

The Gardens of Marjorie Merriweather Post's Hillwood: Interpretive Messages

Garden Docent Training 2024
Hillwood Estate, Museum & Gardens

- Hillwood's gardens are meant to be shared.
 - By the time Hillwood's 2-year renovation was completed (1955-57), Post had decided it was worthy of being a public institution.
 - She wanted the gardens to be enjoyed by others (examples: the garden information booklet; parties in the gardens).
 - The gardens (and entire estate and mansion) provide a public good after her death.
- Post was intensely involved in creating Hillwood's gardens, although she was not planting with her own hands (she didn't use a spade, but had the vision).
 - She directed the landscape architects to achieve her vision; every garden was meticulously drawn before it was planted and Post reviewed those plans.
 - She had holistic approach: design and features (plantings, sculptures, hardscapes, etc.)
 - During Post's time, the garden staff at Hillwood, 12-15 individuals, kept the garden in top-shape. Early Loy, head gardener, worked for Post for 35 years, and his oral history has been invaluable in understanding the past.
- Post had a vision for her gardens at Hillwood.
 - Garden served Post's needs while she lived here
 - Interior (mansion) intentionally connected to the exterior (gardens)
 - Diversity of garden rooms—different moods, functions (backdrop for her entertaining and philanthropy, for recreation, for repose)
 - Beauty and color is paramount (had seasonal plantings then and now)
- Post worked with great landscape architects at Hillwood to achieve the design and feel she envisioned: Innocenti & Webel, Perry Wheeler, Shogo Myaida.
- Post's approach to gardens had distinct influences.
 - American country place era: her previous homes and 1905 tour of England with her father
 - Her own experience as creator of gracious homes and gardens: Boulders, Hillwood L.I., Mar-A-Lago, Tregaron.
- Post's friends and staff created several noteworthy additions to her gardens, to show their admiration and appreciation for her: Friendship Walk (1957) and flagpole (1962).
- The museum today continues to honor and execute Post's vision for her gardens, with 14 staff and approximately 100 volunteers, and a focus on sustainable practices.