

Garden Club of America, Royal Horticultural Society, and Longwood Gardens Celebrate Partnership

The historic Peirce - du Pont House on the property of Longwood Gardens was the venue for a celebration on October 12, 2011, to honor Alex Summers, this year's RHS/GCA Interchange Fellow and to commemorate the inauguration of the Fellowship as an internship at Longwood Gardens.

Mrs. Ann Rose, Longwood Gardens Trustee and Garden Club of Wilmington President, hosted the evening's reception and dinner for GCA delegates, RHS delegates, and Longwood Gardens Trustees and staff. Guests, also, included three "alumni" of the RHS/GCA Interchange Fellowship, formerly known as the McLaren Scholarship: Tony Aiello, Curator and Director of Horticulture at the Morris Arboretum, University of Pennsylvania; Grace Chapman, Director of Horticulture at Lewis Ginter Botanical Garden; and Stephanie Jutila Seltz, President and CEO of Greater Des Moines Botanical Garden.

Paul Redman, Director of Longwood Gardens, welcomed guests into the historic conservatory that connects the Peirce - du Pont House, which was the first conservatory built on the property by its Founder, Pierre S. du Pont. Nathan Hayward, Longwood Gardens Board President, commented on the historic location of the event and Longwood's commitment to development of international public garden/horticulture leadership.

The RHS/GCA Interchange Fellowship is one example of three venerable organizations' – The Garden Club of America, Royal Horticultural Society, and Longwood Gardens – coming together to promote excellence in international public garden/horticulture leadership.

Doug Needham, Ph.D., Longwood Gardens Education Department Head and member of RHS Interchange Fellowship Selection Panel, reflected on his first contact in October 2008 with Nancy Swanson, then GCA Scholarship Vice Chairman for the Interchange Fellowship, about GCA's interest in establishing an internship at Longwood Gardens for RHS/GCA Interchange Fellows. Needham said, "It took much perseverance by all partners 'on both sides of the pond' to secure visa designations to permit the Interchange Fellowship that we are celebrating this evening." During the period from that first meeting until this event, Longwood Gardens secured the J-1 visa "intern" designation from the US Department of State, formalized a memorandum of understanding for the internship, and Alex Summers became the first RHS/GCA Interchange Fellow to pursue an internship at Longwood Gardens.

Needham said, "Sarah Carey, GCA Liaison to RHS, was instrumental in planning, negotiating, and attending to the details of the Fellowship." GCA President, Marian Hill, and Carey commented on the history of the Fellowship and GCA's role in the Fellowship. Carey said, "Since its inception in 1948, the Interchange Fellowship has been the GCA's most prestigious horticultural scholarship, annually providing for an American student to work and study in Great Britain, and for a British student to study in the United States. The addition

of an internship at Longwood Gardens further strengthens this historic and unique horticultural exchange between the US and Great Britain. We look forward to expanding the internship in the future to other major public gardens within the US.”

President Hill spoke of the challenge in this economy, of affording the best possible education. She said, “Students now seek a more creative education in horticulture. To offer an internship opportunity within Longwood’s preeminent gardening institution provides the perfect way to broaden the opportunities offered to recipients of this scholarship. The Garden Club of America is proud to have been a partner in facilitating this new alliance.”

Photo caption:



Alex Summers, RHS/GCA Interchange Fellow; Sarah Carey, GCA Liaison to RHS; Doug Needham, Longwood Gardens Education Department Head; and Sarah Pease, GCA Scholarship Vice Chairman for the Interchange Fellowship, in the conservatory of the Peirce - du Pont House at Longwood Gardens, Kennett Square, Pennsylvania, USA.

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