



PLAINFIELD, VERMONT

# Goddard's Greatwood Gardens

*Preservation (and) Education in Vermont*



Master landscape architect Arthur Shurcliff designed Greatwood Gardens for William S. Martin's Greatwood Farm, including the Formal and Rose Gardens (ca.1908) and the Upper Garden (ca.1918). In 1938, the Goddard Seminary moved to Greatwood Estate and became Goddard College, which now provides intensive residency programs at the BA, MA, and MFA levels. The Goddard College Greatwood Estate Campus was listed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1999. Goddard College's President, Board, and Facilities Director are aware of the historic significance of the Greatwood Campus and are committed to restoring it. Public recognition of Shurcliff's Greatwood Gardens will help to validate and encourage these garden preservation efforts - an especially important endeavor in Vermont, a state with very few historic estate garden landscapes.

## HISTORY

The Greatwood Estate Gardens, some of the finest historical landscape architecture in Vermont, were designed by Arthur Shurcliff, as part of the Greatwood Farm owned by Willard S. Martin. James T. Kelly designed the Estate in 1908. This "Gentleman's" farm made use of innovative farming techniques and was known for its Shropshire sheep and Milking Shorthorn cattle.



Arthur Shurcliff was a graduate of both the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (1894) and Harvard University (1896). Following graduation, Shurcliff worked for Frederick Law Olmsted until founding his own firm in 1905. Shurcliff may be best known as the landscape designer of the gardens of Colonial Williamsburg. He also assisted Frederick Law Olmsted in establishing Harvard University's School of Landscape Design and was President of the American Society of Landscape Architects from 1928-1932. Shurcliff designed private gardens, historic restorations, public parks, roadways, and recreational facilities. At Greatwood, Shurcliff designed the Formal Garden, the Rose Garden and the Upper Garden as well as the Garden House.

The Formal Garden and the Rose Garden (ca. 1908) are located behind the Martin Manor. Architect James T. Kelly designed the Manor in the Shingle Style, with Colonial Revival and Bungalow style details. Both the exterior and interior of the Manor have retained much of their original character. The Formal and Rose Gardens are surrounded by a dry stone wall built by Curt Holt and a crew of elderly Vermonters. The three- to six-foot wall is constructed of shale stones interspersed with large granite stones from the original barn foundation. A Pavilion is integrated into one wall of the Formal Garden and opens to steps leading to the Upper Garden. This walled space is divided into two parts by a wooden fence. The garden space nearest to the Manor is the Rose Garden, which contains a small circular pool and gardening beds within the perimeter of the wall. The Rose Garden was known throughout Vermont and visited by 600 people during "Rose Day" weekend in 1928. The Formal Garden still features the original Korean Boxwood hedges grown from cuttings. The cuttings were a gift to the Martin family by the Japanese government that had used livestock from the Greatwood Farm to develop cattle herds in Korea.

The Upper Garden (ca. 1918), also designed by Arthur Shurcliff, is accessed from the Formal Garden Pavilion. A series of stone steps climbs to a landing where a fountain is set into a stone wall topped by a limestone balustrade rail. Water falls into the fountain pool from a row of five ram's heads, which were cast from a prized ram owned by the Farm. Parallel steps on each side of the fountain pool rise to the Upper Garden. This Upper Garden is surrounded by dry laid shale walls that range from three to five feet in height. On axis from the fountain lies a round pool in front of the Garden House. On the cross axis through the pool, lies a rounded section of the wall surrounding a curved sandstone bench on one end. On the other end, a fountain is built into the garden wall and flows through a channel to the central pool.

The Garden House is one story, step gabled with a slate roof in the Tudor Revival Style. The front façade originally had two sets of windows and a double door that opened into the garden. A carved wooden frieze depicting snakes, lizards, squirrels, frogs, and turtles is placed below a pressed metal gutter rail. Carved limestone woodland animals top the lower gable steps on both the front and rear façade. The interior of the Garden House is framed by historic timbers supported by animal head corbels carved by the Bromsgrove Guild in Montreal. A large fireplace on the rear wall has a Tudor arched limestone mantle. Within the Garden's walls, gardening beds are edged with the original stone walkways that lead to the stairs, the pool, an arched gateway, and cross the water channel. Outside the arched gateway lie arbors on each end of the Tennis Court and a pergola. Stone posts support each of these features.

Willard S. Martin had met his wife Maude while they were both students at Goddard Seminary in Barre Vermont. In 1938, following Mr. Martin's death in an automobile accident, Mrs. Martin sold Greatwood Estate to Goddard Seminary, which became Goddard College, an innovative community learning institution. Today, Goddard provides intensive residency programs at the B.A., M.A. and M.F.A. levels.

The Greatwood Estate and Gardens, entered into the National Register of Historic Places in 1999, are unique to Vermont and northern New England where long, cold, snowy winters and distance from large centers of population limited the number of country estates that were built there. It is important the Gardens be restored and maintained for future generations of Goddard students and the general public's education and enjoyment..



## THE THREAT

There have been a number of initiatives to “save” the Greatwood Gardens, which have been well meaning, but short-term solutions. At this time, Goddard College ‘s President, Board of Trustees, and Facilities Director recognize the historic significance of the Greatwood Estate Campus and are committed to restoring the gardens, grounds, and buildings. Thus Goddard College intends to continue the restoration work that was initiated in 2002 through the general College budget along with regular professional garden consulting. Some of the objectives of this work are:

- Developing an integrated campus facilities plan that recognizes the importance Greatwood Estate and Gardens have within the larger campus
- Continuing and expanding research on the Greatwood Estate Gardens
- Restoration of the Upper, Formal, and Rose Gardens
- Developing interpretive programs for students, historians, and gardeners
- Establishing relationships with other historic gardens in Vermont and New England
- Establishing a relationship with the Vermont Tourism Department
- Including garden restoration and maintenance as a priority in the Goddard College budget

Funding is the main obstacle for the preservation, renovation, and maintenance of the Greatwood Estate Gardens. Goddard College is tuition dependent for all of its revenues. Academic programs, faculty, infrastructure, staffing, and restoration of the Estate Gardens, to name just a few, compete for the College’s monetary resources. Therefore the Greatwood Garden restoration is limited in what can be accomplished, due to the financial demands of making the entire Goddard Campus safe, functional, and inviting.

## HOW TO HELP

To support the preservation of the cultural landscape heritage of the Greatwood Estate Gardens, Goddard College is seeking external funding. You can help by donating to the:

Garden Fund  
Attn: Sarah Hooker  
Director of Alumni Relations  
Goddard College  
123 Pitkin Road  
Plainfield, VT 05677

tel. 866-614-ALUM (866-614-2586); Fax. 802-454-1174

E-mail: Sarah.Hooker@Goddard.edu

Please encourage family and friends to consider Goddard College when they seek quality higher education. Information on the Greatwood Estate Gardens and Goddard College ‘s unique academic programs is available at: [www.Goddard.edu](http://www.Goddard.edu)