

GARDEN CONSERVANCY NEWS

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LongHouse Reserve Becomes First Affiliate Garden



In May 2011, LongHouse Reserve, the home and garden of noted textile designer Jack Lenor Larsen in East Hampton, New York, became the first participant in the Garden Conservancy's new Affiliate Garden program. LongHouse has been visited by the public since its creation, even before it became a public institution. LongHouse's garden integrates garden design, materials, architecture, and plantings with sculpture and other work by such noted artists and designers as Buckminster Fuller, Toshiko Takaezu, and Dale Chihuly. There are more than sixty works of contemporary sculpture on the sixteen-acre site.

LongHouse's mission is to exemplify "living with art in all forms." In addition to collections, gardens, and sculpture reflecting world cultures, it offers a rich program of changing exhibitions, classes, and tours. LongHouse brings together many of Jack's broad-ranging interests and talents.

LongHouse had specific goals for engaging in the affiliate garden relationship with the Garden Conservancy. Many of these were found in answering questions related to LongHouse's transition to a public institution. For example, what best practices and professional standards should be applied? How best to direct the garden and its evolution as Jack hands over responsibility? What are the best roles for LongHouse's board of

directors, Garden Committee, volunteers, docents, programming staff, and interns? What skills and resources are needed to manage the garden to the very highest standards? How will budgeting and fundraising support these goals?

As Jack himself stated, operating with *(continued on page 8)*



LongHouse Reserve became the Garden Conservancy's first affiliate garden in May. At top of the page is a view of the house and pond, with a figure sculpture by Magdalena Abakanowicz. Above, the Red Garden. In the Garden Conservancy's garden assessment, both the pond area and the Red Garden were both identified as key "defining features" of the garden.

Restoring Untermyer, “America’s Greatest Forgotten Garden”

Stephen F. Byrns, chairman of the Untermyer Gardens Conservancy, describes Untermyer Gardens, a 43-acre site now owned by the City of Yonkers, New York, as “America’s greatest forgotten garden.” In its heyday in the first half of the twentieth century, the gardens reportedly employed 60 fulltime gardeners and were supplied by 60 greenhouses.

Photos: Timothy Tilghman



Unfortunately, the gardens, designed by Beaux Arts architect William Welles Bosworth in 1916 on an estate sloping down to the Hudson River, began a decline in 1940 after owner Samuel Untermyer’s death.

With the establishment of the Untermyer Gardens Conservancy in 2010 by Steve Byrns, the process of restoring the heart of the gardens to their former glory has begun. Although many of the architectural features of the garden remain, seventy years of overgrowth and neglect have overtaken most of the gardens. The conservancy is working closely with the City of Yonkers, a public/private collaboration modeled on the relationship between the Central Park Conservancy and New York City.

In an agreement formalized in April 2011, the Garden Conservancy is serving in an advisory role, working with the Untermyer Gardens Conservancy to improve the quality of the gardens and to plan for the gardens’ ongoing management, preservation, and development for the benefit of the public. The Untermyer Gardens Conservancy also raised funds to hire a fulltime horticulturist, Timothy Tilghman, in June 2011. Marco Polo Stufano serves as horticultural advisor.

In 2011, the first stages of restoration have been directed at the walled garden, known as the Greek Garden, with Greek architectural features, crisscrossing Persian-style water channels, and outer walls and towers influenced by Indian and Persian design. Horticultural improvements within the Greek Garden include the reintroduction of the rhythmic planting along the water channels, alternating with bold flower arrays. Trees and shrubs that were growing on the great high walls have been eliminated, rampant weed growth checked, and the beds properly contoured. New woody plants have been placed in gaps along the perimeter. A dramatic first-year planting of tropicals was placed in the Amphitheater, surrounded once again with large flower-filled pots, as it was in Samuel Untermyer’s day. The 350-foot-long west border is



being planted as a mixed border with shrubs and perennials. Restoration of this core walled garden area will remain the focus through 2012; restoration of other areas of the gardens and surrounding park will follow.

A new website (untermyergardens.org) provides further information on Untermyer Gardens and Samuel Untermyer.