In March of this year, before spring had fully sprung, I had the opportunity to join some landscape design friends for a tour of the grounds at the Tregaron Conservancy. Nestled away between Cleveland and Woodley Parks in northwest DC, the Conservancy consists of about 13 acres in a horseshoe shaped plot of land around the Washington International School. Originally an estate named The Causeway, it belonged first to Alexander Graham Bell's wife and then a couple called the Parmalees.

The mansion (now the school), sited on the top of the 20-acre estate, was designed by famous architect Charles Platt. But the grounds were the work of an equally famous landscape architect, Ellen Biddle Shipman, who transformed the lands away from the immediate area around the house into a wonderful garden. Over the years, the lands have been maintained by the current property managers and landscape designers, who have continued to transform the landscape around the school.

"Nothing in the garden is really difficult. Everything can be managed by an ordinary embezzle; indeed, that is why it is the greatest of all amusements."

Events of Interest
July – September 2022

**ASTILBE**

*What’s in Bloom?*

**Astilbe**

Astilbe (commonly called false goat’s beard or false spirea) is the shade gardener’s summer-time staple. Blooming in early to mid-summer depending on the variety, it boasts feathery blooms in a range of colors from white, pale creams and pinks to cool purples, deep fuchsia and reds. Looking for an astilbe to provide interest in your garden at night? Plant ‘Bridal Veil,’ whose white blooms will pull your eye in the evening garden. Want something a bit brighter? Choose Astilbe ‘Visions’ (Astilbe x chinensis ‘Visions’), whose flowers are a stunning raspberry pink color. There are also dwarf varieties for the front of the border, and tall ones that make a statement among other perennials. When not in bloom, astilbe offers an attractive, deep green fern-like foliage from spring through fall. Astilbe ranges in height from as low as 12” to as tall as 24-30”. Both flowers and greens make for great cut flower arrangements.

**What’s in Bloom?**

*All photos © Melissa Clark Photography unless otherwise noted*

**Cove story continued**

into beautiful gardens resembling a woodland forest. After the Parmalees died, the property passed into the hands of Marjorie Meriweather Post and her husband James Davies, who held various ambassadorial posts, and in the 1940s they named it Tregaron.

In 1979, Tregaron was named a DC historical landmark, but once the Davies were gone, the estate fell into neglect and developers acquired most of the land (the rest, along with the mansion, was bought by Washington International School for its campus). A local group named The Friends of Tregaron was successful in opposing the plans for a large development of homes, and in 2006 an agreement was reached under which 13 acres of the estate would be conserved as open green space and managed by Tregaron Conservancy.

Almost immediately, members of the Conservancy made plans to restore as much of the gardens as possible, following Shipman’s vision. Landscape Projects was involved in the earliest efforts, dredging the Lily Pond in 2001 to prepare for restoring it; I still have photographs from that project, carried out during the winter months. Tamara Belt (a Board member), our guide on my visit, explained that the grounds are open to anyone wanting to explore them, and showed us areas where the most current efforts are focused, like the Meadow area. Another project is called Shipman Terrace, a seating area near the Lily Pond, for which the landscape was just completed. By summer, it will be planted and a custom bench installed following a Shipman design.

**Volunteers help keep pathways open and invasive plants are eliminated whenever possible. The Conservancy and the school collaborate on projects like rainwater runoff management. This space is truly an oasis in the city, and since the pandemic more people have discovered it and are volunteering, Belt said. I’ve explored the area from both entryways (one is on Macomb Street, the other on Klingle Road, at a dead end) and am looking forward to returning soon. If you’re out looking for a new urban oasis to explore, I hope you’ll visit Tregaron as well.**

*Melissa Clark APLD*