

# Polly Hill Arboretum Rhode Island Garden Tour

## September 24-26, 2014



Join us for a visit to southeastern Rhode Island. This historic area is rich with diversity, natural beauty and culture. We will be based in the Narragansett Bay town of Bristol for two nights. Thursday we travel to Little Compton to visit three spectacular private gardens, with lunch included. Friday we have a special tour at nearby Blithewold Gardens concluding with a boxed lunch at the mansion. Plan your trip to include extra time to explore many other area attractions on your own, including Green Animals Topiary Gardens, Herreshoff Marine Museum/ America's Cup Hall of Fame, self-guided town tree tour, and more!

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### **Bristol Harbor Inn**

Nights of September 24 & 25

Bristol Harbor Inn is a lovely boutique-style 40 room hotel, located on the water at Thames Street Landing in the heart of historic Bristol, Rhode Island.

*Continental Breakfast included*

259 Thames St # 1, Bristol, RI 02809  
(401) 254-1444

## **Wednesday, September 24**

### **5:30pm**

Our group meets for a welcome wine and cheese reception, (location to be determined)

Dinner on your own.

## **Thursday, September 25**

### **Depart hotel 9:00am**

Today we travel to nearby Little Compton to visit three private gardens. Located in a quiet corner of Rhode Island, between the Sakonnet River and the Massachusetts border, this beautiful area is dotted with farmlands, historic homes, and lovely gardens. (transportation provided)

We will visit the following gardens. (times to be determined)

### **High Elms**



Gioia Browne and Jim Marsh's garden features towering American elms and stonewalls framing the 17th century farmhouse on three acres. The owners have enhanced the mature landscape by adding gardens and planting more than 150 trees and shrubs. The woodland garden surrounding the 19th century barn is planted with ferns, jack-in-the-pulpits and hostas. The enchanting summer house, used for tools and casual dining, overlooks the dianthus, gentians, ferns and dwarf conifers in the rock garden. In the 75 foot perennial border, foxgloves, phlox, old roses, clematis, daylilies, dahlias, anemones, asters, and others bloom from May through November in shades of pink, purple, and blue. Nearby are the shrub walk, hydrangea bed, and the geometric, cutting, and white gardens. The newest garden is a bog garden with a collection of flood-tolerant natives; caerex, roses, azaleas, primroses, delphiniums, skullcap, and resident frogs.

## Atwater Garden

The garden of Berta and Nate Atwater is the best of the seaside mid-20th Century modernist gardens created by the well-known local designer Lloyd Lawton. It is a pilgrimage location for those interested in tasteful, creative pruning of trees and shrubs, with mature Cedrus, Cornus kousa and native hollies being memorable. Their beautiful rock gardens are surrounded by a collection of rhododendrons, azaleas, ilex, hostas, dwarf conifers, grasses and Japanese maples. Also notable are the textural massings of woodland perennials and Nate's vegetable garden. Berta knew Polly through the Rare Plant Group. Berta has



invited us to enjoy a boxed lunch at her garden. (photo by Karl Gercens)

## Sakonnet Gardens



Sakonnet is a secret garden embedded within a native coastal field landscape. At the diminutive scale of a cottage garden, it is conceived as an intimate place to explore, with multiple paths leading one onward to unexpected experiences. The garden is the long-term project of John Gwynne and Mikel Folcarelli. They began in the mid 1970's with a small clearing deep within a natural tangle of autumn olives, oriental bittersweet and local arrowwood viburnums. Now larger than an acre, its labyrinth of spaces are carved organically out of the original thicket. Each outdoor room reflects the owner's ongoing experiments with lighting, space, color mixing, collecting and growing wonderful plants. Like Polly, they experiment to see what can be grown in their coastal area and have begun to open their garden to share their information with other interested gardeners.

**Friday, September 26**  
**Meet at Blithewold at 10:00am**  
**(5 minute drive)**

## **Blithewold Mansion & Gardens**

Blithewold, formerly home to the Van Wickle family, is a 45-room English-style manor mansion filled with family heirlooms, framed by a series of lovely gardens and an arboretum on Narragansett Bay. The estate consists of 33 acres of lawns, gardens, specimen trees, and historic stone structures, and a combination of historic and modern gardening. The sweeping 10 acre Great Lawn and its views to Narragansett Bay is the perfect setting for over 500 different kinds of trees and shrubs.



Taking full advantage of the stunning water views and country setting, landscape architect John DeWolf designed the landscape starting in the mid 1890s in an informal style with touches of formal elements. In August 1926, Ernest “Chinese” Wilson and Alfred Rehder visited Blithewold and to the owners’ delight these eminent plantsmen from the Arnold Arboretum were awestruck by the variety of plants they found. In a letter to her daughter about the visit, Bessie Van Wickle McKee wrote, “They were frankly amazed to find so lovely and interesting a place here and kept saying, ‘Why you have an arboretum here; we never dreamed there was a place like this’.”



Our visit includes a special tour by Dan Christina, Assistant Grounds Manager, who will introduce us to the many unusual specimen trees in Blithewold’s arboretum.

The mansion, also open for touring, is where we conclude our Rhode Island Garden Tour with a boxed lunch on the porch.



Tour includes:

Two nights at the Bristol Harbor Inn; continental breakfast included  
Transportation to Little Compton gardens  
Evening wine and cheese reception  
Boxed lunch both days  
Garden admissions: (Sakonnet Garden and Blithewold special tour fee)  
\$150 tax deductible donation to the Polly Hill Arboretum

Tour Price:

\$500 Per person, based on double occupancy

\$650 Single

**Tour size limited, sign up early!**

508-693-9426

[www.pollyhillarboretum.org](http://www.pollyhillarboretum.org)

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