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Duck's Nest
2020 Ballinger Award Winner
Photo by Brantley Photography

Phipps Ocean Park Master Plan

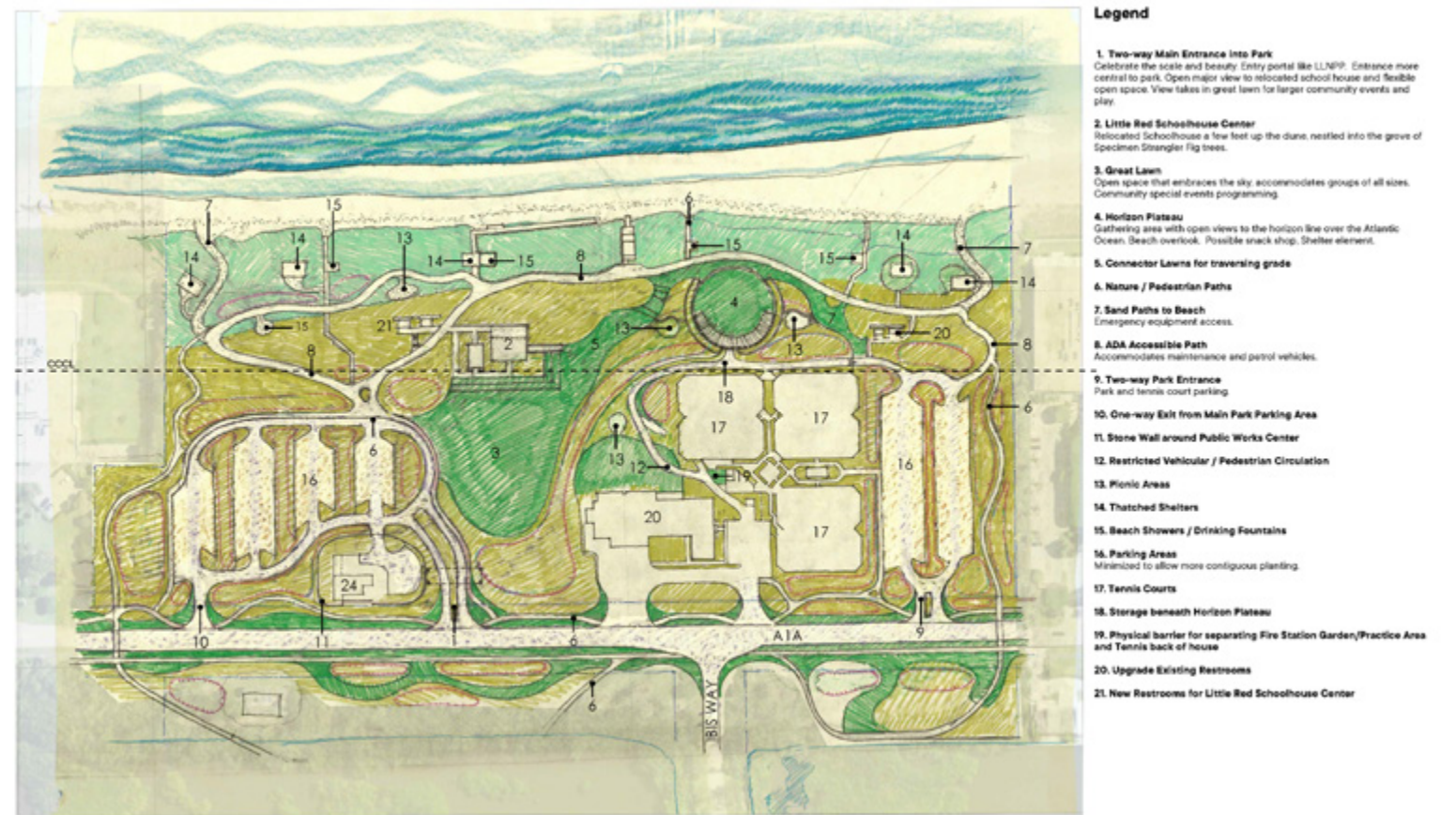
By Jan Sjostrom

There aren't many reasons to visit Phipps Ocean Park unless you frequent the beach or play tennis. Youngsters might go there for the Preservation Foundation of Palm Beach's fourth-grade program re-creating a school day in the 1886 Little Red Schoolhouse, which was southeast Florida's first schoolhouse. But the park might soon become a destination for a far wider audience if a \$140,000 master plan spearheaded by the Foundation and crafted by Miami-based landscape architect Raymond Jungles comes to fruition.

Envision the 18-acre park, which stretches from the Atlantic Ocean to the Intracoastal Waterway, as an oasis, threaded with hiking trails traversing stands of native trees, shrubs and wildflowers. Instead of a flat lawn stretching up to the dune, imagine hillocks and hollows and vistas taking in the ocean, schoolhouse and mangrove islands. Think of birds singing and butterflies fluttering among the wildflowers. "The goal is to create something that people would really use," said Amanda Skier, the Foundation's Executive Director. "Palm Beach has everything, but there are few places where you can go and connect with nature." Planted entirely with native species, the project, which will be undertaken in phases, will reinforce the town's green initiative and be an example of how native plants can be used to create beautiful and ecologically sustainable gardens.

The land, which was donated by the Phipps family in 1948, is owned by the Town of Palm Beach. The Foundation has leased the schoolhouse for its living history program since 1990. By far the biggest project the Foundation has undertaken, the revamped park will expand on the organization's work in its recently revitalized all-native Pan's Garden. Plans call for outdoor areas that can be used for events and new programs for children and adults, such as dune restoration classes and a plant propagation workspace.

"Florida at one time was all native," said Jungles whose plant lists for his landscape designs are at least half native. "It was a balanced ecosystem that was developed with bulldozers and really no regard for trying to preserve any ecosystem." Native plants and the wildlife that depended on them disappeared as land was replanted with tropical exotics and other non-native plants. Town Councilwoman Bobbie Lindsay, one of the forces behind the town's green initiative, remembers hearing many songbirds when she was growing up in Palm Beach. When she and her husband moved back years later, the birds were gone.



First Draft of the Master Plan for Phipps Ocean Park by Raymond Jungles.

Educational signage will be installed throughout the park, but the strongest message will come from the pleasure of simply being inside it. "I think that's really important because we want people to feel what it feels like to be in a native zone," said Susan Lerner, the Foundation's horticulturalist. "I'm convinced that the visceral experience is different." The experience will start on State Road A1A, where a corridor of native landscaping will announce that visitors have arrived at a place unlike the manicured condominiums that surround it. The schoolhouse, which Jungles calls the heart of the park, will be relocated to a central position, visible from the road and a new main entrance.

The park sits on a valuable and rare slice of undeveloped coastline. It features a dune up to 25 feet tall and a variety of habitats, ranging from the beach, where only the hardiest vegetation survives, to the dune's maritime forest, home to the greatest number of plants and animals. Habitats for moisture-loving plants will be created by directing rainfall into shallow retention areas. "There are 69 native species there now, including trees, shrubs, groundcovers and grasses," Jungles said. "There may be as many as a hundred when we're done."

The Foundation doesn't expect everyone to rip up their non-native gardens and create a Phipps Ocean Park of their own. But introducing even some native plants will help bring back native wildlife, decrease water demand, create more storm and frost-resistant landscapes and lessen the impact of harmful pesticides and herbicides on the environment, Jungles said. Embracing native plants brings other rewards as well, said Betsy Shiverick, chairwoman of the Foundation's board. "I've talked to people in town who have put a lot of natives in, and their gardens are filled with butterflies and the beautiful sounds of great birds that haven't been around for a while. People love to feel that they have initiated that, that they've been part of restoring the natural cycle."

The Foundation will hold a community feedback session at 2 p.m. on Jan. 19 on Zoom and another in mid-February. Once the town approves the plan, it's scheduled to be unveiled March 5 during the Foundation's virtual dinner dance. From there, other partners will be enlisted to help fund raise and execute the project.



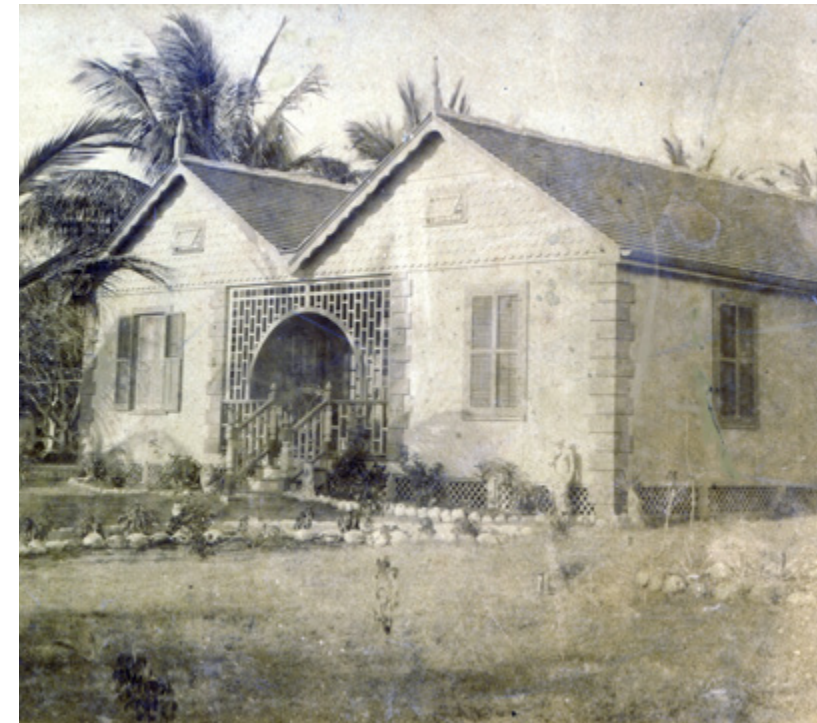
Current Aerial of Phipps Ocean Park

2020 Robert I. Ballinger Awarded to Duck's Nest

The Preservation Foundation is delighted to announce Julie and Brian Simmons as the 2020 recipients of the Robert I. Ballinger Award for their rehabilitation of Duck's Nest. Established in 1988, the award goes to one or more individuals who have made an outstanding contribution to Palm Beach's architectural heritage through the restoration or rehabilitation of a Landmarked estate or public space.

Duck's Nest is the second oldest residential structure on the island, the first being Seagull Cottage. It is believed that portions of the house were constructed by the Long Island Portable Housing Co. in Brooklyn, New York and barged in sections to Palm Beach. The house was assembled on site by Henry Maddock in 1891 and the Maddock family continued to own the house for the next 125 years. Duck's Nest was the oldest house in Palm Beach in continuous family occupancy, until it was saved from imminent demolition by the Simmons family in 2016 to use as a guest house.

Duck's Nest gets its name from the ducks that roosted on the extensive fresh water marsh, now filled in, that was located east of the building at the time. Palm Beach architects Marion Sims Wyeth and John Volk designed additions to the house over the years. The shingle style cottage has gabled roofs and a large front porch that was typical of the island's first homes.



The home illustrates early pioneer history on Palm Beach and stands as a testament to time that it has persisted for the past century. Duck's Nest is integral to the architectural history of the town, just one year after the Landmarks Ordinance was passed, it was designated on April 17, 1980.

The team of design professionals that brought the owners' vision for the property to fruition included: Daily Janssen Architects, Seabreeze Building, SMI Landscape Architecture, and interior designer Phoebe Howard.

Presentation of the 2020 Ballinger Award will take place at Duck's Nest in March 2021. Special thanks is extended to the Simmons for graciously allowing access to their home, a first in the history of the award.

Wildly Exquisite: Florida's Native Plants

By Jan Sjostrom

Botanical art is an exacting art form. A successful work not only has to be technically proficient and aesthetically pleasing, it also must be absolutely accurate. So why would an artist choose such a demanding means of expression? Let artist Carol Woodin explain. She's the organizer of Wildly Exquisite: Florida's Native Plants, opening Jan. 18 at the Preservation Foundation of Palm Beach. "The variety of plants is endless," she said. "There are really hundreds of thousands of things out there to paint and there's always something new to find."

Visitors might make similar discoveries when they tour the exhibition, which features 34 artworks by 29 members of the American Society of Botanical Artists. The exhibition might nudge viewers "to see that there is beauty within these species of plants that are not always perceived as being beautiful," said Amanda Skier, the Foundation's Executive Director. As Woodin said about the maypop, "it's so interesting to look at." It's also a host plant for longwing butterflies. Woodin can't grow passion flowers in her garden in the Catskills, because it's too far north. But Florida residents can.

Encouraging the return of native plants to the landscape has become an increasingly important part of the Foundation's mission to preserve Palm Beach's distinctive character. The exhibition presents a case for native plants through a medium that's popular with many South Florida residents, Skier said. Foundation horticulturalist Susan Lerner's captions include information about where the plants grow, how they've been used over the centuries and wildlife they sustain. After touring the show guests can go next door to stroll Pan's Garden, the Foundation's native plant garden. While there they might see a ruby-throated hummingbird sipping on a coral honeysuckle, as it is in Karen Coleman's colored pencil drawing, as well as many other plants in the exhibition.

The juried show features some of the society's most accomplished artists. Jean Emmons is one of the best colorists working in the field today, said Woodin, who is the society's director of exhibitions. Viewers who look closely at her watercolor of the white-topped pitcher plant will see "a festival of colors," she said.



Carol Woodin, the American Society of Botanical Artists' director of exhibitions, chose the maypop passionflower as the subject of her watercolor on vellum entry.



Jean Emmons, considered one of finest colorists working in the field today, used watercolor on vellum to portray the endangered white-topped pitcher plant.



Karen Coleman's Mutual Attraction is a colored pencil on film portrayal of a coral honeysuckle and a ruby-throated hummingbird.



Wendy Hollender's detailed colored pencil and watercolor pencil on paper depiction of an elderberry is one of juror and foundation horticulturalist Susan Lerner's favorite works in the exhibition.

Lerner, who was one of the jurors, prefers works that tell a story, such as Wendy Hollender's colored and watercolor pencil rendition of the elderberry, which features hand-written notes along with images of the plant's parts and various stages of its growth. "It shows so much from this tree," Lerner said. "It's just an exquisite piece."

The Foundation hopes visitors who haven't considered gardening with native plants will follow the example of New York-based jewelry designer and Foundation patron Mish Tworowski, who suggested the exhibition. He collects botanical art, cultivates an extensive garden at his home in Millbrook, N.Y., and serves on the board of The New York Botanical Garden, where the American Society of Botanical Artists is based. Tworowski and his partner, Joseph Singer, recently bought a home in West Palm Beach. When his landscaper phoned him in New York to say the yard needed be sprayed with pesticide, he was dismayed. "I called a few of my friends who are good gardeners in Palm Beach and they said, 'Yup, welcome to Florida landscaping. That's what everyone does.'" Instead of following their lead Tworowski is researching native plants and planning a more Florida-friendly garden.

The works in the show are for sale, with proceeds divided among the artists, the Preservation Foundation and the American Society of Botanical Artists. The exhibition will be on view through April 2. Virtual events will be held in conjunction with the exhibition, and will be announced on our website.

DEMONSTRATION HEDGE AT PAN'S GARDEN

The Preservation Foundation has recently planted a demonstration hedge of native plants in its back parking lot to encourage residents to learn more about sustainable alternatives to the exotic plants frequently used for privacy hedges.

Most privacy hedges in Palm Beach are comprised of familiar, exotic plants that are planted in groupings of only one species to achieve a uniform appearance. Exotic plants and monoculture hedges require pesticides to keep infestation and disease at bay. These pesticides do not distinguish between “good” and “bad” insects and have reduced bee, butterfly and other beneficial insect populations as a result.

The Foundation's demonstration hedge contains eight different species planted in groupings of two or more. The ideal hedge should consist of a mix of plants that are hand trimmed, rather than sheared, to maintain the full ecological value of each plant. Plants that are sheared rarely, if ever, have an opportunity to flower and produce fruits for birds.

Please visit the demonstration hedge and Pan's Garden to discover the wide variety of native plants available to grow in Palm Beach!

