



Horticulturalist Brings Alpine Garden Back to Life

An interview with Kean Teck Eng by Jennifer McArdle Hoppa

Since October 2008, horticulturalist Kean Eng has helped oversee the transformation of the Alpine Garden and the Broadway side of Fort Tryon Park. More than 40,000 new trees, shrubs, and flowers have been planted, and volunteers played a key role contributing more than 9,600 hours of labor to the revitalization.

What do you like most about working in the Alpine Garden?

Working in a historic garden within a public park is challenging and different; I've loved it. Here we are not starting a brand new garden; instead it's like uncovering a canvas where the color has faded. My role is to put some color back into the rockwork using the guidelines of the historic information we have, the original plantings, and the effect the Olmsted Brothers hoped to achieve in their design. Given today's knowledge and site conditions, we cannot restore 100% of the original. For example, some plants that were used in the 1935 design and considered valuable then today are considered invasive species. In addition, the trees have grown up, creating light conditions distinct from 75 years ago.

What would you like to see happen in the Alpine Garden over the next three years?

I'd like to see the grotto water feature reinstalled. I'd like to extend the Alpine Garden plantings north to the grand staircase that is currently closed but will be reconstructed thanks to funds from Borough President Stringer. I'd also like to see an expanded and dedicated horticultural staff. I'd like to build upon the volunteer efforts to date, fold in more local par-



Photo by Jean-Marc Grambert

Kean Eng has designed and installed greeting gardens along the slopes and staircases that lead to the Alpine Garden.

ticipants in the garden's ongoing care, and build our partnership with the national chapter of the North American Rock Garden Society.

How did you become interested in Rock Gardens?

I was first interested in succulents and cactus that grow in well-drained soil and have low water requirements. I was living in Malaysia then. After gar-

dening in the tropics for a number of years, I moved to New York City and received additional horticulture training at the Brooklyn Botanic Garden. In one of my tours, I became fascinated by plants that could thrive in such rocky settings. Most of the time as gardeners we are thinking about the frequency of watering to sustain garden plants: everyday, every week. Meanwhile, the plants I saw were not only adapting to the rocky environment, they were thriving in it, despite minimal water and low soil fertility.

What are the most important things the community should know about the Alpine Garden?

- 1) That the Alpine Garden is part of an ongoing effort from Parks and the Trust to revitalize and renew the Broadway side of the park.
- 2) The Alpine Garden is one of two historic gardens in the park; the other is the Heather Garden, which is unique. By comparison, Central Park hosts only one: the Conservatory Garden.
- 3) The Park welcomes community involvement and investment in restoring the Broadway side of the park. School groups are encouraged to become active stewards of the park.

The Fort Tryon Park Trust is grateful for the Peter Jay Sharp Foundation's support of the work of the Alpine Garden gardener. To extend this wonderful work the Trust needs your help. Funding for the position ends in May. **Make a donation to the Fort Tryon Park Trust for the Alpine Garden at www.FortTryonParkTrust.org.** ■

Letter from Nancy: It's Time

When I recently visited Sylvia Berman, she was doing The New York Times crossword puzzle. In ink. Not such a big deal in this brainy community perhaps, until you learn that Sylvia, a long-time volunteer with the Friends Committee, is 93 years old and recovering from a heart attack.

The light bulb went on. It is time to honor and thank Sylvia for a quarter century of volunteer work on behalf of Fort Tryon Park.

Friends Committee founder Carol Weinstein said that in 1984 Sylvia took charge of membership. "Our mission was to involve people in the park, and Sylvia was a master recruiter," said Carol, adding, "She had her own strategy for engaging people; she was sincere. She was the main link-up between us and the people who use the park."

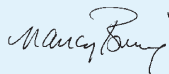
Grateful for Sylvia's years of service, Carol points out that no matter your age, you can make a difference in the park. "We were never just for the young," said Carol, "Everyone can make a contribution; any skill is valuable to the park and to the organization."

Francisco Menendez, Friends Steering Committee member and father of a seven year old daughter, sees Sylvia as "a tremendous role model for little girls for her volunteer work in the park, and also for her work with the League of Women Voters." Francisco added, "Her life spans almost a century. Her mind is still sharp. She's an amazing woman."

Sylvia hosted the Friends membership table last fall. Perhaps you remember her with her chrysanthemum of white hair, impeccably dressed, not shy, but not pushy either. Sylvia has had a series of health setbacks recently, but that hasn't stopped her from making the effort. A striking role model for us all—big girls, little girls, big boys and little boys alike.

The Friends Committee has dedicated a plaque to honor Sylvia Berman. On your next visit to the Linden Terrace you can find it on a bench. Please have a seat, enjoy the view and think about joining us! Thank you Sylvia for your inspiring dedication to the park.

See you in the park,



Nancy Bruning

*Chair, Friends Committee
Fort Tryon Park Trust*



Photo by Rosa Naparstek

Sylvia Berman's park name, conferred by former Parks Commissioner Henry Stern, is Sylvan, meaning a deity of the woods.

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Mission

Fort Tryon Park Trust's mission is to promote the restoration, preservation, and enhancement of this historic and scenic landmark for the benefit and use of the surrounding community and all New Yorkers.

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- **To report dangerous conditions or graffiti and other vandalism:** 311
- **Forestry (tree pruning, dead tree and limb removal):** 311
- **For event permits, fee-based programs, or photography sessions, please visit** www.FortTryonPartTrust.org, and click on Events.

A Round of Applause

The Fort Tryon Park Trust is indebted to its many supporters. Special thanks to the park's major donors of 2010 listed below. Please view a complete list of contributors on the website, www.FortTyronParkTrust.org.

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Flower Power



Photo by Gabe Kirchheimer

In 2010, *Time Out New York* voted Fort Tryon Park the top park in New York City to “Stop and Smell the Flowers.” Six glorious pages on the Heather Garden are also featured in Veronika Hofer and Betsy Pinover Schiff’s photography book *New York City Gardens* (Hirmer Verlag, 2010). Also, check out local photographer Gabe Kirchheimer’s website documenting each and every flower type in Fort Tryon at www.FlowersofFortTryon.com. And stay tuned for a Virtual Tour of the Heather Garden to be released in 2011 on the Trust’s website. ■

Need volunteer hours for school or work?

Fort Tryon Park welcomes you!

2011 Friends Committee Beautification Days

Time: 10:00 am – 2:00 pm
Meet at Margaret Corbin Circle

- March 13: **Spring Preparation**
- April 17: **Celebrate Earth Day**
- May 21: **Spring It's My Park Day**
- June 26: **Painting Day**
- July 24: **General Clean Up**
- August 21: **General Clean Up**
- September 18: **Fall It's My Park Day**
- October 23: **Planting Spring Bulbs**



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Help us Save the Alpine Garden gardener! Donate at www.FortTryonParkTrust.org

ACTIVITIES FOR ALL AGES

Fitness Walks

Tuesdays and Thursdays, 7:30 – 8:30 AM
Saturdays, 8:30 – 9:30 AM
 (Optional walk to the Inwood Green Market afterwards)
 All levels welcome. Meet at the entrance to the Heather Garden at Margaret Corbin Circle

Heather Garden and Alpine Garden Tour

Sundays, March 6, April 3, May 1
1:00 – 2:30 PM
 Meet at Heather Garden entrance

Winter Nature Adventures for Kids

Saturday, March 12
10:00 – 11:00 AM
 Meet at Heather Garden entrance

Urban Wildlife Appreciation Day with the Urban Park Rangers

Saturday, April 9
12:00 – 3:00 PM
 Cloisters Lawn

Shearing of the Heather

Saturday, April 9, 2011
10:30 AM – 12:00 PM
 Heather Garden

Beekkeeping with Ross Ber of Berz Beez

Honeybee Demonstration Hive with live honeybees
Sunday, May 29
1:00 – 2:30 PM
 Linden Terrace

DanceXercise!

Come out and get fit by Dancing in the Park
Every Saturday in June
2:00 – 3:30 PM
 Anne Loftus Playground at Riverside and Broadway

Scandia Symphony Concerts

Sundays, June 5, 12, 19
2:00 – 4:00 PM
 Billings Lawn

Muffin Madness & Neighborhood Yard Sale

Sunday, June 26
11:00 AM – 1:00 PM Breakfast
11:00 AM – 4:00 PM Yard Sale
 Linden Terrace

For updates and additions, visit www.FortTryonParkTrust.org or call the events hotline at 212.795.1388 Ext 305.

Save the Date

June 16, 2011

The Trust's
Sunset on the Hudson Gala
 honoring

Bette Midler

for her
New York Restoration Project's
 cleaning, greening and
 continued support of
 Northern Manhattan Parks



Photo by Amala Lane

What do strength, flexibility, balance, and coordination have to do with a park bench? Ask personal trainer, Trust Board Member, and leader of the park's Fitness Walking Program, Nancy Bruning. View her video, "101 Things to Do on a Park Bench" filmed in Fort Tryon Park and sponsored by the Friends Committee at <http://vimeo.com/18637692>.