

For Immediate Release
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A Company of Pleasures: Garden Renaissance at Hatfield House

Recapturing the spirit of an exceptional 17th-century English garden

**An exhibition in the Arthur and Janet Ross Gallery
September 12, 2006 – August 30, 2007**

An English garden created by a legendary plantsman four centuries ago is the subject of a captivating exhibition opening in September at The New York Botanical Garden. The elaborate and beautiful garden surrounding Hatfield House, originally designed in 1611 by the First Earl of Salisbury and his gardener, renowned plant collector John Tradescant the Elder, is steeped in history. After an extraordinary restoration undertaken by the present Dowager Marchioness of Salisbury (Lady Salisbury), who came to live at Hatfield House in 1972, the garden once again reflects the life and spirit of the 17th century. The garden renaissance at Hatfield House will be on display from September 12, 2006 through August 30, 2007 in the Arthur and Janet Ross Gallery at The New York Botanical Garden.

A Company of Pleasures: Garden Renaissance at Hatfield House is a handsome exhibition of panels richly laden with photographs, diagrams, historic quotations, and explanatory text. The panels are organized into broad themes of plants, people, places, and plans and celebrate the sensory pleasures of gardening. The exhibition was created by the Museum of Garden History in London and Lady Salisbury, among others, and was first displayed last year at the Museum of Garden History.

The exhibition reflects the excitement of the era's exploration of plants from around the world, experimentation with new ideas in landscape and garden design, and fascination with plant science. English horticulturists introduced many new plants and adapted new design ideas from Europe and, indeed, from the whole world. The garden at Hatfield House was among the most celebrated in England, known for being filled with "strange and rare" plants.

A Place of Pleasure and Peace

In the exhibition, Lady Salisbury explains her approach to the garden restoration, "Gradually a picture formed in my mind's eye of the gardens as they may have looked in the 17th century. I felt, as the Elizabethans and Stuarts did, that I did not want to break with the past. By following their principles of beauty and sense of form, they simply tried to make lovelier all that was most attractive..."

Among the features of the garden at Hatfield House are a Foot Maze and Knot Garden, designed by Lady Salisbury in the spirit of the original 1611 garden. They complement the flamboyant detail of the estate's house, which was designed in the period's characteristic Jacobean architectural style, blending late Gothic, Classical, and Tudor motifs. In the large formal estate at Hatfield, parterres contain beds laid out in elaborate Tudor knots and geometric patterns filled with contrasting tones, textures, and color. Pristine hedges, avenues of trees, and classical statues define walkways and frame vistas.

This beautifully designed garden includes orchards, elaborate fountains, scented plants, water parterres, terraces, and herb gardens. There are practical plants and plants for pleasure; both intermingled with exuberance. The mixed vegetable and ornamental garden is described in the exhibition as a “riotous mix of fruit and nut trees, vines, roses, jasmine, lavender, rosemary, melons, onions, spinach, and borage.” The scented garden contains fragrant herbs, which were used for their medicinal and culinary properties.

The exhibition also includes an audio recording, enabling visitors to listen to Lady Salisbury herself talking about her work at Hatfield.

Hatfield House: A Garden with an Illustrious History

The garden at Hatfield House dates from the early 17th century when Robert Cecil, First Earl of Salisbury, employed John Tradescant the Elder (1570–1638) to collect plants for his new home. Cecil sent Tradescant to Europe where he found and brought back trees, bulbs, plants and fruit trees that had never previously been grown in England. Later, he also visited Russia and Algiers on plant collecting trips. His son, John Tradescant the Younger (1608–1662), succeeded his father and traveled even further afield, visiting the colony of Virginia three times. He introduced to England the tulip tree and a yucca plant, among other North American natives. Both Tradescants became famous in their time as gardeners to royalty, collectors of curiosities, travelers, and importers of exotic plants.

After some neglect in the 18th century, restoration of the garden started in earnest in Victorian times and culminated in the efforts of Lady Salisbury.

More information on Hatfield House

At the Botanical Garden’s Shop in the Garden, visitors will find several books that discuss in detail the beauty and importance of Hatfield House and its garden. They include a superb and recently published book, *The Gardens at Hatfield*, written and photographed by Sue Snell, with an expansive introduction full of design insights and horticultural advice by Lady Salisbury.

*Exhibitions in the Arthur and Janet Ross Gallery
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The New York Botanical Garden is a museum of plants located at Bronx River Parkway (Exit 7W) and Fordham Road in the Bronx. The Garden is open year-round, Tuesday through Sunday and Monday holidays, from 10 a.m.–6 p.m. April through October, and 10 a.m. – 5 p.m., November through March. For more information, including directions, admissions pricing, and programming, please visit www.nybg.org or call 718.817.8700.

The New York Botanical Garden is located on property owned in full by the City of New York, and its operation is made possible in part by public funds provided through the New York City Department of Cultural Affairs.

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