

# How does your garden grow?



Photocourtesy of Preston Stockton

The university raised \$2.3 million to refurbish the Reynolda Gardens. The majority of work is being done in the Formal Gardens above.

Two years of  
toil have  
restored  
Reynolda  
Gardens to the  
turn-of-the-  
century  
sanctuary that  
the Reynolds  
first planted.



Noes Fox/Old Gold and Black

Renovated Tea Houses grace the Formal Gardens at Reynolda Village. Newly planted flowers should begin to bloom this spring.

## University pours funds into soil Restoration recaptures essence of historic garden

By Kate Cosgrove  
Features Editor

As R.J. Reynolds was sowing the seeds of his tobacco empire, his wife Katherine was quietly planting her own garden. Today, as modern medicine is trying to eliminate the fruits of Reynolds' labor, horticulturists have been working diligently to recreate the early 20th century garden that Katherine Reynolds first planted.

After two years of landscaping and construction, the gardens located in Reynolda Village have been returned to their original state, as Katherine Reynolds first designed them in 1916. The university, which retains proprietorship over the Reynolda mansion and gardens, commissioned the \$2.3 million project in 1994.

According to Preston Stockton, the Superintendent of the Reynolda Gardens, the university decided to restore the gardens after realizing that they had fallen into disrepair.

"The maintenance of the garden had not been kept up since the time when the Babcocks occupied the [Reynolda] house. Boxwood trees had overtaken the garden."

The university raised money for the landscaping through the Heritage and Promise capital campaign. Individual foundations also contributed money toward the project. \$1.3 million of the money raised was used for the actual labor and plantings, and the remaining \$1 million was placed in an endowment for future maintenance and upkeep of the gardens.

The Reynolda Gardens are comprised of 125 acres; however, the bulk of the renovation was on the four acres known as the Formal Gardens.

A special planning committee determined that walls, walkways and fountains needed to be taken out of the garden to complete the renovation. Non-original boxwood trees were also removed in order to install pathways similar to the first ones placed. From day one, the goal of the committee was to restore the gardens to their *exact* state of 1916.

### A Rose is a Rose is *not* a Rose

Stockton soon found that replicating the four acres of gardens was not an easy task. Camilla

**Stockton and her staff discovered that Katherine Reynolds was not an average gardener. On the contrary, she was deeply intrigued by both horticulture and agriculture, and her garden bore an assortment of rare and particular flora.**

Wilcox, the curator of education at Reynolda House, located correspondence letters written between Katherine Reynolds and her landscapers and horticulturists to provide a working list of the types of flowers that were planted in the garden. The Pennsylvania Horticulture Society was also helpful in providing types of flowers that were popular at the time.

However, Stockton and her staff discovered that Katherine Reynolds was not an average gardener. On the contrary, she was deeply intrigued by both horticulture and agriculture, and her garden bore an assortment of rare and particular flora.

Katherine Reynolds spent long amounts of time deliberating upon the flowers that she would plant. Her eventual decision was an assortment of plants from hothouses in Europe and Asia, as well as the United States.

According to Stockton, the staff used the Internet to locate the exact species and genus of flower that Katherine Reynolds had planted in her garden. They found plant growers in both the United States and Europe who could provide them with either the actual plant or the bulb to grow the distinct type of flower they needed.

Some flowers were easy to locate, while others were more difficult. "We tried to replicate the flowers as closely as possible," Stockton said, "but eventually you must make a decision."

Plant nomenclature did not become standardized until 1917, and as a result it was difficult for the staff to locate some flowers which may have been known by several different names when Katherine Reynolds planted them.

Construction of the gardens began in the summer of 1995, as workers began to make structural

changes. The majority of the work took place in 1996 and 1997. Facilities Management, in conjunction with Stockton, commissioned the Jaeger Company, a landscape architecture group from Gainesville, Ga., to complete the physical task of restructuring. The group specializes in historic landscaping, and according to Stockton it helped the project to focus historically on what needed to be done to recreate the 1916 garden. National Park Services also provided consultation on the renovation.

The Jaeger Company made structural repairs to the original Teahouses (gazebo-type houses in the garden) and arbors. They also repaired, and in some instances reconstructed, stucco walls, fountains and steps.

New electrical lines and irrigation systems were installed in the rose garden and lower formal garden. Crews upgraded drainage and installed a new turf system to restore original grass paths.

Improvements were not limited to the Formal Gardens alone. The university allotted part of the money to conservatory and greenhouse repair. The greenhouse received a new heating system, and asbestos was removed. Trails surrounding the garden were improved to facilitate the heavy traffic that they receive and to make them accessible for large school groups and people with physical disabilities.

### The fruits of labor

Although the flowers in the refurbished garden are far from blooming — many have not even been planted — the garden is drastically different in appearance now than it was prior to construction. Two theme flower patches — one blue and yellow and one pink and white — as well as a hedge of heirloom roses have been planted, resembling the same scheme that Katherine Reynolds devised. Stockton said that the fruits of the project will be more visible in two years time, when all of the flowers will begin to bloom fully.

"Our work in the gardens is really important because we are losing early 20th century gardens every day. We are lucky that Wake Forest owned them because it provided a foundation to go back and restore the gardens," Stockton said.



Photo courtesy of Preston Stockton

A landscape architecture group specializing in historic landscaping helped to recreate the early 20th century garden.