

The Gardens at Eyre Hall

✦ A garden of the past, present and future

It is the week before Thanksgiving and 5,000 tulip bulbs have just been planted at the gardens at Eyre Hall. Nestled amongst a multitude of slumbering perennials, they will grow slowly this fall, endure winter and await those early signs of spring. Along with a congregation of well-rested trees, shrubs, perennials and companion bulbs, they will emerge in spring, one more brilliant than the next, graceful blooms in every color atop strong and elegant stems.



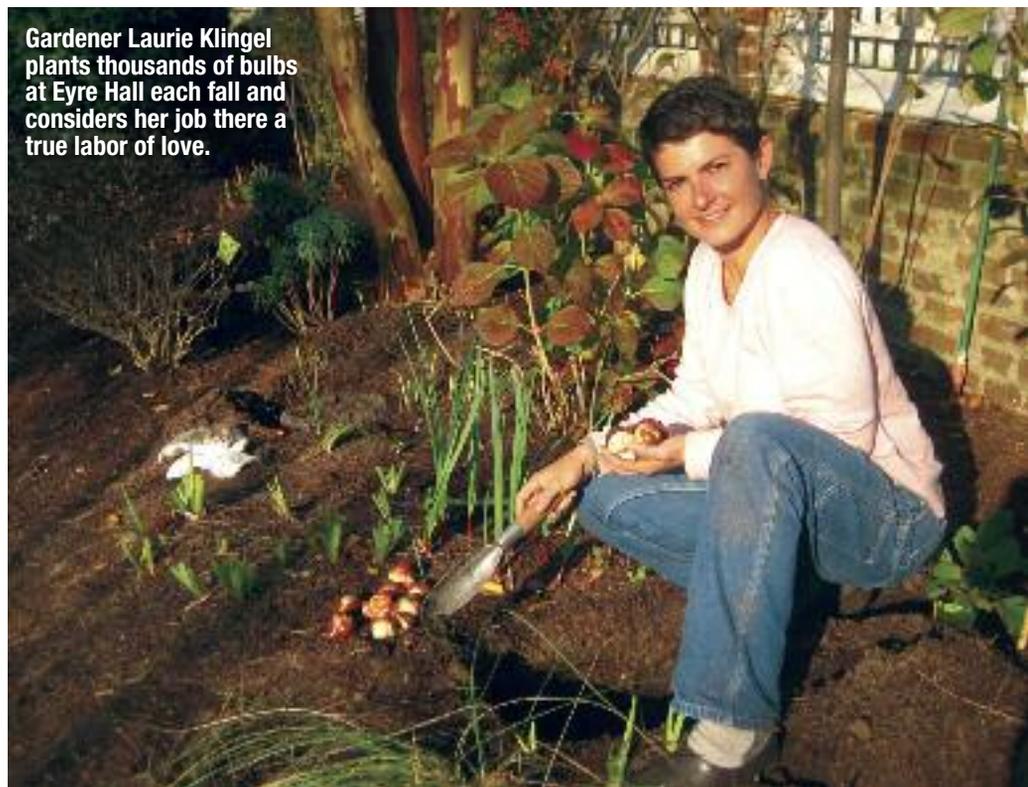
△ Each long border embraces a unique color palette. The rich red, mahogany and deep rose in this border contrast nicely with the spring green and chartreuse of newly emerging foliage.

The English boxwood that line the garden paths also provide a deep, evergreen backdrop to a variety of garden vignettes. Underplanted with tulips, violas and *Hyacinthoides*, a green Japanese maple shows off nicely. ▽

The gardens here were created in the early 1800s by John Eyre and his wife Ann. Though the home had been built almost 50 years earlier by his grandfather, John was inspired to expand the garden in substantial and exceptional ways. He enclosed his 2 acre garden with a brick and picket wall and developed extensive paths and parterres where all manner of entertainment and plantation activities took place. In 1818 he completed the construction of an orangery for the purpose of overwintering citrus trees. This conservatory-like structure had a south-facing room constructed largely of glass while a complex flue system channeled heat from two hearths in the northern room. This

“green-house” was likely one of the most sophisticated and unique structures of its kind in Virginia, and is one of only three early orangeries still standing in the state.

Today, the current owner and eighth generation of the Eyre family to reside here continues the extraordinary tradition of stewardship that began with his forefathers over 250 years ago. The gardens retain their historical significance in every way, yet remain a true, present-day pleasure garden with the addition of colorful and contemporary mixed borders. Open to visitors every day of the year, the garden is graciously shared with the local community and garden enthusiasts from near and far.



Gardener Laurie Klingel plants thousands of bulbs at Eyre Hall each fall and considers her job there a true labor of love.

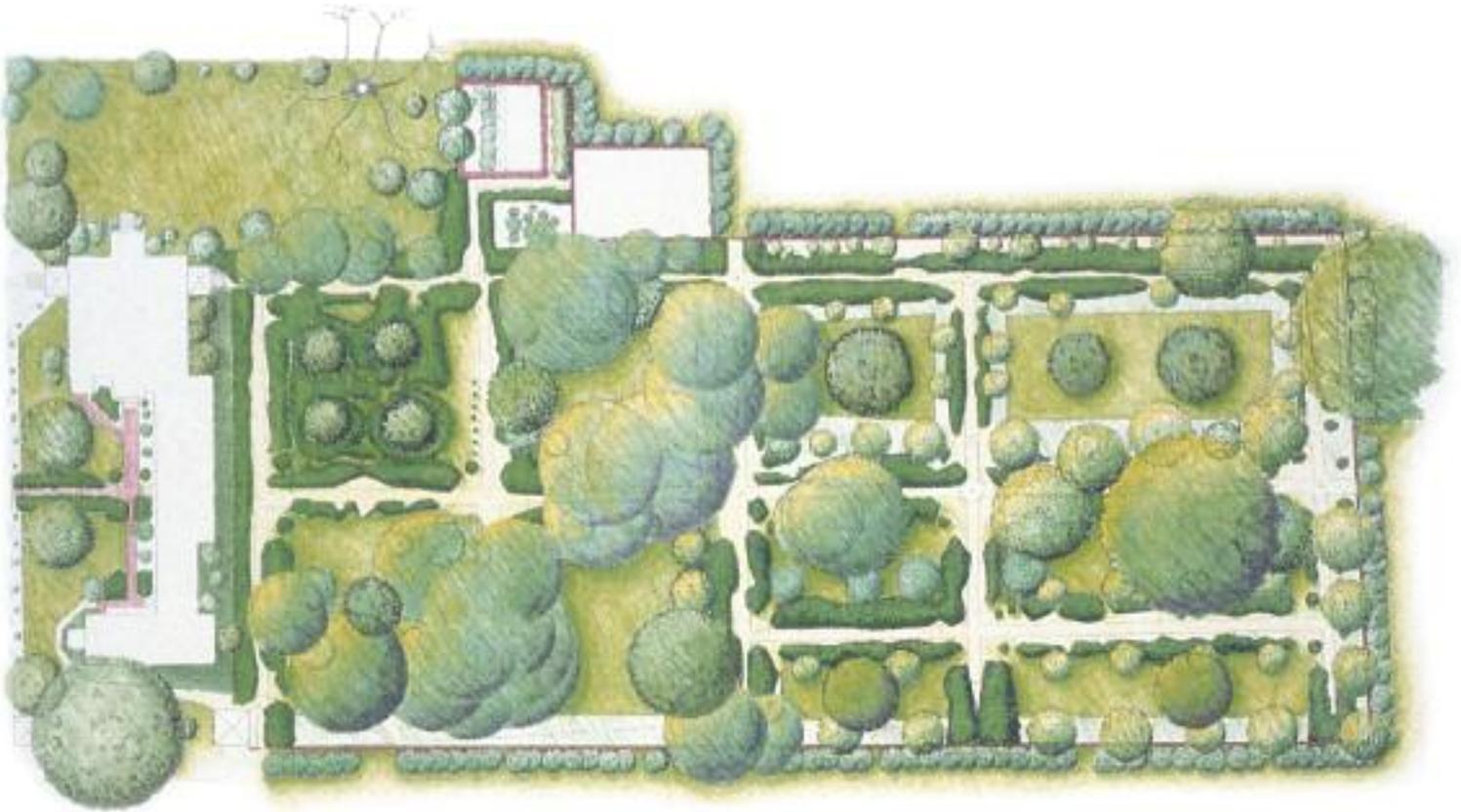


GARDENPROFILE

English boxwood, many of which are over 200 years old, line the paths within the garden, creating eight rectangular “garden rooms” or “oblongs” as they were historically termed. Here, this most common of shrubs reaches extraordinary heights of 8 feet or more and serves as the evergreen

backdrop for resplendent borders brimming with color and texture. Standing amidst the grand boxwood, one gets a true sense of the enduring continuity of ownership of this garden, and the innate longevity of this humble yet dignified evergreen.

A mid 1990s rendering of the garden depicts the extensive path system and rectangular garden areas. This geometrically balanced design style was customary in mid-Atlantic gardens in the 18th century. ▽



In early spring, naturalized daffodils bloom along the wide path known as Dogwood Lane. The quiet walk leads to Eyreville Creek, a tributary of the Chesapeake Bay.

Long borders filled with trees, shrubs and herbaceous plants hug the brick and picket garden wall that encloses the 2-acre garden. The wall was built circa 1800 by John Eyre and continues to define the garden today.▷

In this historic setting, the mixed borders are the present-day incarnation of what has always been a pleasure garden. Guests are always welcome to explore the gardens at their leisure.▽



GARDEN PROFILE

Too old to have variety names, crapemyrtles tower above the gardens, providing long-lasting color and welcome shade through the hot and humid days of summer.



Deutzia, weigela and spiraea are impressive companions to late blooming tulips, anemone and pansies.





Boxwood-lined paths divide the garden into eight “rooms.” Here, twin magnolia trees stand proudly amidst the beds and borders of one such room.



△ Shading the family graveyard, the eerie presence of the orangery ruin can be felt throughout the garden. It speaks volumes about the life and times of the Eyre family whose legacy persists to this day.

The gardens’ north gate leads to the wide and wooded path known as Dogwood Lane. Framed by thousands of naturalized daffodils and clouded in the white of dogwood each March, the path ends at Eyreville Creek, one of three Chesapeake Bay tributaries that border the farm. Beyond the oyster-laden waters’ edge, magnificent flocks of migratory birds rest in the protected waters here before moving on to their destinations.

The last Saturday in April of each year, the garden emerges in all of its spring finery for Historic Garden Week in Virginia. On this day, visitors are able to tour the home as well as roam endlessly throughout the garden. And while the radiance of the tulips will surely inspire, the subtle charm of ancient crapemyrtle and age-old boxwood is ever-present. They are a subtle reminder that as the seasons change and world turns, the gardens at Eyre Hall will remain a tribute to past, present and future generations. 🌿

Laurie Klingel lives and gardens on the Eastern Shore of Virginia. She owns Appleseed Nurseries Inc. along with her husband, and is the gardener at historic Eyre Hall.

Visitor Information

The gardens at Eyre Hall are located at the end of Eyre Hall Drive on Virginia’s Eastern Shore, just 12 miles north of the Chesapeake Bay Bridge Tunnel. Free and open to the public every day of the year, guests are welcome to explore the gardens at their leisure. Those interested in touring the home during Historic Garden Week in Virginia can obtain information at www.vagardenweek.org. Group tours can be arranged by contacting gardener Laurie Klingel at laurieklingel@yahoo.com.