

AHS 80th Anniversary: 1922–2002



≈ AHS Retrospective ≈

VISION FOR A NEW MILLENNIUM (1987–PRESENT)

WHEN Carolyn Marsh Lindsay of Rochester, New York, took over as the 27th president of the American Horticultural Society in 1987, she noted matter-of-factly in her first column in *American Horticulturist* magazine that “this is the first time you have honored a woman to lead you.”

In the 15 years since Lindsay took office, the Society’s top leadership position has been divided almost equally between women and men. During that time, the Society has championed children’s gardening and launched other successful national initiatives, including the AHS Plant Heat-Zone map and the SMARTGARDEN™ program. Bolstered by energetic leadership and an exciting new vision, AHS is now poised to take an even more active role in connecting Americans to gardens.

SUPPORTING CHILDREN’S GARDENING

In 1993, the Society’s first Children’s Gardening Symposium was held in Chevy Chase, Maryland. The aim of the symposium was to draw attention to the vital role horticulture should play in our education system. The symposium was organized by former AHS education coordinator Maureen Heffernan, with the support of former AHS President George C. Ball Jr. and sponsorship by the W. Atlee Burpee Company. “We saw an opportunity to play an active role in nurturing the next generation of gardeners,” says Heffernan, who is now director of public programs with the Cleveland Botanical Garden.

More than 500 people attended that first symposium; the 10th annual installment was held this past summer in San Francisco (see article on page 14). In addition to the symposia, the Society has supported youth gardening through the



Beau Beau’s Garden is one of the newest children’s gardens at River Farm.

children’s gardens created at River Farm and sponsorship of a national award to recognize individuals and groups involved with kid’s gardening.

COMPOSTING PARK

The Society historically has taken a lead in promoting earth-friendly gardening and environmental stewardship, and one of its most successful programs was the creation of a National Home Composting Park at River Farm in the early 1990s.

Recognizing the value of home composting for both improving garden soil and reducing solid waste, former AHS staff member Joe Keyser began teaching composting classes on the grounds every Saturday. After the *Washington Post* newspaper published an article about the classes, gardeners from across the country visited River Farm to learn more about “black gold.” This led many other local agencies to initiate composting programs of their own.

AHS PLANT HEAT-ZONE MAP

Another initiative designed to help home gardeners was the AHS Plant Heat-Zone map, released in 1997. The map—conceived as a companion to the USDA Hardiness map—was the brainchild of AHS

AHS Presidents 1987–2002

Carolyn Marsh Lindsay (1987–1990)
George C. Ball Jr. (1990–1993)
H. Marc Cathey (1993–1997)
Linda D. Hallman (1997–2002)
Katy Moss Warner (2002–present)

President Emeritus Dr. H. Marc Cathey, who saw a need for a tool gardeners could use to select plants based on their ability to tolerate heat. With the help of experts from around the nation, Dr. Cathey has been assigning plants with heat codes that are now being used in many books and catalogs.

SMARTGARDEN™

Dr. Cathey also spearheaded development of the AHS SMARTGARDEN™ program, initiated in 2000 to give gardeners scientifically sound, earth-friendly advice on all facets of gardening and to show gardeners how to create and maintain a beautiful landscape by working with rather than against nature. Starting next fall, Dorling Kindersley publishers will issue four SMARTGARDEN™ books tailored to different regions of the United States.

NEW VISION AND MISSION

Building upon the achievements of the last decade, the American Horticultural Society’s Board of Directors this past year approved an exciting and challenging new direction for the Society reflected in a new vision and a new mission statement. The Society’s vision is “Making America a nation of gardeners, a land of gardens.”

According to AHS President Katy Moss Warner, “Our new mission is to open the eyes of all Americans to the vital connections between people and plants, to inspire all Americans to become responsible caretakers of the Earth, to celebrate America’s diversity through the arts and sciences of horticulture, and to lead this effort by sharing the Society’s unique national resources with all Americans.”