

# The Brooksider

Published by Friends of Brookside Gardens, Inc.



October, 2013

## President's Letter

Dear Friends,

On this crisp October morning, five deer are grazing on the front lawn, a woodpecker is at the bird feeder, and there is a definite sense that the seasons are changing.



Autumn is a time of transition. For some readers, it means that the warm and languid summer days have become energized by cooler temperatures and much busier schedules.

Regardless of the season, all of us who love Brookside Gardens know that the Gardens are ours to enjoy all year long. The beauty of Brookside is a constant in our lives, regardless of changing seasons.

At the FOBG Annual Meeting in September, we asked members to tell us why they love Brookside Gardens. Here are several responses that illustrate that love for the Gardens spans every season:

"I love Brookside Gardens because of its year-round beauty and interest. Love the classes, trips and workshops."

"I love Brookside Gardens because it is a place that inspires my soul every season. I visit often for guidance for my own garden to see what plants are on display."

"I love Brookside Gardens because it is beautiful. I love the change of seasons."

"I love Brookside Gardens because I can view the change of seasons and the rhythms of life."

The Friends of Brookside Gardens has planned a variety of venues for you to enjoy during this new season.

The Holidays in the Garden Silent Auction on Saturday, November 9<sup>th</sup> from 5:00 p.m. to 8:00 p.m. in the Visitors Center will be a very special occasion. This gala event is a wonderful way to usher in the holidays with friends, to enjoy good food and music, and to bid on works of art by local artists, on plants, gift certificates and many other items.

The Annual Holidays Greens Sale is Saturday, December 7<sup>th</sup> from 9:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. in the atrium of the Visitors Center. The holiday greens will be available for sale or pick-up if you have already pre-ordered. There is a discount of \$2.00 per item if they are pre-ordered and paid for by November 15, 2013.

The new [FOBG website](#) (be sure to bookmark it) will keep you informed about these and other events scheduled for the Gardens we enjoy at every season of the year.

*Suzanne*

In this and future issues of FOBG's *The Brooksider*, we will include a new series of articles titled "Brookside from the Inside." These articles are based on conversations with the Brookside Gardens' staff horticulturists whose inspiration, skill and hard work create and re-create the gardens that we love. We will look at what drew BG staff members to a professional life in horticulture and public gardens, and how they feel about working in a changing environment that is always on display. We'll take a stab at understanding their complex jobs that require a visionary, designer, project manager – who can dig, maintain plantings and diagnose problems. We'll let them tell us about their areas of responsibility, their challenges and successes, and what they like best about Brookside.

We hope "Brookside from the Inside" will enhance your enjoyment of the gardens by giving you a new perspective on how it all happens.

Julia Horman, co-editor

## *Brookside from the Inside* *a look at what it takes to make it all happen*

By Julia Horman

Every visit to Brookside Gardens brings "ah" moments – those special encounters with the beauty, comfort and surprises of nature. Some are initial responses, like the first time you notice the beauty of the Gude Garden on an overcast day. Other "ahs" may result from the recurring pleasure of a favorite sight, maybe the bark and structure of the Dawn Redwood. I had a surprising "ah" moment the day I went to Brookside to interview Jim DeRamus for this article. Jim had suggested that we meet in the Azalea Garden gazebo, noting it was a nice, quiet spot with a table. As we walked into the gazebo, we were greeted



by a delightful fragrance wafting on the October breeze. I'm sure I uttered an "ah" as I looked around for the source; Jim just smiled and said, "Osmanthus." I had never noticed the large, fall-blooming shrub that is planted right next to the gazebo! That "ah" moment, whether fortuitous or set-up, was a perfect segue to the matter at hand – a conversation with BG's staff Horticulturist who just happens to

have the Fragrance Garden as part of his responsibilities.

Although Jim DeRamus did not join Brookside Gardens' staff as a Horticulturist until 2005, Brookside has played an important role in his life. Jim grew up in Kensington, Maryland. He talked about his parent's interest in gardening, his father's love of azaleas, family trips to Brookside after church on Sundays, and his own frequent bike rides to the gardens. As a boy, Jim was eager to keep an eye on all the early development work in the gardens. He says this enduring interest in Brookside Gardens eventually led to his pursuing a career in Horticulture.

Before turning to Horticulture, Jim studied Art and Biology at St. Mary's College of Maryland. He worked in Graphic Design for 13 years and, at the same time, improved his skill in gardening, hardscape construction, including stone work, post and beam, flagstone, and water gardening as he developed his own property. Jim began the transition to a career in Horticulture in 1989 when he joined a start-up gardening company. A few years later, he was hired as Head Horticulturist at Columbia Country Club, a job that allowed him time to pursue his BS in Horticulture at University of Maryland. Jim knew he was on the right track at UMD where he earned a 4.0 GPA and

graduated at the top of the College of Natural Resources. When an employment offer finally came from MNCPPC, Jim says he didn't have to think twice before accepting - he considers landing a job at Brookside to be one of the luckiest breaks of his professional career!

Jim's life at Brookside revolves around five garden areas: Perennial Garden, Yew Garden, Maple Terrace, Wedding Gazebo, and the Fragrance Garden and Herb Hill. He emphasizes the overarching focus of keeping those gardens presentable saying, "It doesn't happen by magic, this isn't Disney World. Maintaining our gardens takes a tremendous amount of work." Jim describes the maintenance as routine but physically demanding, noting that the banana plants in the Fragrance Garden are so heavy they have to be rolled out of the beds.



Jim glides right past the maintenance issues to talk about the gardening cycle. He describes an annual flow of work, from vision to design, planning, execution and maintenance, with each stage bringing its own pleasure. When Jim discusses vision and design, he sounds like an artist – he's holding a palette with its base of plants that are suitable for his BG conditions. There is an overlay of color, texture, size and shape. Now come the aesthetic and practical decisions – what's new and different; which combinations will look best together; which plants will work well in the curving sweeps that he likes to use throughout the beds; what's available? The crop requests must be in by September, and then it's time to get the beds ready for bulb planting - the cycle's always in motion – the bulbs bloom around April 15<sup>th</sup>. Designs for the summer beds are finalized and ready for installation as the bulbs fade. Jim says there can be blips in the cycle's motion when plants fail to thrive as expected. He and his team are always ready to jump in and "re-design on the fly." The Fragrance Garden reaches a peak of beauty in the last week of June; the cycle rolls on to maintenance, and thinking, planning for the next season.

The Fragrance Garden is one of the more challenging areas in Jim's domain. Since there are a limited number of fragrant plants, he spends most of his

research time looking for those plants that will tolerate our climate and clay soils. Jim's aim is to have fragrance wafting through the garden year round. He talked about a suggestion that Lisa Tayerle had made when they were working together several years ago. Lisa was toying with the idea of a "What smells today?" sign in the garden, but the sign never went up because connecting aroma to plant can be tricky. Jim and Lisa knew that many visitors are unfamiliar with plant names, and identification of a plant by a picture of its flower could be difficult too since fragrant flowers are often insignificant. After listening to Jim talk about plants and fragrance, I thought maybe he could just hang around in the garden on days when the fragrance was strong and regale the visitors with stories about plant evolution, fragrance and pollinators. That would be fun, but....there is always more work to do and Jim's focus has turned to redesign. He is currently working on the downhill-side shrub border in the Fragrance Garden, where some of the plants have deteriorated because of excess moisture. Next on the list is the redesign of Herb Hill which will be done in collaboration with his assistant, Josh Demers. Jim proudly notes that Josh, a BG seasonal, is working on a degree in Horticulture at University of Maryland.

Another of Jim's challenges has been the Yew Garden. He describes its unpredictable growing conditions, where the same plant might thrive on one side



and languish on the other. Over time, this garden had become extremely difficult to maintain. It was demanding attention – Jim knew that something had to be done – the Yew Garden was calling out for a redesign. With pride, Jim talks about this project as an example of identifying problems, contemplating solutions and finding inspiration in unusual settings.

In the case of the Yew Garden, the setting was the Crab Shack at Rehoboth where Jim found himself working up a new design for the garden using crayons on the brown paper-covered table. The Yew Garden is part of the group described as the Formal Gardens. Jim saw that, although each of the gardens

along the formal axis had aspects of formality, none was planted in a formal style. His inspiration was to simplify the existing planting design to create an example of a true formal garden for Brookside. The redesign proposed two round water features, to be placed away from the center so that they would not interfere with the sightline along the axis from the Perennial Garden to the Wedding Gazebo. These features have yet to be installed.

When I asked Jim about his favorite spots at Brookside and his favorite plants, I found some resonance in his answers. He said that since he was a young boy he has had one favorite spot in the whole



garden – the stairs going from the Fragrance Garden to the Wedding Gazebo. Jim says he has always loved the plantings, the stone walls, and the way a heavy rain creates a temporary water feature cascading down the stairs. I asked about the walls, and yes, he did walk on them as a boy and he loved those waterfall stairs! Somehow, I think the boy in Jim may have chosen the favorite plant, too. Jim says his favorite is *Solanum quitoense*, also known as Naranjilla. You'll probably recognize it by the common name "Spiny Bastard" – you know, it's that formidable-looking plant he uses in the containers on the Maple Terrace. Jim assured me that the spines are delicate and don't puncture like a rose thorn.



As our conversation goes on, it becomes obvious that Jim is a man who finds life amusing. He will leave an attractive Milk Thistle growing alone on the edge of the Maple Terrace for its entertainment value, add rubber ducks to the fountain in the Perennial Garden as a bit of whimsy, and laugh about spending time fishing for a child's shoe in that same fountain when the shoe was actually out in the lawn. From Jim's perspective, life should never be boring. In addition to his hands-on work in the gardens, he shares his broad knowledge base by teaching in workshops and writing articles for *Groundwork Magazine*, a publication of Landscape Contractors Association. Jim says his personal aim is to learn something new each day and to help others do the same. He particularly enjoys training and working with his volunteers, describing them as "close to my heart," and expresses the hope that being a volunteer works as well for each of them as it does for Brookside.



I love the way Jim wrapped up the world of Brookside as he said, "Keeping this garden alive is a group project with all of us fulfilling our part in keeping the garden dynamic and new. The staff is only one part of the equation, FOBG and the volunteers fill in critical areas, and the visitors provide the final element. If you take any one of these elements away the garden will not survive." Jim sends a special "Thank You" to the members of FOBG for their continuing financial support, and their gifts of time and effort.



***Friends of Brookside Gardens  
Holidays in the Garden Silent Auction  
Celebrating Gardens, Nature and the Holidays  
November 9, 2013, 5:00 to 8:00 pm***

**Attention:** Friends and supporters of Brookside Gardens:

Whether you are thinking about a gift for yourself, or about holiday gifts for your family, you are sure to find something with your name on it at **FOBG's Holidays in the Garden Silent Auction, November 9, 2013 from 5 to 8 p.m.** at the Brookside Gardens Visitor Center.

Members of FOBG have been working hard to create this wonderful event. As you might expect from the theme "Holidays in the Garden," the items to be auctioned will include garden fixtures, nature books and landscaping services. Among the many other great gifts for family and friends will be incredible works of art, crafts, jewelry and gift certificates for restaurants, theatres and vacation getaways. While you browse and bid, you will be entertained by four different musical groups and enjoy light refreshments.

As usual, all funds raised by this FOBG activity are designated for the support and improvement of Brookside Gardens. This source of funding is increasingly important in these times of shrinking budgets for public works projects.

Promotional flyers are available at Brookside's Information Desk. We encourage FOBG members to spread the word and help us make the **2013 Holidays in the Garden Silent Auction** our most successful auction yet.

For additional information about the auction, please visit FOBG's [new website](#) where you will be able to see examples of the Auction items. You can also contact us through the FOBG voicemail, 301-962-1435, or by sending an email to [FOBG](#).

Freddi Hammerschlag, Chair

Barbara Waite-Jaques, Co-Chair

# Holidays in the Garden

## A Silent Auction to Benefit Brookside Gardens

Saturday, November 9, 2013

5:00 to 8:00 PM

\$35 per person admission includes light  
refreshments and live music

Accepting only checks, MasterCard or  
Visa for admission and bid items



*We still need a few volunteers to help out at the Silent Auction the evening of November 9<sup>th</sup>.*

*If you're willing to help, call us at 301 962-1435, or just sign up using this link:*

*<http://www.volunteersignup.org/ECEQ7> Thank you!*

In this and future issues of *The Brooksider*, we will provide a listing of upcoming FOBG sponsored events and Brookside Gardens adult programs. The list will be updated as information becomes available. We hope this will be helpful in planning how you can take advantage of all that Brookside Gardens has to offer. Additional offerings, such as children's programs, art exhibits and excursions are available in the [Experience](#) program guide.

### **FOBG Sponsored Events**

	<b>Date</b>	<b>ParkPASS #</b>
FOBG Free Lecture: Colors of Fall with Native Plants	11/01/13	248602
FOBG Silent Auction	11/09/13	-----
FOBG Free Lecture: Design-less Gardening	11/15/13	248603
FOBG Free Lecture: Beautiful Buffets	12/06/13	248604
FOBG Greens Sale	12/07/13	-----
FOBG Orchid Show and Sale	03/15/14	-----
FOBG Orchid Show and Sale	03/16/14	-----

### **Brookside Gardens Adult Programs**

	<b>Date</b>	<b>ParkPASS #</b>
Winter Squash	10/22/13	247951
Winter Squash	10/22/13	247952
Winter Brights	10/23/13	248001
The 2 for 1 Container	10/25/13	245849
The 2 for 1 Container	10/25/13	245850
Fall Conservatory Tour	11/01/13	248554
Colors of Fall with Native Plants	11/01/13	248602
Anatomy of a Leaf	11/06/13	248806
Demo: Planting Tulips	11/08/13	248555
Bountiful Expression	11/12/13	248799
Snowy Roots	11/13/13	248002
Designer-less Gardening	11/15/13	248603
Mixed Winter Container	11/22/13	248807
Mixed Winter Container	11/22/13	248808
Thanksgiving Table Flowers	11/25/13	248809
Thanksgiving Table Flowers	11/25/13	248810
Beautiful Buffets	12/06/13	248604
A Richmond Christmas	12/10/13	249299
A World of Flavor	12/11/13	248849
Seasonal Chic	12/17/13	248800
Seasonal Sides	12/18/13	248003
Holiday Centerpiece	12/20/13	248850
Holiday Centerpiece	12/20/13	248851
Cleaner, Greener Home	01/08/14	248852

Nature Movie Night: Planet Earth: Seasonal Forests	01/10/14	248599
Fairy Gardens	01/17/13	248853
Fairy Gardens	01/17/13	248854
Food Gardening and Climate Change	01/21/14	248855
Feeling Fruity, Nearly Nutty	02/22/14	248004
All About Air Plants	02/12/14	248856
Nature Movie Night: Planet Earth: Great Plains	02/07/14	248600
Let the Sunshine In	02/11/14	248801
Seed Starting for the Veggie Garden	02/18/14	248857
Season Spanning Soups	02/19/14	248005
Spring Forward Conservatory Tour	02/21/14	248556
Green Matters Symposium	02/28/14	248349
Philadelphia Flower Show	03/04/14	245851
Philadelphia Flower Show	03/06/14	245852
Nature Movie Night: Disneynature's Wings of Life	03/07/14	248601

***For additional programs, more information and fees,  
see the [Xperience](#) program guide or click this link for [ParkPass.org](#)***

**Suggestions? Ideas? Let us know!**

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