



Volunteers work to restore Maudslay gardens

By **Katie Curley**
Staff Writer

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NEWBURYPORT — When Sandee Liversidge first saw the expansive Italian and rose gardens at Maudslay State Park, the brick wall surrounding the area was in disrepair and the flowers in bloom were in no particular design or pattern.

The gardens at Maudslay were once an award-winning collections of roses and dahlias, designed in the early 1900s by landscape designer Martha Brookes Hutcheson.

"In its heyday, it was a truly unique and classic example of Italian gardens, which were popular at the turn of the century," Liversidge said. "I hate to see it slowly vanish."

As chairwoman of the Garden Committee of the Maudslay State Park Association, Liversidge has campaigned hard to bring the garden back to full bloom by fundraising, working with the state and even donating her time planting. She is determined not to let the hidden treasure disappear for good.

"In the next 10 years, I want to see the wall fountain and the iron gates," Liversidge said. "My dream has always been that the garden be an educational opportunity and a place horticultural students can intern."

In 1805, the Moseley family, one of the wealthiest families in New England at the time, settled in Newburyport and built up the gardens by acquiring land and creating a substantial estate.

After the death of the senior Moseleys, the estate was torn down, and the gardens gradually diminished. The land was eventually sold to the state and became a state park.

Over the past 10 years, the committee has worked to bring back the large Italian and rose gardens situated off Curzon Mill Road.

"When I first got involved in the gardens, the brick walls were falling down, and the perennials were planted by a groundskeeper and not really part of a designed plan or true to what was there before," Liversidge said.

Each year the committee has worked to restore the garden. Last year, the committee raised money to install a full irrigation system, and this year the committee hopes to install an authentic-looking fountain complete with electricity.

"We are trying hard to preserve the look of the garden as it was designed by Martha Brookes Hutcheson and was famous for," Liversidge said.

Though the park is state-owned, no money is earmarked for renovations to the garden, and the committee relies entirely on fundraising and volunteerism to operate. It is always seeking volunteers.

"A lot of people don't realize the gardens are all volunteer and donations," volunteer Amy King of Newburyport said. "In this day and age, everyone is competing, but it is important to preserve such a beautiful piece of history for the community to enjoy."

The state provides a historical landscape designer, who helps plan and design the gardens with the committee. Under the designer's plan, after the fountain is installed, the next project will be to re-create the original rose pergolas and install the garden gates.

"When we started, there was no garden committee," Liversidge said. "I joined the State Park Committee, then created a garden committee because it was easier to accomplish things that way."

Part of the revitalization took place yesterday, when the Garden Committee volunteers began the spring cleanup and started work on additional improvements. The committee is hoping the community pitches in to help.

"It's so nice when you are bent over in the garden weeding and a walker or a jogger goes by and says 'thank you,'" King said. "Even though the gardens are a shadow of what they were in 1905, they still maintain an elegance, and it would be sad if we lost that."

The Garden Committee is fundraising in order to get the fountain installed. It invites anyone who wants to volunteer to clean up the gardens to come to the garden on Saturday from 9 to 11 a.m.

"There is so much horticultural opportunity in the park, the ornamental garden, shrubbery and trees," Liversidge said. "There is even an old vegetable garden that could be started up again. We have a treasure so close to us."

Volunteers Needed

What: Rake, weed and plant

When: Saturday from 9 to 11 a.m.

Where: Maudslay Gardens off Curzon Mill Road

Come: Dressed to work outside, rain or shine

Contact: Sandee Liversidge at 978-462-4731 or e-mail gardenwork2@earthlink.net

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