



CBHL Members' West News

Edited by Beth Brand
Head Librarian
Schilling Library, Desert Botanical Garden

San Francisco Botanical Garden Update

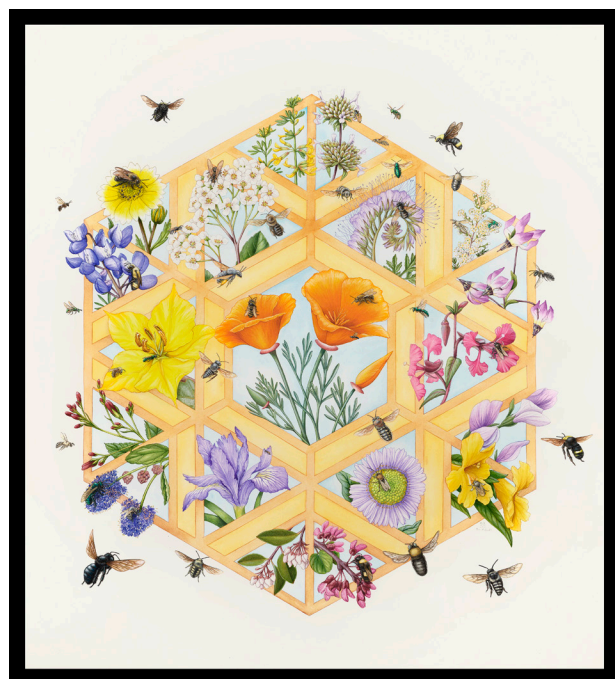
Brandy Kuhl
Library Director
San Francisco Botanical Garden

After a long pause due to the pandemic, we are thrilled to welcome Erin E. Hunter and present her new art exhibition, *Wild Nectar: Paintings of Flora and Pollinators*. Beautiful, intricate, and enlightening, Erin Hunter's paintings are the perfect way to start the new year and restore the library's art exhibit program. Erin's original paintings and

unframed prints are on display and for sale from January 7 through April 30. Erin also put together a wonderful short video on the making of her most recent piece, *Look Closer*. Video and details on the exhibition are at <https://www.sfbg.org/hunter>.

I am also thrilled to welcome Sharon Murata, our new part-time Children's Librarian. Sharon has experience working in libraries and running children's programs and has also studied and worked in horticulture. Sharon joined the library team in early January. With Sharon's hire we will be able to restart our children's programs and reopen the library more days.

Above: Artist Erin Hunter at work on a piece featured in her new art exhibition.



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Job Posting:

Librarian Position at Los Angeles County Arboretum

Responsible for collection of over 30,000 volumes that includes books, journals, and archival information relating to plant science, horticulture, landscape history, and related fields. The Arboretum library serves visitors and students, as well as professional and scientific communities. The Librarian has responsibility for services and programs for the public, and the purchase, classification, and cataloguing of library materials. This position, offered by the Los Angeles County Department of Parks and Recreation, will officially post in March or April of this year.

For more information, contact Richard Schulhof at richard.schulhof@arboretum.org.

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As part of our community memory project, PHS interviewed Iris Brown, long-time gardener at the Norris Square Neighborhood Project. CBHLers visited this garden in 2005 when CBHL met in Philadelphia. Photo by Rob Cardillo.

CBHL Members' East News

Edited by Shelly Kilroy
 Librarian, Peter M. Wege Library
 Frederik Meijer Gardens & Sculpture Park

Pennsylvania Horticultural Society Update

Janet Evans
 Associate Director, McLean Library
 Pennsylvania Horticultural Society

Community Memory Project

Work continues on our community memory project, the purpose of which is to support the documentation, preservation, and dissemination of Philadelphia's community garden histories. To date, we've held six virtual workshops on "Oral History for Community Gardeners" in which project coordinator, Joe Makuc, outlines the basics of creating oral histories of community gardeners. While participants may choose to conduct their own interviews for oral histories, many of them are being conducted by Joe, and are being uploaded to our YouTube channel here: <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCR3IIXteQWyPtnr9PjsULCA>.

Interviews will continue over the next several months. Selected clips from the oral histories, along with photos, will ultimately be uploaded to the Smithsonian Community of Gardens website <https://communityofgardens.si.edu/>.

Update on NEH Funding

Library staff are hard at work creating metadata for three image collections that form the basis of our project, "The Genius of Place: Images of Gardens and Landscapes from America and Around the World 1920-1984" which is funded under an NEH Sustaining the Humanities Through the American Rescue Plan (SHARP) award to support cultural organizations affected by the coronavirus.

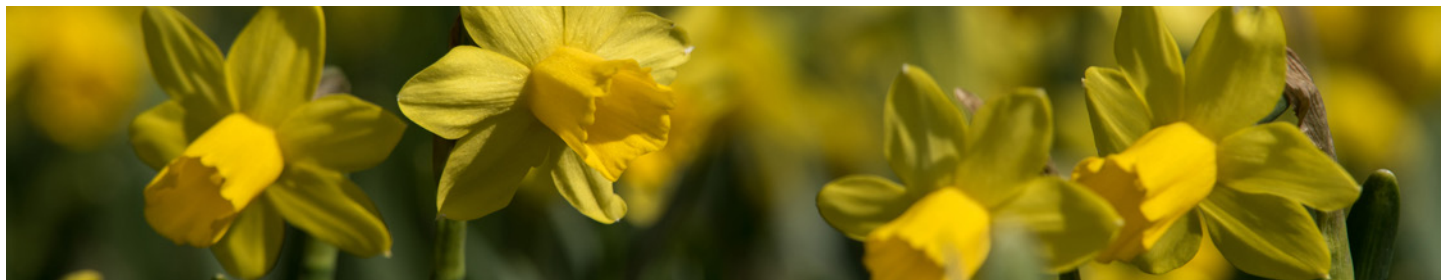
The grant covers partial funding of two library staff positions involved in a project to digitize, describe, and upload items that document the history of gardens in Philadelphia, the United States, and abroad, and to develop a webinar program for general audiences. At project end, the images will live on the PA Photos and Documents online digital repository.

Library Life During COVID

We continue to do our book discussions over Zoom and find that our participants value it, but at the same time hope for a chance to meet face to face again sometime in 2022. Book discussion list here:

<https://pennhort.libguides.com/McLeanLibraryBookGroup>.

As is true for many libraries, we are open to the public at reduced hours at this time, but are able to supply our patrons with eBooks and provide virtual reference services. We miss seeing our “regulars” and our favorite volunteers.



Calendar of Upcoming Events

Edited by Rita M. Hassert

Library Collections Manager

Sterling Morton Library

The Morton Arboretum

March 29-31, 2022

Computers in Libraries 2022

Virtual

<https://pheedloop.com/CILC22/site/home/>

March 29-April 1, 2022

Annual Conference

Visual Resources Association

Baltimore, MD

<http://vraweb.org>

April 3-9, 2022

National Library Week

<https://www.ala.org/conferenceevents/celebrationweeks/natlibraryweek>

May 2-8, 2022

Children's Book Week

<http://everychildareader.net/cbw>

May 19-22, 2022

Annual Meeting & MuseumExpo 2022

American Alliance of Museums

Boston, MA

<https://annualmeeting.aam-us.org/>

May 24-28, 2022

54th Annual Meeting

Council on Botanical and Horticultural Libraries (CBHL)

Denver, CO, and Virtual

<http://www.cbhl.net>

June 20-24, 2022

Annual Conference 2022

American Public Gardens Association (APGA)

Portland, OR

<https://virtualllearning.publicgardens.org/76-annual-conference-2022>

June 23-28, 2022

Annual Meeting

American Library Association (ALA)

Chicago, IL

<https://2022.alaannual.org/>

July 24-27, 2022

Botany 2022

Anchorage, AK

<https://2022.botanyconference.org/>

July 31-August 2, 2022

2022 Annual Conference

Special Libraries Association (SLA)

Charlotte, NC, and Virtual

<http://www.sla.org>

Book Reviews

Edited by Gillian Hayward
Library Manager
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Women and Gardens: Obstacles and Opportunities for Women Gardeners Throughout History by Judith Mundlak Taylor and the late Susan Groag Bell. San Francisco: Taylorhort Press, 2021. [iv], 286, [4] pages, frontispiece illustration. \$19.99. ISBN 978-0-578-94247-6 (paperback).

Reviewed by Charlotte A. Tancin
Librarian, Hunt Institute for Botanical
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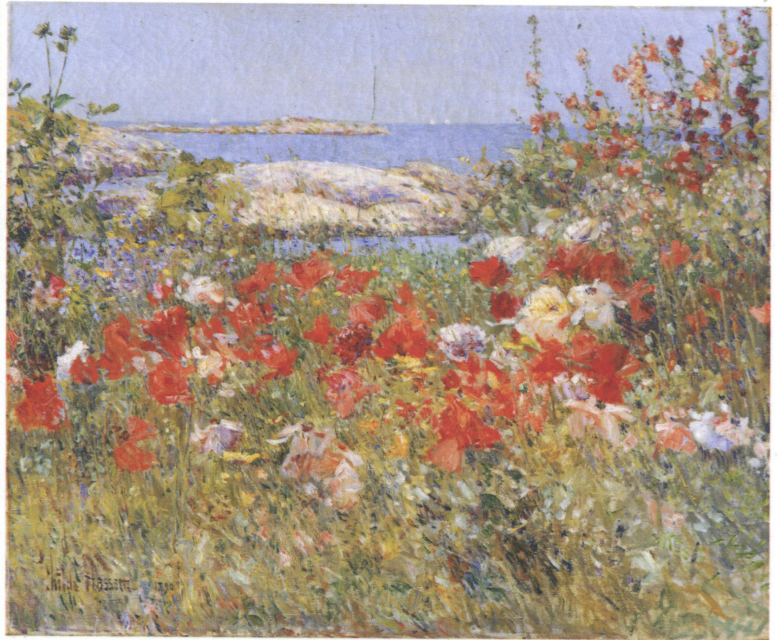
The bones of this book were research notes left behind after the death of Susan Groag Bell (1926-2015). She was a feminist scholar from the time just before women's studies programs began, and her focus was on how women's contributions to society have largely been written out of history. Early on, she used existing resources in new ways, such as showing slides of artworks to point out women's largely unrecognized societal roles. In 1971 she taught one of the first women's studies courses and wrote a reading guide for it that would become one of the first academic textbooks on women's history.

Bell was looking into a lot of different research areas, and back in the 1970s, she began preliminary work around the extensive topic of women and gardens. The project lapsed, and after her death, a Stanford colleague asked Judith Taylor if she would complete the work and bring it to publication. Bell's project differed from Taylor's own research, which includes books on California gardens, olive cultivation, plant introductions, and most recently on flower breeders. Still, it appealed to Taylor's own views on how women were historically sidelined beyond the domestic sphere, for which she has strong feelings. After poring over Bell's notes for some time, she agreed to take on this project, provided that she could expand it, especially the second half of the work, with her own research.

The result is *Women and Gardens*, an overview of women's work in gardening and horticulture – and obstacles to such work. Bell's scope for the project, which Taylor has kept to here, looked back over 500 years with particular focus on the 19th and early 20th centuries. It was narrowly constrained in terms of race, class, socioeconomics, and geography: women in Western cultures, largely of northern European

WOMEN AND GARDENS

*Obstacles and Opportunities for
Women Gardeners Throughout History*



JUDITH MUNDLAK TAYLOR
& THE LATE SUSAN GROAG BELL

origins, and mostly in the middle to upper strata of society, with considerable focus on England, some on Europe and North America, and some on other countries. Even with these constraints, the book is very informative and eye-opening. It may seem like parts of this are well-trodden ground, but when Bell was working on this, it was not so. There is original research here, and it is well worth reading her and Taylor's observations on underlying and overarching societal forces that in many ways kept women out of real garden work and professional horticulture. They also discuss later forces that opened doors for women (often just cracking the doors open barely enough to force a foot in), and how the fight for women's right to vote and for changes to laws about property rights and similar issues were crucial for these openings. Although this work focuses on a restricted subset of women, it is informative for the larger history that now continues to be researched more widely.

Within Bell's original outline, the first four chapters of the book lay out historical background, while the last four look at specifics regarding schools of horticulture for women, women in landscape architecture and in ornamental plant breeding, with a short, final chapter on writing. Themes and information from several scholarly disciplines are brought together to describe how women, long the keepers of home gardens and foragers for food and medicine, and historically valued as herbal healers and midwives, were from the Renaissance on gradually displaced from those roles, as medicine, botany, and horticulture were professionalized in ways that implicitly and explicitly excluded women. Naturally these changes, along with other societal forces discussed, also removed such work from the aspirations of girls and women going forward. We live in a time when girls as well as boys can envision themselves as astronauts and presidents, but this book vividly describes the before times, and particularly the last 150 years.

Chapter 1 is about obstacles, and begins by describing male encroachment into fields previously often managed by women: "physic," herbal healing, midwifery, as well as raising food. With regards to healing and midwifery, the rise of universities and changes in the modes of education for younger children led to separate tracks for girls and boys, which over generations sank any possibilities for women not only to continue in health-related roles but to develop further in them. Yes, there were many new discoveries in medicine and techniques that proved some earlier beliefs and practices wrong or made improvements on them, but these were, in effect, now new secrets only available to men through formal education. Add to those hurdles the powerful hold of the Church on societal roles and expectations, and the burning of women as witches often under suspicion for their skills at herbal healing and midwifery. Obstacles, indeed.

In terms of growing food and flowers, introductions of new plants into European gardens led to new enthusiasms, new knowledge, and a taste for lavish gardens among royalty and nobility. Kitchen gardens were more and more relegated to poorer people and servants, while people of leisure and means enjoyed the "main" gardens. New introductions took a long time to make their way to the wider population. Market gardeners and gardeners for hire were mostly men. "Ladies" were encouraged to enjoy flower gardens but not really to work in them. Some women worked in them anyway, which is another of Bell's interests. A theme of this book is the way women were increasingly limited not only in their aspirations but also in their perspectives. There was societal pressure and peer pressure on women in the middle and upper classes regarding what was ladylike, permitted, done, or not done. There are good observations about Victorian prudishness in England, how the weight of it fell heavily on the rising middle class, who aspired to be seen as being as good as the upper classes. The middle class was even more determined not to be outdone in terms of "proper" behavior, which included women being pure, uneducated, useless, ornamental.

Chapter 2 looks at 18th-century England. Bell had done considerable research in women's diaries and letters to show that there were a lot of women working on and in their flower gardens, but not docu-

mented in garden histories. Women grew flowers, and men made landscape parks – men owned their land, women did not. Men’s educations and travels exposed them to new ideas and classical accomplishments, which they used in developing their own properties. Patriarchy and primogeniture meant that men owned their gardens and parks, which they passed down to the men in their families, while women’s gardens were ephemeral, even though their activities in gardens continued the work of women in general over centuries. Women, for the most part, did not pass on their gardens to their daughters and granddaughters – daughters were like branches to break off and graft to the stock of another family. Men were planting for posterity and prestige, while women planted with an eye toward their inner vision and a sense of personal achievement. History recorded large accomplishments and new developments.

Chapter 3 looks at opportunities for women in the face of those and other obstacles. Bell saw gardens as havens for women: an enclosed space between home and the outer world. In the 19th century botany, was becoming a suitable (genteel and non-threatening) object of interest for girls and women, fueled partly by the simplicity of the Linnaean system of classification. Women collected plants and pasted them into albums, identifying them and writing their names. They embroidered plant images and drew and painted plant pictures. Some grew flowers. The bicycle and typewriter provided new opportunities for work outside the home. Some began to work as botanical artists for authors and publishers, sometimes credited as the artist, sometimes paid. Some women wrote professionally on gardening and horticultural topics. Women awakening to new possibilities in these and other areas began to come together to discuss the need for the ability to vote and to change laws about property, rights to children, and other matters. Some significant societal shifts were happening.

Chapter 4 discusses gardening as liberation. 19th-century women were increasingly encouraged to be passive, obedient, and decorative, to raise children, take care of the home, and keep their opinions to themselves. Bell was very interested in how long this situation persisted and how it was eroded; in how long women were hobbled by particular norms and social realities. By the mid-19th century, gardening became an increasing interest for women, especially in the middle and upper classes. In 1896, the new director of the Royal Botanical Gardens, Kew, “very reluctantly” hired some women as professional gardeners (the only illustration in this book is the frontispiece photo, “Women gardeners at Kew, circa 1915”). The new women gardeners at Kew were required to attend horticulture lectures and to wear brown woolen knickers at work. During WWI, women were essential workers for public gardens and parks as well as in market gardens and farms. By the early 20th century, two generations of women gardeners, horticulturists, and garden writers had set the stage for modern women gardeners and landscape designers. This coincided with women’s entry into various professional schools, with a “surplus” of unmarried and childless women who needed to support themselves in some way, and with the height of the women’s suffrage movement.

All of that history sets the stage for chapters 5-7, about schools of horticulture for women, women in landscape architecture, and women in ornamental plant breeding. This is the larger portion of the book (pages 95-222); chapters 5-7 discuss how women got into those fields and documents a number of examples. You might think, perhaps, that this is the core of the book, and in a sense, it is, although this core would not be nearly as meaningful without the history laid out in the first four chapters. Because of people like Bell, we now have such history brought together, and because of people like Taylor, it and many examples are brought to light through writing and publication. This book is a valuable addition to documentation of women in horticulture and the obstacles they dealt with over centuries. Of course, it is a reminder of obstacles that women in many places are still experiencing.

Chapter 8 is an odd, brief look at writing, and does not really fit the rest of the book, although it was part of Bell’s original outline. An appendix, “Women Rose Breeders in Australia,” supplements chapter 7,

presenting in tabular form information compiled by Kate Stanley. And the front cover illustration supplements chapter 6, showing a color photo of a painting, “Celia Thaxter’s Garden, Isle of Shoals, Maine” (1890). The book ends with a dual bibliography of references from Bell’s notes and Taylor’s work, along with an index. *Women and Gardens* is a fascinating read and is recommended for both libraries and individuals. Bell’s work for this book was done decades before wider academic perspectives opened up on race, class, gender, and intersectionality. The resulting history outlined here reflects that, and is still important for our understanding of these parts of our larger, shared story. Thanks to Bell and Taylor for giving us this history.



Unearthing the Secret Garden: The Plants and Places that Inspired Frances Hodgson Burnett by Marta McDowell. Portland, OR: Timber Press, 2021. 320 pages, illustrations. Hardcover, \$25.95. ISBN: 9781604699906.

Reviewed by Gillian Hayward
Library Manager
Library and Information Services
Longwood Gardens

Author Marta McDowell states on her website that her “work typically follows the relationship between the pen and the trowel, that is authors and their gardens.” Her previous books that fit neatly into this lovely niche are explorations of the plants and places that inspired fellow writers Emily Dickinson, Laura Ingalls Wilder, and Beatrix Potter. Discovering the inspirations behind Frances Hodgson Burnett’s beloved children’s book *The Secret Garden* seems a natural fit for McDowell.

The Secret Garden (1911) tells the story of recently orphaned, spoiled Mary Lennox, who has been transported from her wealthy home

in colonial India to the wild moors of Yorkshire to live with an uncle she’s never met. When forced outside by her caretakers into the fresh English air she begins to explore and learn about the gardens, people, and creatures of Misselthwaite Manor. Upon learning of a secret garden that’s been mysteriously closed off for years, she begins a transformative quest to find it. To tell more would take away the pleasure of experiencing this memorable book for the first time. As McDowell states in her preface “If you have not yet read *The Secret Garden*, I hope that you will. It is a gardening book you will never forget...”

This reviewer can be counted among those who have not forgotten *The Secret Garden*. It sits alongside C. S. Lewis’s Narnia books at the top of the list of childhood favorites. How fascinating to now learn of the woman and the gardens behind the story. McDowell has clearly done her research on Burnett, painting a picture of a well-traveled hard worker with an eye for details and a great love for the natural world. Frances Hodgson Burnett was a prolific writer - other well-known titles include *Little Lord Fauntleroy* and *A Little Princess*.



Born in Manchester, England, Burnett's most inspirational gardens were at her homes Maytham Hall, Kent (U.K.), Fairseat, Plandome Park, Long Island (New York), and Clifton Heights, Bermuda. The first section of McDowell's book covers both Burnett's early years and time spent at Maytham Hall (1898-1908) after divorcing her first husband and her surviving son was grown. McDowell describes a middle-aged woman awakening to the possibilities of cultivating a love for gardening in the perfect spot for it: "Maytham was just the place to indulge it. The formal grounds encompassed three acres of walled garden rooms, stretching south from the main terrace. Flower borders flanked both sides of the walls. Productive kitchen gardens grew in some of the buttressed brick garden rooms. Fruit trees espaliered against the brick..." (p. 52-53). Burnett soon became a fully entrenched garden fanatic, not only supervising the work of her gardeners, but donning her red cotton gardening frock and digging in herself. She began to write in her favorite place—her

beloved rose garden—where she also befriended an outgoing English robin. McDowell devotes a chapter each to Burnett's gardens at Maytham in spring, summer, and autumn, and makes clear that its glorious gardens were the genuine inspiration for *The Secret Garden*. Lovely black and white photos of Frances in her Maytham rose garden in full Victorian dress are accompanied by colorful images of the gardens at Great Maytham Hall (as it is now known) today.



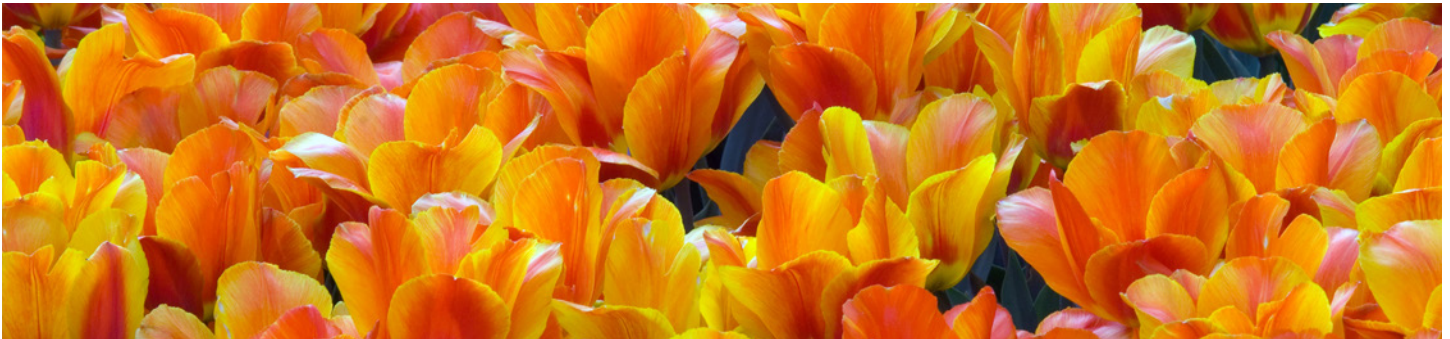
Part two of McDowell's book features the gardens of the fictional Misselthwaite Manor at the heart of *The Secret Garden*, mirroring part one's format of spring, summer, and autumn. The chapters feature descriptions of the plot and include lovely illustrations from various editions of Burnett's novel and photos of their inspirations from her Kentish garden. Like Burnett, McDowell clearly understands the effect a "perfect" garden can have: "If you have ever stepped into a garden and felt a shiver of something – recognition? awe? – you have had your own secret garden moment. Nature and a gardener have conspired to make a place that resonates at the same harmonic frequency as your spirit. A mystery...It is an effect to which every gardener aspires" (p. 120). This mysterious spirit transforms Mary Lennox in the story, which was memorably described by one of Burnett's author friends as "a children's Jane Eyre" (p. 147).

In part three, "After the Secret Garden," Frances has left England for Long Island, where she builds her bayside estate in Plandome Park: "While Plandome could never be Maytham Hall for Frances, she made it her nest" (p. 155). She and her son shopped nursery and seed catalogues together. Eventually, "crates arrived filled with alstroemerias, campanulas, single chrysanthemums, black-eyed susans, Shasta daisies, more

roses, and many, many bulbs" (p. 163). In the winters, snowbird Frances began to visit Bermuda, where she could garden through another season each year and experiment with some colorful and new (to her)

subtropical plants.

McDowell has thoughtfully included some of Burnett's lesser-known garden writing in part four – which turns out to be thoroughly enjoyable content. These include a 1906 *Country Life in America* essay about the landscape feature known as a ha-ha, a short, sweet book called *My Robin* about her friendship with the curious English robin at Maytham Hall, and a slim gardening memoir called *In the Garden*. Her garden memoir, written while she was in failing health near the end of her life, includes this hopeful line: “As long as one has a garden one has a future; and as long as one has a future one is alive. It is remaining alive which makes life worth living – not merely remaining on the surface of the earth” (p. 257). Memorable words from the author of *The Secret Garden* that are as applicable today as they were 100 years ago.



CBHL Conference Collaboration Grant Program

During the 2010 mid-winter CBHL Board Meeting, the Board established a grant program to encourage CBHL members' participation in other like-minded organizations' conferences. Currently, there is already a wonderful reciprocal relationship with the European Botanical and Horticultural Libraries Group (EBHL). To expand collaboration, this “CBHL Conference Collaboration Grant” will pay up to \$500 towards conference fees (not including accommodations, travel expenses, or meals) for a CBHL member to go to the conferences of GardenComm (formerly Garden Writers Association), American Public Gardens Association, Special Libraries Association, Internet Librarian, or similar organizations.

The grantee would receive the funds before the meeting (up to \$500) with the agreement the participant would present a report to CBHL (either through the CBHL Newsletter or as a presentation at the Annual Meeting). The report should include useful aspects of the conference that will help other CBHL members. The report is intended as continuing education for the CBHL members. The grantee is also intended to serve as a CBHL ambassador to the conference and is required to register as the CBHL representative.

To receive the grant, the prospective grantee needs to submit a letter addressed to the CBHL Secretary and include:

- Name of conference
- Date of conference
- Amount of grant request
- URL of the conference website
- Reason for choosing the conference, including the benefit to CBHL
- The date when you will submit your report about the conference to either the CBHL Newsletter or as a talk at the CBHL Annual Meeting

Please give the Board one month prior to the registration deadline for the conference to make a decision about the grant. Funding will be awarded based on the amount of funds made available by the Board during that particular fiscal year.

Submission email: CBHL Secretary, Brandy Watts, blwtts@ucla.edu.

CBHL Newsletter, Issue 164, March 2022

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Join us!

Receive the CBHL Newsletter, Membership Directory, email discussion list, members-only web pages, and annual meeting materials.

Join online at:

<https://www.cbhl.net/become-cbhl-member>

Questions?

Contact CBHL Membership Manager

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