takvorian, Katherine, 52
Tate, John, 42
Tatum, Darcey, 9
Taylor, Dr. Wendell, 40
Taylor, Janet, 71
Teuscher, Dr. Henry E., 1
The Joy of Herbs (magazine), 75
Thode, Fred, 26
Thomas, Charles, 53
Thompson, George, 46
Thompson, Hall, 46
Thompson, Hall, Jr., 46
Thompson, Judith, 46
Thompson, Lisa, 46
Thompson, Michael, 46
Thompson Enthusiast Garden, 28, 46
Time, Inc., 39
Tissue Culture Laboratory, 64
Torchmark Corporation, 64
Touch and See Nature Trail, 13
Touchstone, Omar (Tut), 65
Turlington, Dr. Lee F., 5, 7, 47
Turlington Camellia Solar House, 28, 47
Tutwiler, Lucile, 24
Tutwiler, Temple, 64, 67
Tynes, Carolyn D., 26, 46, 54
Upchurch, Ann Samford, 52
Upchurch, Sam, Jr., 52
Vare, Alex, 30
Vulcan Materials Company, 64
Wade, Vandy, 69
Wallace, Melbourne D., 4, 13, 16, 44
Walter, Charles Whitten, 22, 24, 39, 44
Walter Overlook, 27, 44
Walter, Mrs. Charles Whitten (Arline), 10, 44
Walton, Louise, 72
Warner, Katy Moss, 77
Warren, Herbert, 2
Webb, Leah Cobb, 32
Webb, Rena, 13
Webb, Susan Mott, 64
Webster, Richard, 44
Welborn Construction Company, 2
Whatley, Kathy, 71
Whatley, Susan, 71
Whelan, Dr. Charles, 5
White, Gary, 68, 70
Williams, Tom, 24, 39, 40, 62
Williamson, Jean Cochran, 53
Williamson, John, Jr., 53
Williamson, Margaret Brooke, 53
Williamson, Wendy Martin, 53
Wilson, Audrey Ann, 74
Zion, Robert, 33
About the Author

Author and historian Carolyn Green Satterfield brings to life the history of the Birmingham Botanical Society. Through personal interviews of past Society presidents and others, she traces the origins of the Gardens from 1964 to the present. Included are descriptions of master plans, garden dedications, and structure changes from the grounds keepers' cottage to the Conservatory, Garden Center, and Education Complex. Photographs by Ann M. Chambliss add a visual presentation to the largest municipally owned botanical garden in the Southeast which contains nationally recognized gardens.

Dr. Satterfield holds the Ph. D. degree in history from The University of Georgia and is a professor at Samford University. She is active at the Birmingham Botanical Gardens having served in numerous ways, as Auxiliary president and as a Society board member for many years. She is author of Historic Sites of Jefferson County, Alabama; The Country Club of Birmingham: Centennial History; and the forthcoming biography of Theodore Swann.