

## Letter from the Executive Director by Michael P. Desplaines

2008, as all of you gardeners know, has been a challenging year. Record rains may have filled up all of our wells for winter, but kept many visitors away from our historic cultural landscape. As the Director, I also know that smaller crowds mean fewer sales in our gift shop and café. The economic uncertainties of this past year certainly have had an impact on our summer season as well.

However, through new marketing techniques and outreach to new communities, most notably the Lewiston/Auburn market, we have positioned ourselves to weather the storm well. Our work on the Gems of 26 campaign, and our membership and support of both our

Oxford Hills Chamber and the Androscoggin County Chamber of Commerce continue to reap rewards. New visitors have discovered us, new members have joined in our work, and the growth of this amazing place, and our organization, continue to bring us new fans.

I look forward to the upcoming holiday season. We'll offer an expanded "Trees & Trains" exhibit and extend the weekends of the exhibit to include the first 3 weekends of December. Our historic house will be decorated in the theme of "An Old-Fashioned Christmas" featuring antique Christmas ornaments collected over the decades.

I am so proud of our work together, and grateful for the opportunity to share this unique gem with visitors from all over Western Maine and the country. Thank you to all our staff, volunteers, members, and donors who make it all happen. 🌿

## Front and Center: Our First Facade Improvement Project

If you've visited our fabulous Garden Gift shop recently, you've noticed something new (other than the fantastic selection of gifts, tools, and home décor we have): you didn't have to walk through the kitchen to get there! This spring we finished a complete restoration of the front steps to our magnificent 1840 house. Designed by the architecture firm Barba+Wheclock, these beautiful cedar and teak stairs will serve as the new year-round entrance to our house and gift shop. This is all part of our new facade improvement campaign, which will also include painting the house, installing a new McLaughlin Garden sign, and

eventually replacing the old chain link fence along Western Avenue with cedar fencing. Special thanks to Herb & Lois Strauss for a \$1,000 gift which kick-started our campaign to raise funds for this important project. Thanks also to Paris Farmers Union for a \$500 gift. If you are interested in donating to help make these projects a reality, please contact the Garden. 🌿



## Notes From the Garden by Kristin Perry, Director of Horticulture

As a horticulturalist for a historic garden it is my job to maintain the integrity of the plantings and character of the garden. New additions to the garden replace and revitalize old plantings and diversify the collections. I feel Bernard McLaughlin would welcome and approve these additions.

New plantings of Black Chokeberry (*Aronia melanocarpa* 'Autumn Magic') have been added along Main Street. Black chokeberry is an excellent replacement for the invasive burning bush that was removed. It has beautiful fall color, spring bloom and berries.

In the side yard, just outside the porch door, one of our Japanese Maples finally succumbed to a difficult site location and had to be removed. This has left space open to new possibilities for next season.

The Scotch Pine in the core garden was removed this past winter. It had been in gradual decline for many years. In early summer it was replaced with *Stewartia koreana*. The Korean Stewartia is a Maine-grown seedling and was donated by Asticou Gardens. It has done well over the summer and will go into winter healthy.

These past two years we have been working on the woodland hill-

side. The work includes thinning and removal of dead pines, removal of weedy invasive plants, thinning brushy growth, and adding new rhododendrons that were donated by York Rhododendrons. Woodland work will continue until a specific plan and funding is in place.

Rehabilitation of beds within the core garden continues to progress. Annual plantings were added to the main border that fronts the lilac hedge. These plantings were initiated by information received from the McLaughlin family, including records and photographs of the gardens from the 1940's onward. Many visitors noticed the new additions; in particular *Verbena bonariensis* was one of the favorites.

This growing season has been challenging. Perennials were shredded by early summer hail damage but rewarded by even midsummer rains to provide the most spectacular display of garden phlox ever.

Future plans for the garden include many varied projects that are dependent on funding: removal of declining trees throughout the garden and addition of appropriate replacements, replacement of the old chain link fencing that parallels Western Avenue with wooden pasture fence, and possible reinstallation of the old water feature in the rock garden.

A special thanks to all the volunteers, garden assistants and interns that have contributed this past season in the garden. I look forward to the next season and to pruning lilacs in the snow. 🌿

## McLaughlin Garden is a Jewel in "The Gems of 26"

Leaders from some of Western Maine's most significant tourism destinations, including McLaughlin Garden, have joined together to attract visitors to their part of the world. The group, known as "The Gems of 26" includes the Maine Wildlife Park, Sabbathday Lake Shaker Village, Poland Spring Resort, Poland Spring Preservation Park, and McLaughlin Garden. All are connected by Route 26, the state highway that meanders through the gorgeous countryside of Western Maine.

McLaughlin Garden is very proud to be a part of this unique co-marketing endeavor. To date our group has produced a beautiful rack card, with 35,000 copies distributed at our various sites as well as at the Maine Welcome Centers in Kittery, Yarmouth, and Fryeburg. We have been featured in newspapers and publications, most notably in the Boston Globe and the Maine Tourism Association monthly newsletter. We will be a presence this coming February at the Boston Globe

Travel Show, and plan to advertise in several regional magazines this coming spring. By working together and leveraging our resources, individual members have benefited from a significant boost in visitors this season already.

The Maine Wildlife Park, Sabbathday Lake Shaker Village, the attractions of Poland Spring, and the McLaughlin Garden truly are the "Gems of 26." For more information about this Route 26 tour from Gray to South Paris, visit [www.gemsof26.com](http://www.gemsof26.com). 🌿

**McLaughlin Garden**  
97 Main Street, South Paris, Maine 04281  
[www.mclaughlingarden.org](http://www.mclaughlingarden.org) 207.743.8820

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## 2007/2008 Annual Fund Donors

Thanks to the generosity of so many of our members and friends, our 2007/2008 Annual Fund Campaign, launched back in October of 2007, raised over \$35,000! Many thanks to all listed below who gave so generously to support our ongoing preservation and educational programs. The 2008/2009 Annual Fund Campaign will kick-off this October, so watch your mail and be a part of our great work! *(Please note that we make every effort to be accurate. If we have omitted your name in error, please contact our office.)*

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## 2007/2008 Auction Donors

2007's "An Evening in Paris" and this year's "A Venetian Affair" were both spectacular evenings that raised much-needed funds for our on-going restoration work and for our educational programs. In our historic 1840 barn attendees browsed and purchased treasures donated by friends and businesses from all over the country and even Europe! With the help of auctioneer Paul Arsenault we raised over \$50,000 between the two events. As always food and drink was provided by the Good Food Store of Bethel. Save the date of Saturday, August 22nd, 2009 for next year's fantastic auction!



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## Volunteer Corner

by Jennifer Caldwell-Jeans,  
Volunteer and Program Coordinator

The McLaughlin Garden employs two full-time and one part-time paid staff members. With three and a half acres of cultivated gardens to tend, a unique and gorgeous gift shop to run, special events, year-round programs and daunting mass mailings, we have much to do. We need volunteers; they are our lifeblood. Our hope is to one day have an army of volunteers that are happy to be here and more than thrilled to come back.

Volunteerism, according to good ol' Wikipedia, "is the willingness of people to work on behalf of others without being motivated by financial gain." You will not receive financial gain here, but you will gain in so many other ways: the knowledge that you are helping a cultural and community landmark, reconnecting with neighbors and community members, and gaining a sense of achievement in knowing you made a difference. One of the best parts about volunteering at the

McLaughlin Garden is that every little bit helps. We have volunteers that only volunteer once a year for a specific event and that is fabulous, because I know I can count on them. Volunteers also receive benefits the day they volunteer such as a discount on all purchases in the Garden Gift Shop and seasonal café, and at our plant sale.

We don't ask for a concrete commitment, but we do ask for a willingness to give us a chance. If you have a willingness to volunteer, we have a task for you. We welcome people from all walks of life. Bernard never turned his nose up at help and I'll gladly follow suit. The only skill you need here is a smile. 🌱

