

The Earthwhile Garden



The Earthwhile Garden



Like any art, gardening changes constantly, sometimes in baby steps and sometimes in bold leaps. Within our memory, two monumental events have driven gardening change: the creation of Earth Day in 1970, which raised awareness of environmental issues, and the opening of the High Line in NYC in 2009, which profoundly impacted garden practices, plant selection, and design. Today, eco-gardening, the product of both, is well known and valued. Mindful gardeners now aim to create beautiful, biodiverse, and sustainable landscapes where all creatures thrive. However, there is always a part of us that wants more, and where gardening is concerned, we want to be rewarded for our efforts with a haven that is not only beneficial, but also worth our while. Today, let's dare to get up close and dig a bit deeper, envisioning new possibilities for a garden that maximizes ecology and aesthetics to make beautiful and functional outdoor spaces that nurture our souls, and nature too. Let's create *The Earthwhile Garden*.

7:30-8:45 **Registration, Continental Breakfast, Vendor Sales**

8:45-9:00 **Welcome, Introductions, and General Information**

9:00-10:00 **Featured Speaker: Jared Barnes**

The Wild South: Naturalistic Planting & Ecological Design for Southern Gardeners

Jared Barnes, Ph.D., started gardening when he was five years old, obtained his horticultural science degree from North Carolina State University, and now enthusiastically pursues how to best cultivate plants and minds. He fulfills those passions as an award-winning associate professor of horticulture at Stephen F. Austin State University in Nacogdoches, Texas, where he stewards the Plantery, the student botanic garden. He also writes a weekly newsletter titled *plant•ed*, hosts *The Plantastic Podcast*, writes for various publications, and gardens with his wife and daughter at their smallholding, Ephemera Farm. Jared's featured presentation shares ecological principles and naturalistic planting strategies for crafting sustainable, resilient gardens that are suited to the Southern landscape.

10:00-10:30 **Break and Vendor Sales**

10:30-11:30 **Featured Speaker: Molly Hendry**

A Case for Cultivation: Curating Plant Communities in Motion

Molly Hendry is a Birmingham, Alabama, native whose training as a horticulturist and landscape architect has taken her across the country and around the world to study gardens. Most notably, she spent a year at the top UK public gardens as the 2016-17 Royal Horticultural Society's Interchange Fellow. On her return, she worked with the Friends of Birmingham Botanical Gardens team for 5+ years, helping direct the future development of the gardens. In 2023, Molly founded Roots & Ramblings and now designs plant-focused gardens for hands-in-the-dirt gardeners, while also exploring new ways to create meaningful gardens and to cultivate thoughtful gardeners. Molly's featured presentation makes a compelling case for gardens that are not only thoughtfully composed but also generously cultivated through time, and empowers home gardeners to be the creative agent in their ever-growing and changing composition.

11:30-11:45

Break and Vendor Sales

11:45-12:30

Concurrent Session 1 (choose one program)

Concurrent Speaker: Preston Montague

Residential Restoration: Experiments with Piedmont Prairies

Preston Montague discovered horticulture and landscape design while working as an artist and realized they were not only important as creative expression but also as vehicles for pursuing social and environmental justice. Impassioned, he achieved degrees in both disciplines from NC State University. He now practices landscape architecture and fine art in Durham and enjoys a robust teaching and public speaking schedule, which allows him to test elements of his practice with students and sharpen his approach through examination and criticism. Preston's concurrent session examines the historic role prairies have played in the ecological fabric of the Carolinas and the growing use of herbaceous plantings to restore habitat in urban and residential environments.

Concurrent Speaker: Tessa Pinner

From Dirt to Dreams: Practical Ways to Increase Diversity in the Home Garden

A Greenville native, Tessa Pinner is a garden designer with degrees in fine art and horticulture. She interned at Great Dixter in East Sussex, England, and Chanticleer in Wayne, Pennsylvania. Prior to opening her practice in 2023, she worked as Creative Director for Dabney Collins. Tessa's concurrent session shares ideas from her cottage garden for creating and cultivating rich garden environments including mixed borders, a cutting garden, and a pocket meadow.

Concurrent Speaker: Dean Norton

George Washington: Gentleman Farmer and Environmental Visionary

A renowned authority on gardening history, Dean Norton is a horticulture graduate of Clemson University and the Director Emeritus of Horticulture and Livestock for the Mount Vernon Estate where he worked for 55 years applying the latest plant science and management techniques. Credited with leading the restoration of the Mount Vernon gardens and landscape, he has been honored with numerous awards and, most recently, been asked to serve on the Committee for the Preservation of the White House. Dean's concurrent session examines the legacy of George Washington and his impact, including "Earthwhile" practices.

12:30-1:45

Lunch and Vendor Sales

1:45-2:45

Featured Speaker: Preston Montague

Designing for the Experience: Composition in Practices

Welcome Preston Montague again as he shares planting design strategies, rooted in the artistic principles of composition, to enrich and heighten the garden experience. Choreographing experiences with designed plantings is a feat of art, science, and will. The old adage of "right plant, right place" applies to plant survivability of course, but it can also apply to the way we arrange plants to encourage particular reactions from visitors. Preston will explore the art of designing for an experience and will share simple tactics that can hasten decision-making and help organize a design process.

2:45-3:00

Concluding Remarks and Raffle Drawings



3:00-3:15

Break and Vendor Sales

3:15-4:00

Concurrent Session 2 (choose one program)

Concurrent Speaker: Dean Norton

Washington's Head Gardener with 200 Years Experience

Join Dean Norton again as he talks about trees, shrubs, turf, flowers, and vegetables, sharing 200 years of experience that unite management techniques for the 21st century with an appreciation of 18th century principles and practices.

Concurrent Speaker: Jared Barnes

Woodn't It Be Nice: Trees and Shrubs for Today's Gardener

Welcome Jared Barnes again as he looks at outstanding woodies that thrive in tough sites, adapt to wet and dry conditions, attract pollinators, and connect horticulture with the world.

Concurrent Speaker: Molly Hendry

Taming the Wild: Gardening with Native Plants

Welcome Molly Hendry again as she shares strategies for adding beauty and biodiversity by designing with a variety of Southeastern native plants in a residential context.

Symposium Art

Sustaining Beauty

by Greenville Artist, Susan White



As a child, “How do you draw [fill in the blank]?” was a question Susan frequently asked her unwitting mother. Entranced by colorful scenes in children's books illustrations, she quickly came to claim artwork as her love. When her father encouraged her to pursue a “practical” career, Susan chose graphic design, receiving her degree from North Carolina State University.

For most of her adulthood, Susan has found satisfaction in organizing the hierarchies of text and visuals for various companies and clients. Mom of two grown daughters and happily married for 27 years, the empty-nesting season of life has brought plein air painting, hiking, gardening and daily dog walks with the family's furry friend, Teddy. After living through a cancer diagnosis and finding a newfound appreciation for her “one wild and precious life”, Susan has recently made (slightly) more time for artwork. She embraces the joy of expressing the incredible beauty of nature around us.

Registration Form



Early Bird Registration:

12/01/2025 – 12/31/2025

Late Registration:

01/01/2026 – 01/17/2026

Registration Deadline:

01/17/2026

The Earthwhile Garden ♦ Saturday, February 14, 2026 ♦ Greenville Convention Center ♦ Greenville, SC

Early Bird Registration is \$85—either by registering online and paying by credit card or by registering by US Mail and sending in a check. Late Registration after 12/31/2025 increases to \$95.

To register online and pay with a credit card, scan the QR-code to the right to go to www.gmgga.org/symposium and select the **Register Now!** button. You will receive a confirmation email when your registration is received.

To register by U.S. Mail, please complete the needed information on the form below—**only one person per form**. If paying for more than one person, you can do so in one check for the cumulative total amount of those registrations. **Make your check for your registration fee payable to GGMGA**. Enclose your check with your registration form in an envelope. Mail to:

Gary Cutter, 9 Crimson Glory Way, Travelers Rest, SC 29690-6900.



Upon receipt of your registration, a confirmation will be sent within 5 days via email from symposiumregistration@gmgga.org. Please make sure your email address is legible. If you don't see your confirmation email, please look in your promotions or spam folders. If you have questions, please contact symposiumregistration@gmgga.org. We regret that no refunds will be issued.

Registration Fee: \$ _____

Early Registration fee is \$85.00. Late Registration begins 1/1/2026 with the fee increasing to \$95.

Friend of the Symposium Donation: \$ _____

We thank you for any and all donations. All donors will be recognized as "Friends of the Symposium."

Total Check Amount (Fees + Donation): \$ _____

Name _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip Code _____

Email _____ Phone _____

- Concurrent Session 1:** _____ Preston Montague, *Residential Restoration: Experiments with Piedmont Prairies*
(Check One) _____ Tessa Pinner, *From Dirt to Dreams: Practical Ways to Increase Diversity in the Home Garden*
 _____ Dean Norton, *George Washington: Gentleman Farmer and Environmental Visionary*

- Concurrent Session 2:** _____ Dean Norton, *Washington's Head Gardener with 200 Years Experience*
(Check One) _____ Jared Barnes, *Woodn't It Be Nice: Trees and Shrubs for Today's Gardener*
 _____ Molly Hendry, *Taming the Wild: Gardening with Native Plants*

- Box Lunch (Check one):** _____ Carolina Cobb Salad with Grilled Chicken
 _____ Smoked Turkey with Bacon and Provolone Cheese Sandwich
 _____ Vegan Greek Salad
 _____ Special Dietary Requests (Please list) _____