



A RENAISSANCE *at Wethersfield*

HISTORIC PRESERVATION INITIATIVES

Photo Credit: Pieter Estersohn

Wethersfield
estate & garden

2025



A Vision FOR THE AGES

Wethersfield's values today continue to be driven by the remarkable, enduring vision of its founder, Chauncey Devereux Stillman, a true renaissance man whose vision was shaped by the best of classical minds. He approached nature, conservation and beauty in ways that combined classical inspiration with the humanist ideals of the Italian Renaissance. Taken together, this informed Mr. Stillman's vision of bringing nature, conservation, wildlife habitat, horticulture, architecture and the arts together in one place – Wethersfield Estate & Garden.

Mr. Stillman shaped not only a landscape, but the poetics of human experience within it. Here, the sweep of meadows, formal and wilderness gardens, ponds throughout, trails/bridle paths – adorned with statuary and alive with wildlife – are not random arrangements, but an ordered expression of memory and meaning. He understood that in contemplating beauty in nature, the human spirit is lifted to its highest measure. For this reason, historic preservation now underway is more than maintenance of land and stone – it is the safeguarding of a living work of art that continues to inspire, move, and ennoble all who walk its paths.

CONSERVATION

Leonardo da Vinci treated nature as a living textbook, as did Chauncey Stillman. Together with Farm Manager, Owen Boyd, they pioneered conservation and agricultural practices designed at Wethersfield to protect and nourish nature throughout much of the 20th century. Many of the practices begun here are now the standard in today's environmental movements. Their work remains a valuable precursor to modern day biodiversity and stewardship. Small wonder the United Nations sent its own Scientific Delegation to tour Wethersfield as a model of stewardship for all to learn from.

Conservation practices taking place at Wethersfield today include renewed initiatives for habitat and soil health, as well as related community programming with organizations such as the Waterman Bird Club, the DLC, Stanford Community Garden, Millbrook Garden Club, Amenia Garden Club and the Wethersfield Adventurers Club for children.



Nesting boxes installed throughout the fields



Painted turtle basking in the sun



Preserving nesting grounds for the Bobolinks, a tipping point species



Discovering the rich diversity of birds at Wethersfield

Photo Credits: Sarah Blodgett

Preservation: THE FORMAL GARDEN

The English Arts & Crafts-style Inner Garden, and the more formal Italian Renaissance garden that extends from it, reflect a balance between human cultivation and natural beauty. They preserve the idea of nature as both wild and ordered, animated by well-placed classical statuary and the soothing sound of water features. This garden represents a deep respect for shaping nature without destroying it, punctuating it with colorful horticulture, preserving allées and groves, and sweeping landscape vistas as sources of tranquility and wonder.

With support from **The Garden Conservancy** and the leadership of our head gardener, historic preservation efforts are underway to faithfully restore the garden's original design, as well as address years of deferred maintenance. With profound thanks for your very generous support, Wethersfield has invested significantly toward these initiatives, with many projects now completed and more in planning for 2026.

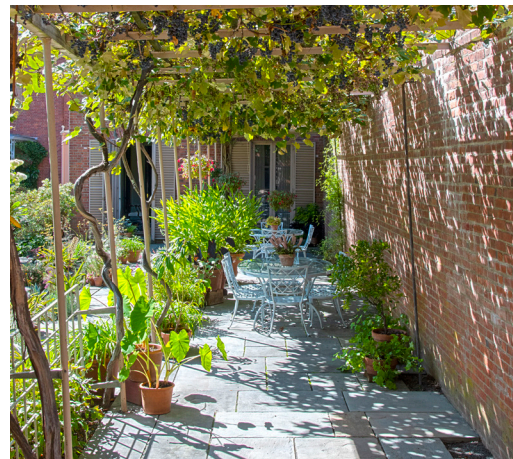


Photo Credits: Pieter Estersohn



Preservation: THE FORMAL GARDEN



Flowing Through Time: Restoring the Inner Garden’s Historic Rill
The Inner Garden Rill is once again an aesthetic delight. Wethersfield had to remove and re-pour its concrete foundation and repair its broken irrigation system. It is now beautifully replanted, with the lovely sound of gently moving water.



Stone Leveling the Walkways
The bluestone pathways throughout the garden and around the house have been properly leveled and placed to ensure safe, even paths and uniform beauty, after suffering years of heaving.



South Retaining Wall
The south wall, located below the Citrus Lawn, had developed a significant crack that compromised its entire structure. In 2025, the wall was carefully dismantled, repaired, and refaced with new fieldstone, restoring it to its original design.



The western wall of the Inner Garden
This wall has been re-braced with buttresses for stability and visitor safety, after tree roots had undermined its foundation. This area is now reopened to the public, and is graced with overhead grapevines for shaded seating, punctuated with hanging baskets of bright fuchsia.



Returning the Garden to its original scale
Hard cut-backs in the garden to its original, historic scale better reveal the majesty of Evelyn Poebler’s architectural landscape design. With certain yews cut back as much as five feet (above), visitors can now revel in the poetry of the garden’s architecture features.



Thinning out invasives
To reveal dual vistas of the Berkshires and Taconic Hills from the Pine Grove gardens original architectural features.

Across THE ESTATE

Preservation work extended beyond the gardens this year. At the Long Barn, new window trim was installed, rotting wood was replaced, and the exterior received a fresh coat of paint. Along the road leading to the trailhead, a deteriorating retaining wall was removed and replaced with new culvert piping. Similar improvements were made on the exit drive, where aging culvert piping was also replaced.



Storm DAMAGE

On June 19, 2025, a microburst tore through Wethersfield, causing extensive damage to the forests, trails, and gardens. Initial cleanup alone exceeded \$120,000 just to reopen the property in time for our busiest season. We extend our heartfelt gratitude to all who made financial contributions to help cover this unforeseen expense. In the months ahead, work will continue as we clear felled trees, introduce new plantings to open space, and guard against the spread of invasive species.



Photo was taken by Kleber Santos of FotosbySantos.com, who resides in Millbrook, NY



Cultural Arts AT WETHERSFIELD

Cultural Arts programming at Wethersfield invites both classical and new voices in for the community's enrichment. Whether it's a music recital or concert, a magical story-teller leading children through the garden, a guest speaker series with local luminaries on a range of subjects, or dancers that invite contemporary expression, Wethersfield maintains its irrepressible freshness by lifting spirits, while sharing ideas for our time.



Master Class with the legendary Denyce Graves for emerging classical vocal arts students in the Shared Voices Program.

“A classic is classic
not because it conforms
to certain structural rules,
or fits certain definitions...
It is classic because
of a certain eternal
and irrepressible freshness.”

– *Edith Wharton*

Cultural Arts: CONVERSATIONS AT WETHERSFIELD

The Wethersfield Speaker Series features renowned Museum Director **Richard Armstrong**, leading dialogues with other local luminaries, including **Peter Pennoyer** and **Charlie Pierce**. We will expand these dialogues with art luminaries, humanities thought leaders, and conservation/landscape visionaries in the coming year.



Richard Armstrong leads a thoughtful discussion with Peter Pennoyer (left) and Charles Pierce (right)



Music Mountain's Artistic Director Oskar Espina Ruiz accompanies the Terra String Quartet in the Wethersfield Carriage House



Young Concert Artists Risa Hokamura, concert violinist, and Albert Cano Smit, concert pianist, perform at Wethersfield

Community AT WETHERSFIELD

The season opened with Tales from the Garden, featuring award-winning storyteller **Jonathan Kruk** who led families on an imaginative walk through the inner garden. Thanks to co-chairs **Carolina Gunnarsson Kim** and **Meghan Klopp** for this inspiring event.

Throughout the summer, the **Adventurers Club** returned and young explorers discovered many corners of the estate – from ponds and trails to statues and the cutting garden – through hands-on learning activities and crafts.



YCA Artists perform for fourth and fifth graders at the primary school in Pine Plains



Wethersfield Adventurers sharing their crafts projects



Wethersfield Adventurers exploring the reflecting pond in the Inner Garden



Tales from the Garden, led by Jonathan Kruk

Photo Credit: Sarah Blodgett

Trails & EQUESTRIAN SPORT

Wethersfield is a proud community resource, offering 20 miles of trails for hiking, cross-country skiing, equestrian sport, and more.

Trails saw meaningful upgrades this year, including opening new trails, newly designed trail maps and the installation of an information kiosk to better serve our visitors. Equestrian traditions also thrived, with the annual Wethersfield Hunter Pace drawing a record 250 riders.



Head gardener, Jeff Lynch, along with DLC's Julie Hart take visitors on a guided nature walk across the gardens and into the wilderness.



Wethersfield trail around Long Pond



Millbrook School Cross-Country Team on their Annual Run through Wethersfield



Continuing a beloved tradition of Mr. Stillman's, Wethersfield hosted the Millbrook Hunt Opening Meet and Breakfast on October 4, and looks forward to welcoming the community again for its Thanksgiving Meet in November.



Wethersfield CARRIAGE HOUSE TOURS

Led by Sem Groenewoud — a World Champion Carriage Driver and once a driver for the Rockefeller family — our Carriage House tours offer visitors a fascinating look into Chauncey Stillman's collection of 22 antique carriages and sleighs. With a broad range of carriages on display, from show to training to speed, guests learn about the evolution of carriage design and the artistry of the sport of driving, including the prestigious four-in-hand tradition.



Wethersfield HOUSE TOURS

Wethersfield offers guided house tours on most Fridays and Saturdays from May through October. Visitors explore the first floor of Wethersfield House and gain an in-depth look at the history of the Stillman family, the estate's architecture and the remarkable collections inside.

This year we launched a docent program, with volunteer docents leading weekly tours. Their support has allowed us to expand our offerings, welcoming more visitors from across the U.S. and abroad. Looking ahead, we are excited to develop a similar docent program for the gardens.

Those interested in being a docent should contact Hillary Henderson.



Friends of Wethersfield GARDEN LUNCHEON



The much anticipated, annual Garden Luncheon was held at Wethersfield on August 30th. The Spirit of Wethersfield Award was presented to **Kathleen Vuillet Augustine** for her commitment to conservation and garden history, and for her generous

support of Wethersfield throughout the years. Co-chaired by **Farran Tozer Brown**, **Deban Flexner** and **Carolina Gunnarsson Kim**, the beautiful setting included sweeping vistas and floral tablescapes with exclusively designed Cara Cara fabric. Elegant fern arrangements, symbolic of those throughout Wethersfield, graced the tables. **Vicki Salnikoff** served as Auctioneer Extraordinaire. Our thanks to all Garden Luncheon donors for supporting our preservation and programming efforts. This includes thanks to our event Sponsors: **Bank of Millbrook**, **Cara Cara** and **George T. Whalen Real Estate**. We also extend thanks to the leadership of the Friends of Wethersfield, the gala co-chairs and auctioneer, and our Wethersfield staff.

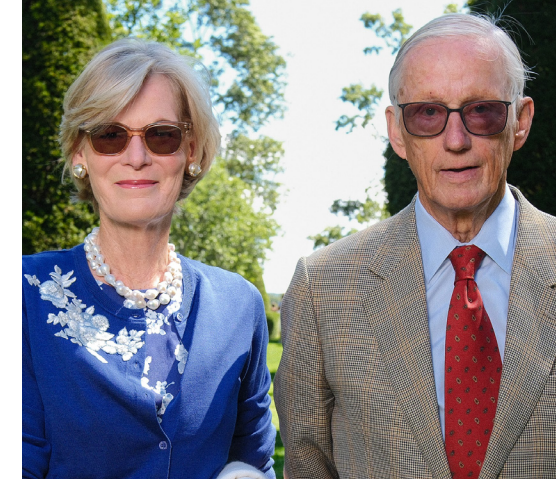
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Nancy Hathaway (right) presenting the Spirit of Wethersfield Award to Kathleen Vuillet Augustine for her lifelong commitment to conservation and horticultural interests.



Co-Chairs from left: Carolina Gunnarsson Kim, Farran Tozer Brown & Deban Flexner



Grants & RECOGNITION

Wethersfield received significant recognition and support for its ongoing work in preservation and community engagement.

Wethersfield was awarded another **Archival Needs Assessment Grant**, our second grant from the **Documentary Heritage and Preservation Services of New York (DHPSNY)**, for work on archival planning to guide our long-term stewardship. This grant of services builds upon the Foundational Planning Assistance Grant received in 2024, allowing us to further strengthen the care and stewardship of our voluminous archives.

In July, Wethersfield was awarded a **Preserve New York State Grant** to fund a Building Condition Report for Wethersfield House. This support comes at a pivotal time, enabling us to address critical needs of the estate while laying the groundwork for future stabilization and restoration funding. It marks an important step in preserving the historic character and beauty of Wethersfield for generations to come.

The Millbrook Garden Club continues to support the Wethersfield Horticulture Fellowship through their annual grant program.

We are grateful to our local representatives, **Senator Michele Hinchey** and **Assembly Representative Didi Barrett**, for recognizing Wethersfield with commendations this year.



Wethersfield House, 1944, credit Gottscho-Schleisner, Inc.



Wethersfield hosted a spring workshop in partnership with the Preservation League of New York, the Greater Hudson Heritage Network, and the Documentary Heritage and Preservation Services of New York. Mid-Hudson region nonprofits were invited to learn about current grant opportunities. Following the session, attendees enjoyed a guided tour of Wethersfield House.



Wethersfield was honored to receive a Citation from **New York State Assembly member Didi Barrett**, presented at the Fifth Annual Friends of Wethersfield Garden Luncheon. The citation recognized Wethersfield's impact as a cultural and community resource, and for helping make the region a better place to live, work, and grow.

2025

Both a Celebration and a Call to Action.

These past 5 years have marked a powerful renewal at Wethersfield. We've returned to our founding mission by adhering to Mr. Stillman's intentions for Wethersfield; habitat for wildlife, tranquility and beauty among 1,000 acres of unspoiled nature, with open fields, sprawling vistas, 20 miles of trails through re-forested land, the historic preservation of the formal garden, vital programming across the Cultural Arts, estate tours and recreational programming for all.

These pages illustrate your generous donations hard at work this year at Wethersfield. While much has been achieved, much more remains to be done. We are filled with pride and urgency. This milestone is both a celebration and a call to action. More historic preservation work is required to address decades of deferred maintenance, be it for historic buildings such as Wethersfield House and the Carriage House Museum, aging infrastructure, and planning for more modern, efficient technologies to enable the use of the premises more fully. Wethersfield remains committed to best-in-class cultural arts programming that engages, enriches, and inspires all who visit.

We invite you to be a part of this legacy of stewardship and inspiration. Your support ensures Wethersfield will remain a place where one experiences wonder, inspiration and awe in all its unrivaled beauty.



Profound Thanks to Our GENEROUS DONORS

Listing includes gifts received between October 2024 and September 2025.

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Mission Statement

The Mission of the Wethersfield Foundation is to preserve and maintain the house, gardens, art, carriage museum and grounds of the Wethersfield Estate.

In keeping with the vision of the founder, Chauncey Stillman, the foundation seeks to promote responsible land stewardship, habitat protection, innovative horticulture, sustainable farming, and to share the beauty of the property and cultural arts with the community.

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Wethersfield
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