

Boscobel Herb Garden- Annual Report, June 2020

From Felicia Saunders

The Boscobel Herb Garden Committee has been very busy this past year. An enthusiastic group meets each Tuesday morning, 9-12 from April to November in that beautiful setting to maintain the Herb Garden. The Philipstown Garden Club has been in charge of the maintenance since 1972.

Last year we undertook a revision of the Garden based on documents from the Dyckman estate shared with us by Jennifer Carlquist, Boscobel's Director. By June of 2019, the process of displaying plants that might have been present in a Hudson Valley garden of 1820 or so was well underway. We spent the summer adding plants, revising beds, weeding and then spreading many yards of mulch to both keep weeds down and preserve moisture in the soil.

Boscobel Restoration installed a small, weatherproof box to house the comprehensive Plant List of the plants in the Garden by their common and botanical names. It also notes the ways a plant might be used during that period. A garden of that time would need to be a food source, an apothecary and provide for various household uses such as dyeing and moth prevention. The Plant List correlates to the plant labels marking each plant created by Kathy Richter.

This year we put up a slate in the Orangerie where we list the plants that are in flower. It is updated weekly and seems to be popular with visitors.

We have learned the lesson of hard pruning. Our box plants which we pruned on a cold day 2 years ago are green and full and a more reasonable size. The quince trees which had looked quite sad and as if they needed replacement are now flourishing. The espaliered pear border where the plants had grown so large as to shade the flower border now allow sun to fall on these plants and they thrive.

The Boscobel maintenance crew has added their talents in replacing the borders to the middle beds and fixing the split rail fences that support the espaliered pears.

The Pollinator Pathway project, which was kicked off last winter by the Horticulture Committee, has been the inspiration to dedicate the area outside the pear border but inside the tall deer fence to native plants and pollinators. The area has a magnificent show of daffodils in the early spring and we are now planting specific native plants to attract pollinating insects. This will be an ongoing project.

Through a new connection to the Haldane School Garden Committee, we have been gifted dye plants to enlarge our collection. Woad, weld, madder, and akenet are now growing happily in their new home. WE thank the Haldane group for the generosity with their plants and their expertise.

In November we will bring all the tender plants such as scented geraniums and lemon verbena into the Orangerie for the winter. We wind up the year with our traditional tulip planting and scone party before putting away our tools for the winter.

Finally we continue to weed, mulch, trim, prune, and water every week AND have a lot of fun.