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Brookside Gardens!

Spring & Summer 2020

The New Harry T. Dewey Memorial Garden

On Sunday, October 20, 2019 Brookside Gardens dedicated the eagerly anticipated Harry T. Dewey Memorial Garden. Located on the south bank of the Upper Aquatic Garden pond, this gently sloping, narrow slice of land enjoys a prominent and accessible location between the pond and the broad walkway leading from the Overlook stairs to the Ginkgo Canopy and boardwalk beyond. It can be seen both at ground level, including three sides of the pond and the Anderson Island bridge and pavilion, and from the Overlook above.

The garden features a mulched path running along its axis, a bench, a perching rock over the water at pond's-edge (to contemplate aquatic life up close) and a custom-built circular stone and concrete terrace with seat walls for events and pond-viewing. The plantings are a diverse palette of herbaceous perennials and grasses including phloxes, coneflowers, blackeyed susans, asters, bluestar, native milkweed and goldenrod – and irises: almost 3 dozen kinds with hundreds of individuals. Many of these plants are rare or newly introduced cultivars, and several lure pollinators to this meadow-like community. From the beginning, the design intent was to create a colorful, welcoming space with year-round interest that could be walked through. The low-growing plants allow for water views and welcome visitors to the pond's edge at strategic vantage points.   Structure is provided by native shrubs: inkberry, buttonbush, dwarf American holly, winterberry holly, elderberry, and summersweet; and by baldcypress and

swamp chestnut oak – both canopy trees that will afford future shade.

The garden was made possible by the thoughtful, gracious generosity of Harry Dewey's husband, Tom Comstock. Harry was that perfect combination of lifelong gardener and keen plantsman. He held a particular interest in rock gardening, but, as an avid collector, there weren't many plants he would disdain or hadn't tried at least once. His Beltsville garden was modest in size but accommodated tiny ephemeral treasures, dwarf shrubs, camellias, rare trees, even bamboo and a garden folly. (So advanced was his plant experience that he could trump even the most rarified plant discussions with, "yes, but have you grown the *variegated* one?") Harry's association with the Gardens began in the 1970s as a fertile collaboration and friendship with many Gardens staff. He is thought to have been the Gardens' first volunteer, serving whenever needed as a tour guide. He continued to share his knowledge of Brookside and McCrillis Gardens' plant collections and history for nearly 25 years, enchanting visitors with his witty, urbane and wickedly dry observations.

The team shepherding the garden from concept to reality was diverse. Prominent local landscape designer Barbara Katz of London Landscapes, LLC defined the original intent, look, flow and use of the space; and she designed, researched and sourced the uncommon plant palette. Brookside Gardens

Tom Comstock and Harry Dewey

staff Stephanie Oberle, Ellen Bennett, Phil Normandy, and area gardener Jeanette Proudfoot held a variety of roles including refining the design through several iterations, working with the donor, and procuring and installing the plants in time for a major June event. The gardening staff laid the path, planted the plants, installed rocks, turf, and the bench. Montgomery Parks landscape architect Ching-Fang Chen designed the circular stone terrace and brought in superb stonemason Rob Page of Page Stonework and Landscape to bring it to reality.

The result is greater than the sum of its elements: it is a beautiful, welcoming, calming space of repose or ramble, where before nothing existed, its ultimate purpose elusive. Please seek it out on your next visit, take a quiet stroll or pause and reflect, and imagine the spirit of Harry Dewey, his love of gardens and plants, and the legacy he has left.

—Phil Normandy, *Plant Collections Manager*