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# A LETTER FROM OUR ROSES TO ROCK GARDENS COMMITTEE

Dear Garden Enthusiasts,

Welcome to Roses to Rocks Gardens: **Blossom to Blossom** Tour, our annual celebration of our communities' beautiful garden oases that benefits The Montclair Foundation and the Van Vleck House & Gardens. We are so happy to showcase these gardens in all their Spring glory for us to savor.

As always, we are so grateful to our friends and neighbors who are so graciously sharing their beautiful properties and gardens that will awe, inspire and soothe us all as we bask in the full bloom beauty of late Spring. Eight families from Montclair and Glen Ridge have opened their magnificent outdoor sanctuaries and floral gardens at their height of beauty. Each property is unique and has been painstakingly planned and nurtured by our homeowners and their wonderful consultants and contractors.

The addresses of these properties and a map to help find them are on pages **14-15** and are open to you and your guests Friday, June 2nd, and Saturday, June 3rd, from 11:00 am to 4:00 pm.

This year's collection of gardens spans the spectrum of styles - from a wonderful and unique specimen garden to grand estates - there is something for everyone! Please remember that the properties are staffed by our valued volunteers to help make the tour as safe and pleasant as possible. Patience is appreciated.

The tour journal serves as your ticket and must be shown to the Van Vleck volunteers at each property to gain admission. You may visit each property only one time on either day. Please also remember to set aside some time to tour the Van Vleck Gardens as it is our local treasure and so much is in full bloom this Spring. As a reminder - the tour takes place rain or shine.

A HUGE thank you to our sponsors, supporters, advertisers and, most importantly, our volunteers. We are grateful for their ongoing and continued support. This ticket/ad journal contains a wealth of resources and hope you'll reach out to them for their services should the need arise - and let them know you found them through Roses to Rock Garden Tour.

Lastly, the tour could not take place without the generosity of the homeowners. They are the stars of this tour. If you meet them on your visit, please let them know how much you appreciate their efforts and opening their properties for our enjoyment and inspiration.

Happy Touring!

The Roses To Rock Garden Tour Committee,

*Barbara Baletti*  
*Deborah Hirsch*

*Jeanie Givens*  
*Tracy Parsons*

*Meryl Hillsberg*



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**- From Your Friends at the  
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# A LETTER FROM OUR BOARD OF DIRECTORS CHAIRS

Dear Friends:

Jeanie Givens, Mark Packer and I invite you to a very special day visiting extraordinary gardens in our community. Please enjoy the privilege of being able to walk through these normally very private places, whose hosts have put enormous energy into creating something wonderful! Additionally, please respect and be careful while you are visiting these incredibly special places. Our heartfelt thanks to our *Roses to Rock Gardens* Committee Chair, Tracy Parsons, who planned and arranged this event.

*Roses to Rock Gardens* is one of our two spring fund-raisers (the other, our Plant Sale), and the proceeds from these events help us keep our property open to the public 365 days of the year, without an admission fee. You might like to know that it costs us upwards of \$2,900 a day to run The Montclair Foundation/Van Vleck House & Gardens. We have a fully staffed Education Department running myriad programs for tots to seniors. We have just created an exquisite Outdoor Education Center complete with a water feature and finely wrought bronze trellises. This space now provides an expanded opportunity for discovery, learning and a connection to nature. We have two horticultural experts who interact with various groups and committees, educating and advising on all gardening matters. We are always available to answer your plant and shrub questions.

In addition, the 6-acre garden is a meditative delight at any time of the year, with many opportunities to study the wildlife in a peaceful oasis. We have a superb edible garden, the produce of which is shared with youth programs and Toni's Kitchen.

Additionally, the house, which was built in 1916, is available to non-profit organizations for events and meetings. A house of this significance is forever in need of maintenance, and we are very proud of our stewardship and preservation of this space for the community.

We provide educational opportunities through our Nonprofit Roundtable series that runs 6-8 times per year for local nonprofit directors and staff.

Finally, our Grants Committee reviews and funds a selection of community grants twice a year. In the past year we awarded over \$125000.00 to non-profit organizations covering the spectrum of theatre, scholarships, tutoring, homelessness, and food insecurity.

We thank you for your past and present support and since we are always in need of volunteers, we encourage you to go online and peruse our volunteer opportunities.

With warmest regards,

Emer Featherstone, Chair  
Jeanie Givens, Vice Chair  
Mark Packer, Executive Director



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## 21 Van Vleck Street Montclair



If you are unfamiliar with the history of the Van Vleck House & Gardens, it's an inspiring story of a family's abiding love of horticulture and community.

Joseph Van Vleck began spending summers in Montclair in 1868, eventually moving here from the city in 1872. He and his wife had 10 children. Their youngest son, Joseph Jr., became an architect and designed and built what is now the Van Vleck House for his brother, Will, between 1914 and 1916. Joseph Jr. retired in 1917 and began devoting more energy to gardening. In 1923, what is now the Carriage House, was built as a garage with an attached greenhouse. Joseph Jr.'s two sons shared his love of horticulture, particularly Howard, who pursued it passionately by working in the greenhouse on hybrid rhododendrons. He created hardy varieties of yellow rhododendrons that are unique to the property and thriving today.

Howard and his family moved into the 21 Van Vleck Street house in 1939 and planted, among other things, the wisteria that grows from the base of the two Doric columns on the terrace. One vine was twisted clockwise around its column and the other was guided counterclockwise around the second column. They bloom in early May and are breathtaking.

Like many of the gardeners on this tour, Howard Van Vleck's goal was to have a beautiful garden that was easily maintained. His planning benefits us today, when spring arrives, the grounds become a showplace with the flowering rhododendron, azalea, wisteria, blueberry and the Edith Bogue Magnolia on the east side of the house. The rhododendron that borders the perimeter of this 5.7 acre property were originally brought from Pennsylvania and planted as the house was being built. Upon Howard's death in 1992, the Van Vleck heirs looked for a steward of the property for its maintenance and community enjoyment.

In 1993 the property was gifted to The Montclair Foundation, a non-profit established in 1979 for the purpose of supporting Montclair-based nonprofit organizations. The Foundation created the Van Vleck Management Board to oversee the preservation of the Van Vleck House & Gardens for the benefit of Montclair and the surrounding communities.

In May 1996 the gardens were open to the public for six weeks, and the following year, public access was expanded to include every afternoon from May through October. Shortly after, the gardens were open to the public all year long and remain so today. As you tour the property, you will notice many distinct gardens including the Formal Garden, Mother's Garden, the Winter Garden, the Tennis Court Garden, the Edible Garden and the Butterfly Garden. Mother's Garden is located to the west of the house. This was Joseph Jr.'s mother's garden, and she and her husband, Joseph Sr., lived in a six-story Tudor Victorian in the northwestern corner of the property. That house was demolished in the 1960s after her death.



Most of the gardens are named descriptively. The Tennis Court Garden occupies the space where the tennis courts were once located, and the Drying Yard, to the west of the house, is where laundered clothing was hung out to dry. The Tennis Court Garden was updated in 2008 under the guidance of Michael Deenihan.



To enhance the educational programs offered to children and adults, we created a Butterfly Garden in 2014 and The Suzanne and George Harris Edible Garden in 2015. The Butterfly Garden was designed with plants that provide the necessary resources for certain insects, birds and animals

to survive. Here students and visitors can observe plant and animal life cycles as well as food webs. The Edible Garden was created for interactive gardening activities such as planting, harvesting and seed saving. Most of the produce from this garden is donated to Toni's Kitchen, a local nonprofit soup kitchen. We love that it's both beautiful and functional.

In 2017, we reintroduced 2 beehives to the property. The bees cover a two-mile radius, gathering pollen to make honey and pollinating our community's plants. Our bees generated 200 jars of honey each year and they continue to be healthy and active in our garden.

In the last few years, nesting boxes for woodpeckers, owls and other birds were added throughout the property, as well as boxes for flying squirrels and bats. The Bergen County Audubon Society provided financial support and guidance for installing these wildlife enhancements. Bird feeders including suet boxes, thistle feeders, fruit feeders and mixed seed feeders were installed to create a birding station across from the Raymond Family Education Center, attracting a wide variety of birds to the gardens.

Continuing our mission of nurturing growth in the community, Montclair Community Farms received a grant from The Montclair Foundation that enabled them, together with Morgan Farm from Cedar Grove, to expand their growing activities in the Van Vleck Greenhouse. Seedlings propagated in our greenhouse are planted in both Montclair Community farm sites and at Morgan Farm. They are eventually harvested and sold from their mobile farm stand, serving 300 local older adults with limited access to fresh and healthy foods.

Van Vleck House & Gardens is a living canvas that continues to evolve. In 2020, we began identifying additional space on the property to conduct outdoor education classes, hold fundraising events and provide visitors places to sit comfortably and enjoy the natural surroundings. A new multi-purpose space near the Raymond Family Education Center is planned for the future.

Through the generosity of members and donors, our grounds are maintained as permanent open green space in the heart of Montclair. Our gardens are open for public enjoyment and education. The ground floor of the Main House is used for conferences, meetings, receptions and exhibitions solely by nonprofit organizations. The second story is office space and home to Turrell Fund, Schumann Fund and The Montclair Foundation.

Visitors are welcome to enjoy all the garden spaces and are encouraged to join us for classes, concerts and special events. With no municipal or state funding, we rely on the support from our members to keep our gates open and our gardens blooming. We invite you to become a member today. To learn more or become a member of Van Vleck, please visit [vanvleck.org](http://vanvleck.org).

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# Montclair

## *A Garden for All Seasons*

# B

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When we purchased our house in 2018 the gardens were lush and beautiful but the retaining walls were tumbling and the original plantings were wild and overgrown. There was no fencing so the deer ate everything in sight. We loved the overall look and feel of the garden but we knew it could be improved. We wanted to repair the retaining walls, add more privacy trees, update the hardscape under the deck and add the fire pit area. We also wanted to keep the bamboo as it provided drainage and even more privacy

During COVID, my teenage son decided to build a pond in the far of the yard. It has been a wonderful addition as it draws beautiful birds and other wildlife. Every year we add a few more plants and this year, my son would like to add a turtle to his pond!

I am an amateur gardener, I typically plant my own containers, so it is a series of trial and error. We worked with our long term landscaper, Paul Fogerty of Peter Paul Landscapes, to achieve our goals. One of the best decisions was to add the bluestone hardscape under the deck which created a shaded outdoor living area. The fire pit is also a lovely spot to relax year round. The slope of our property provides a great opportunity for sledding in the winter months. After every big snow storm our yard is packed with teens and their sleds.

The outdoor space is very important to us. We are able to hold large gatherings of family and friends. We love the lush canopy of trees that surround our property as they are filled with an impressive assortment of birds. I was raised in upstate New York so our garden feels like a piece of my childhood nestled in New Jersey.

# Peter Paul

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# Montclair

## *Inspiration and Transformation*



When we moved from Manhattan to our home in Montclair in 2017 the backyard had a nice semi-finished patio and a simple border garden with hostas surrounded by a chickenwire fence covered with forsythia. There was large gravel around the perimeter as well which held a French drain. The landscape was simple and tidy. There was a dogwood in the backyard but no other species of interest except three beautiful old weigela bushes that bloom profusely each spring. I liked that border garden and the stone perimeter. I appreciated the gravel path that circled the lawn because it gave the garden a path to walk on and I loved the weigela “tunnel” on the side of the house. These basic elements pointed me in the direction for what the garden is today.

I wanted my garden to transport me to my favorite places like Van Vleck, the High Line, the Battery, the Sicilian island of Salina, Gramercy Park, my childhood home in Italy, and what I imagined Grey Gardens was like in the 1920’s before Big and Little Edie let it fall into disrepair. I began researching the plants I would need to create something that could help me feel connected to all those places. I went to plant sales, took classes, visited arboretums, the Great Swamp, and joined The Garden Conservancy. I learned about perennials, native plants, Japanese maples, redbuds, dogwoods, and what plants seemed to be the happiest in the gardens I visited. Visiting the Van Vleck taught me the most because I could go every week and see things changing and evolving.

In thinking more about the garden I wanted, I returned often to Piet Oudolf’s perennial gardens at the Battery. I read books and watched documentaries about his work. “The Gardens of Piet Oudolf” doc stunned me and I went about creating a garden that could serve as a refuge for both me and the birds all year long and the pollinators

in spring. With the help of my husband (we did not use outside labor) we built a pergola and I began to shape the lawn, add pea gravel, create new flower beds and add a path around the side of the house. I also fell in love with the hydrangeas at the Van Vleck and added two to my garden.

As my love affair with plants continued I learned what worked best year after year and I became more intentional in my purchases and more skilled about placement and coordination of bloom times. The biggest changes to the garden were the pergola, an arbor with a gate, a large sculpture which adds an interesting architectural element and a carpet of creeping thyme in the middle of the garden. We also created a wall of climbing roses on the garage wall which helps give it a cottage vibe. This year we plan to add native perennials to the front yard border gardens. We are thinking of adding a wood burning hot tub but I fear I am running out of space!

I am truly a “hand’s-on” gardener. My only kind of manicure is the one I get when my nails and hands are covered in dirt. I knew nothing about gardening until 2017 and I am still an amateur. I love gardening and planning the garden because it feels like what I imagine artists feel like when they paint. When I garden I feel like I am making music or art. I use no chemicals or pesticides or anything that could harm pollinators or humans. We have seen 20 different bird species in our garden in addition to foxes, possums, rabbits and a family of raccoons that come to visit.

I am emotionally attached to the garden and I am grateful to it for all the hours of peace it has given me. I go to it to reflect and to enjoy it. The garden gave me the gift of feeling once again in my life. It is wonderful to continue learning while aging and to feel so alive while doing it.

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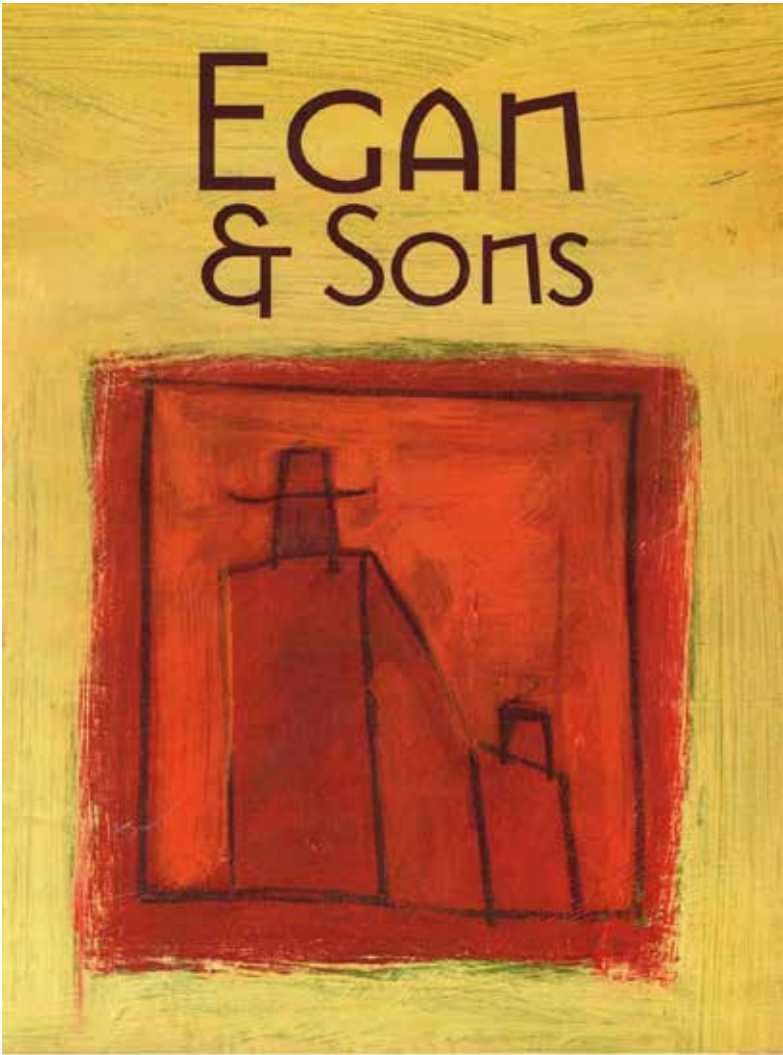
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**Cheers!**  
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## *Upper Montclair* *A Parisian Courtyard*

# D

We purchased our home in the spring of 2019. The garden was one of the main attractions. It was quite pretty and had the most beautiful trees lining the driveway and back path. The property extends back to Lorraine Avenue, so it's quite extensive. My favorite part is the back area replete with old world features like the running fountain, stone bench and weathered brick. The wrought iron gate is probably our favorite feature. I wanted a "Parisian Courtyard" feel. Originally it was grass but we graveled the area creating symmetrical curved paths. The trees that line the pathway to the gate are stunning cherry blossoms that look sensational in early spring.

The circular path around the back lawn serves as somewhat of a walking path which was present when we bought the house but we have redone it. The crab apple trees that line the driveway are sensational, blooming in the spring with beautiful white flowers. We love how the petals coat the driveway, creating the look of a wedding promenade. It serves as a perfect backdrop for prom pictures! The trees arch towards each other and looking at the tops of them from our kitchen and family room is like seeing an archway of trees which we really enjoy, especially at dusk and when it snows.

We installed a pool and trees along the east side. There had once been an old oak tree that we took down as we added an extension to the house. That area on the south side of the pool is now grass and plantings. We had a pool house built with climbing plants on the lattice on the north side of the pool.

I love European style planters and we added several around our property. We also added more crab apple trees in the front of the

house, lining the driveway. There had once been an apple tree that was in much need of care so we removed it and added shrubs and plantings. Additionally, we graveled portions of the front area and created a more structured garden. The most sensational feature of the front lawn is the incredible cherry blossom tree which is breathtaking when it blooms.

The gazebo was here when we purchased the home. It is not my favorite asset but we plan to replace it with some other structure which will complement the current mood of our home and gardens. We would love a glass structure, perhaps old world in style. While neither my husband nor I are avid gardeners I do enjoy planting my planters and containers. Our landscaping can be credited to Peter Paul Landscapes.

My husband and I, our three children, and our French bulldog love our grounds. We spend a great deal of time outdoors all summer and throughout the year. It is our very private and serene place.

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# *Glen Ridge Renovation Rejuvenation*

# E

In 2017 when we purchased our house the existing garden was pretty but old and overgrown. The patio was a single level and a third of the yard near the garage was asphalt. There was a run-down traditional English garden near the sunroom. We liked that the garden felt removed from the outside world and was private but we wanted to make it more lush, natural, and fresh. We also wanted to increase the feeling of privacy. Renovating the space was the answer and we ended up adding a tiered patio.

Initially we were doing all the planting but had trouble parting with some existing plants and envisioning how we could add more depth. We hired Lisa Mierop to design our front gardens and portions of our backyard. She also renovated the stone wall at the back of our property. As far as deciding which plants we wanted to add or keep we opted to keep our mature euonymus trees but all the rest was a refresh. We love Nantucket so hydrangeas were a must. I also had a special request for *Baptisia australis*.

The biggest changes we made in the garden were tiering and expanding the patio around the house. We removed the 20x40 foot asphalt and replaced it with grass. For privacy, we lined the fence and the back of the garage with green giant arborvitae, one of our best additions!. With Lisa's help we also expanded our beds, tore out the English garden (pebble paths and all) and added grass and additional plantings. Lisa also helped us illuminate the property, adding lighting throughout, All these changes have made the backyard feel much more of an escape.

In the front of the house we removed a lot of very tall mature trees and shrubs, never realizing how much more we would like our

home. Opening up the front of the property and adding lighting really showcases its architectural beauty.

I am a hands-on gardener. I enjoy planning layouts and adding new plantings and I do most of the maintenance.

Our outdoor space is critical to us. We have a dog, we live outside in the summertime and it is the center of a lot of great memories. We even built our kitchen and sunroom with our gardens in focus as we wanted the outside to be part of the inside, an integral part of our home.



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# Montclair

## *Creating Our Happy Space*

# F

When we purchased our home in 2012, the backyard plantings, while beautiful, encroached upon the original slate patio making it dark, buggy and uninviting. They also created a muddy run off sometimes leaving an inch or more of mud covering several parts of the patio. The plantings also significantly reduced our usable yard space. I loved the lushness of the original plantings and the beautiful fall foliage they provided. They just grew too large in the wrong place and had a negative impact on our ability to use our patio and yard.

Our plans drastically changed from simply removing some of the overgrowth and creating some drainage to a complete remodel so that we can use our patio and yard, We expanding the patio and adding a pool and fire element. We also pushed back the yard closer to our back property line. We now have an inviting outdoor entertaining space, a larger yard for the children to play, and a beautiful variety of plantings. Our landscape professionals, CLC Landscape Design, brought our vision to life. Their dedication, knowledge and expertise transformed our backyard. We have enjoyed it more last summer than the first 10 years living here combined.

I wanted flowering plants that would bring color and beauty to our backyard space and more importantly feed bees and butterflies. My short-term plans for our landscape include keeping the plants happy and watching them grow! I would like to think that I am a hands-on gardener. I enjoy inspecting all of the plantings several times a week and making sure they are healthy and happy.

Our outdoor area has become a true gathering space for our family and friends. When we are in that space, we feel gratefulness and joy. We couldn't be happier.



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# *Montclair*

## *A European Vision Realized*

G

We purchased 30 Porter Place in August 1997. Our gardens today look nothing like they looked then. It's been a 26-year labor of love.

Given the original layout of the house and the property, our yard is really at least four separate yards. Each presented an opportunity to improve upon.

We added the pool and expanded the patio area in 2018. We installed the fountain on the Harrison Avenue side about 20 years ago. Throughout, Lisa Mierop has been our landscape professional, inspiration and teacher. Much of the credit for our gardens belongs to her.

Our consistent effort throughout the years has been to achieve a European look and feel to our property. We like to vacation in Europe. Much of the inspiration for what you see comes from our European vacations.

As for future landscape plans, there is always something more to be done but we believe we have achieved our ultimate goals for our home.

We both like to have a hand in the care of our gardens. We both plant and Susan waters almost once a day.

During the warmer months our outdoor space becomes an expansion of our living space. Much of our day is spent on our patio and by the pool. When we are in our garden we experience pride, serenity, happiness.



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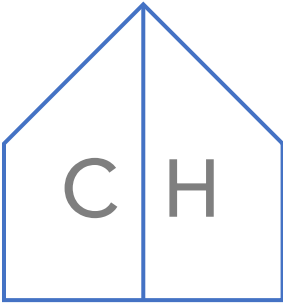
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# Montclair

## *It's All About the Yard*

# H

When we moved into our house in 2018, the yard was somewhat overgrown. There were several large trees, not in the best of health, that we felt needed to be removed from the lower part of the backyard. There were holly bushes surrounding the pool, which provided nice year-round greenery, but whose leaves were not fun to step on with bare feet. The front yard had beautiful mature trees at the street and along the property line that we loved.

One of the features that we loved about our home from the moment saw it was the nearly one acre lot, something very hard to come by in Montclair. We loved the pool and patio that the previous owners had installed (in 1973!). The yard was overgrown and needed some TLC but we were excited about its potential.

We completed a large renovation and addition and kept the outdoor space in mind when planning the build. We knew we needed to clear the dead/dying trees from the back yard. We also needed to level the pool area along the south property line and to upgrade and move the pool equipment to a new location. The initial renovation plans did not include the back porch, but we came up with the idea as a way to connect the indoor and outdoor spaces. We use the porch in nearly every season and could not be happier with how it turned out! And though not a garden element, per se, we decided to paint the basketball key on the driveway as a fun feature for the kids. We also knew we wanted to incorporate the beautiful, mature trees in the front yard into our plans to update and clean up the landscaping. Our landscape designer, Lisa Mierop, developed the plan for the full property.

We decided to keep the healthy mature trees in the backyard, but everything else is new. We love the laurel hedge and the broadleaf evergreens that create a lovely privacy border. We added a Southern magnolia, lilacs, hydrangeas, alliums, peonies, and Knock Out roses. In addition, we planted a coral bark maple by the pool that is striking in the winter with its bright red bark, and added colorful perennials. The front yard was designed around the mature magnolia, dogwood, and evergreen trees that were already there. The beds were planted with a variety of perennials and seasonal annuals which add color in the spring and fall.

We will likely need to do some updating/repairs to the pool coping and pavers. We love the bluestone and the grass surrounding it, so that won't change much. It will be more of a minor face lift than anything else.

We love our outdoor space and use it often. Our entire family has friends here nearly every weekend. We've had lacrosse and football games break out in the back yard, kids and dogs swimming together in the pool while parents sit and chat on the porch. We hosted family holidays with heaters at full blast and the fire roaring during the pandemic and middle school graduation parties and football team dinners at tables around the pool. The yard was a big reason why we fell in love with this house and we enjoy it each and every day.

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*Thank you to the hard working men and women who help keep The Van Vleck House and Gardens beautiful.*

*- Neil Hillsberg*

The logo for Piazza Della SOLE features the text 'Piazza Della SOLE' in a white, sans-serif font on a black rectangular background. Below this, there is a blue silhouette of a high-heeled shoe. At the bottom, the text 'Where Fashion & Comfort Meet' is written in a white, sans-serif font on a purple background.

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# *Montclair*

## *Pond, Pool and The Hundred Acre Wood*

# I

When we moved here in 2001 the gardens, planted by a previous owner, contained a variety of perennials and we found it interesting to see what would bloom and when. I really loved the pond and the beds above and below the patio. The garden has changed as our family has grown. Over the years we have added the boxwoods and change the bulbs and annuals we plant.

The wooded lot next to the main property was where our twins played when they were young. There was a swing set, a trampoline, and a long rope swing - we called it the "Hundred Acre Wood." It was a great place for our children and their friends to explore.

We made some changes to the cabana and tennis court area and the abundance of hydrangea offer great color there in the summer. The cabana was damaged in a hurricane so we restored it and added the patio and pergola, which now has the wisteria growing, courtesy of my husband. Our family just loves the pond and pool area. Our pond was built/maintained by Rob Dekker and his dad 35 years ago. Rob still comes back every year to service the pond, even though he lives out of state!

We added the stone walkway to the pool and stonework in the garden going from the cabana to the court. The cabana became the place where the kids and their friends hang out, play music, and watch movies at night.

I'm not much of a gardener myself so I count on our landscape professionals. Our lovely housekeeper, who has been with us since our children were born, loves to plant and tends to the planters we have around the property.

I have to admit that my favorite thing to do is to enjoy this garden space and its beauty with my family and friends. I appreciate the serenity a garden brings.

We love spending time outside whether it's dining "al fresco" or just sitting by a fire pit on a cool evening. Movie night outside and s'mores by the fire are fun. And I love the sound of running water. Sitting outside and listening to it from the pond or pool is so calming. Experiencing this while taking in all the amazing colors in the garden makes me completely satisfied and content.

*The Montclair Foundation/Van Vleck House & Gardens  
is pleased to announce*

## *Kathy Wessling*

*as honoree for Deck The Halls 2023  
in recognition for her selfless generosity and  
contributions to our nonprofit endeavors.*



*Stay tuned....*

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*and*

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# 2023

Details Coming Soon



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