



AAG Procedures Manual for Submissions

5 Steps to Documenting a Garden

*for the
Archives of American Gardens
Smithsonian Institution*



Archives of American Gardens, The Garden Club of America Collection,
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Archives of American Gardens, Smithsonian Institution
and
The Garden Club of America Garden History & Design Committee

Contact your GH&D zone representative with any questions about this procedures manual

INTRODUCTION



The Archives of American Gardens (AAG) collects, preserves and provides access to visual resources and records that document the history of gardens in America. In this way, AAG strives to preserve and highlight a meaningful compendium of significant aspects of gardening in the United States so that America's rich garden heritage can be better understood, appreciated, and enjoyed today and in the future.

Every moment a garden exists it is subject to the forces of change, loss, and, in some cases, destruction. A familiar and beloved garden today may become a distant memory in just a few years (or, in the case of a natural disaster, a few hours). Even the most meticulously maintained garden evolves over time to the point where it deviates from its earlier incarnation. Unless gardens are photographed and their origins and life span documented, the thought, creativity, care and labor that goes into them may be lost forever.

Gardens seldom follow a regimented design formula; instead, they are each uniquely part of the American experience, highlighting the region, culture, history and personal tastes that influence them. Despite their uniqueness, gardens are such a subtle and natural part of our surroundings that they are often taken for granted and may not be “noticed” until they are in danger of disappearing or are gone completely.

Documenting a garden helps to address the importance of recognizing its particular significance. It may take years for this recognition to occur, but when it does, it is crucial to have images to study in order to understand and appreciate the thought processes and work involved in the garden's creation. Indeed, the most frequently used portion of The Garden Club of America Collection at the Archives of American Gardens are the glass lantern slides that were created in the 1920s and 1930s. Only the foresight of The Garden Club of America to photograph what were then ‘contemporary gardens’ saved these gardens from total oblivion.

BEFORE YOU BEGIN

All the materials you need to document a garden for the Smithsonian's Archives of American Gardens (AAG), including this Procedures Manual, are available in the **Document a Garden for the Smithsonian AAG** section on the [Garden History & Design Committee landing page](#) in the Members Area of the GCA website.

The [underlined blue text](#) in this Procedures Manual is hyperlinked to the form, sample, etc., in [Document a Garden for AAG](#):



DOCUMENT A GARDEN FOR AAG

Gardens are part of the American experience, highlighting the region, culture, history and personal tastes that influence them. Documenting gardens provides an important piece of the contextual puzzle of social change, traditions, and trends over time.

- ▶ Why Document Gardens?
- ▶ Getting Started; Checklist, Forms
- ▶ Five Steps Procedures Manual
- ▶ Sample Submissions, Maps, Images
- ▶ AAG Brochure for Property Owners
- ▶ More Photography Resources
- ▶ More on AAG Public Spaces Policy
- ▶ Re-Document a Garden
- ▶ How to Create Google Earth Plans
- ▶ FAQs and Documenting Tips

Before digging into the details of this Procedures Manual, it will be helpful to review the following resources:

- The [Quick Guide to Documenting a Garden](#) for an overview of the entire documentation process.
- The [Forms Bundle](#) contains all the forms needed to document a garden.
- The last page of the Forms Bundle is the [Checklist for AAG Submission](#) (also on the following page). The “Checklist” is an extremely useful tool for tracking your progress through the submission.
- With your club and GH&D Committee, identify a garden to document. Before a public space can be documented, be sure to fill out the [Public Spaces Questionnaire](#) in Step 1 on pg. 6 and review [AAG's Documentation of Public Spaces Policy](#). Contact your GHD Zone Rep for approval prior to proceeding any further.
- Take time to review a [Sample Submission](#) on the GH&D landing page. But remember that every garden is different and will have its own story, and therefore, every garden documentation will be different.

Now you are ready to begin!



GARDEN HISTORY & DESIGN COMMITTEE

CHECKLIST FOR AAG SUBMISSION

Name of Garden: _____
Completion Date: _____
GCA Volunteer(s): _____
Garden Club: _____

RELEASES (All must have an original signature.)

[Property Owner's Release](#) (License)

[Photographer's Release Option 1](#) (Assignment of Copyright) or
[Photographer's Release Option 2](#) (Non-Exclusive License).
Each photographer should sign either release, but not both.

[Volunteer Release](#) (Transfer of Copyright and Waiver of Liability)

[Photo Subject Release](#) (Required only when someone is photographed
in the garden and is recognizable.)

AAG SUBMISSION FORMS AND PLANS

[AAG Submission Form](#)
[Features Map](#)
[Image View Map](#)

IMAGES

[Image Caption Template](#) (preferred)
Image Caption List. List of numbered images with a detailed description
of each including date of photograph and name of photographer(s)

Digital image files that meet minimum standards outlined in
[AAG's Digital Photography Policy](#)

Make/model of digital camera indicated on Photographer's Release(s)

35mm Slides, numbered, dated and labeled (if applicable)

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION (Not mandatory but highly encouraged)

[Questions to Ask Garden Owners](#)
Plant Lists
Copies of newspaper or magazine articles (with source and date cited)
Bibliography
Historic Images (numbered and listed on the Image Caption List and Image View Plan, with
Photographer's Release/s)

Other

SUBMISSION

Review the entire submission with the owner
Submit [Public Spaces Questionnaire](#) (if applicable)
Submit completed documentation to/with your GH&D Rep. Do not send to AAG.

GARDEN CLUB RECORDS (optional)

Copy of submission for club files. Please include a statement with any
copies of the submission you make that "Use of any images or documentation
requires the prior approval of the Archives of American Gardens. Please
contact AAG staff at aag@si.edu for all use requests."

TABLE OF CONTENTS

STEP 1: PREPARE TO DOCUMENT A GARDEN	5
SELECT A GARDEN	5
Criteria for selecting a garden	5
Kinds of gardens to document	5
Public spaces policy	6
Update a garden already in The GCA Collection (Re-document a garden)	6
OBTAIN APPROVAL	7
SET UP THE WORK FOLDER AND SCHEDULE	7
GATHER YOUR VOLUNTEER(S) AND PHOTOGRAPHER(s)	7
Have volunteers and photographers sign releases	8
STEP 2: MEET WITH THE PROPERTY OWNER	9
PREPARE FOR THE MEETING	9
CONDUCT THE MEETING	9
Review the process	9
Have the owner complete the Property Owner's Release	10
Gather information about the garden	11
STEP 3: PHOTOGRAPH THE GARDEN AND PREPARE THE IMAGES	12
AAG DIGITAL PHOTOGRAPHY POLICY	13
Equipment Guidelines	13
Digital Image Processing, Digitally Scanned Images	14
GUIDELINES FOR TAKING IMAGES	15
CHOOSE THE IMAGES	17
NUMBER AND RENAME IMAGES	17
CREATE THE IMAGE CAPTION TEMPLATE OR LIST	18
COPY TO A FLASH DRIVE	18
STEP 4: CREATE THE IMAGE VIEW & FEATURES MAPS	19
START WITH A BASE MAP	19
CREATE THE IMAGE VIEW MAP	19
CREATE THE FEATURES MAP	19
STEP 5: COMPLETE THE SUBMISSION	21
FINALIZE THE AAG SUBMISSION FORM	21
ORGANIZE THE SUBMISSION MATERIALS	22
REVIEW WITH THE OWNER AND PHOTOGRAPHER	23
MAKE COPIES	23
DIGITAL TRANSFER/MAIL/DELIVER TO YOUR GH&D ZONE REPRESENTATIVE	23
ACCEPTANCE OF THE SUBMISSION	23

STEP 1: PREPARE TO DOCUMENT A GARDEN

I. SELECT A GARDEN

AAG welcomes documentation for all types of gardens throughout the United States - historic, contemporary, large, small, urban, suburban, and rural.

A. Criteria for selecting a garden

1. The site must be a garden or a designed space. A garden is defined as an area with plants that are cultivated.
2. An amenable owner who will accommodate return visits from a photographer, and sign the appropriate release granting permission to photograph the garden and allow the documentation to be made available by AAG for research.
3. Is the garden a public space (park, historic site open to the public, school or business campus, etc.)? If yes, go to Section C. Public Spaces to evaluate if it is eligible for documentation.
4. Gardens may be, **but do not have to be**, those of garden club members.

B. Kinds of gardens to document

The kinds of gardens to document include, but are not limited to:

Residential gardens of all kinds and sizes

City/urban gardens	Condominium/townhouse gardens	Container gardens
Xeriscapes	Cutting gardens	Herb gardens
Rock gardens	Rose gardens	Seaside gardens
Vegetable gardens	Vernacular gardens	Woodland gardens

Historic gardens or landscapes

Associated with significant events or persons.

Contains exceptionally important elements such as sculpture or garden ornaments.

Embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, region, or method of construction.

Vanished Gardens

Garden that no longer exists due to various reasons such as transfer of ownership, redevelopment, scaled down over time.

Can include a combination of historical and current documentation materials.

‘Everyday’ gardens

Associated with a region’s demographic, social or economic development.

Associated with a local tradition.

Not produced by a professional landscape architect or garden designer.

A designed space valued for its aesthetics

It has significance as a design or work of art.

It was designed by a master gardener, landscape architect, horticulturist or amateur using a recognized style or tradition.

Community gardens

Butterfly gardens	School gardens
Children’s gardens	Vegetable gardens

Subdivisions and planned communities/resorts

Commercial and industrial ground

Corporate offices	Gas stations
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C. **Public spaces**

In order to avoid duplicating the work of others, AAG focuses its efforts on collecting documentation for gardens that are not already being documented by another organization or repository. Please fill out the [Public Spaces Questionnaire](#) and submit to your GH&D Zone Representative.

Additional information is available in the AAG [Documentation of Public Spaces Policy](#).

Types of **public gardens and spaces to consider** documenting for AAG:

Community gardens	Civic designs	Traffic islands
Town squares	Subdivisions	Planned communities
Commercial or industrial grounds	Churchyards	
Certain town parks (typically small and/or maintained by volunteers)		

Types of **public gardens and spaces to avoid** documenting for AAG:

City parks	Botanic gardens or arboretums
House museums or historic sites	Museums
University campuses	Country clubs
Any private or public organization that maintains records on its history	

Always contact your GH&D zone representative before beginning any garden documentation, but particularly before documenting a public or semi-public garden or space to be sure that it is eligible for inclusion in the Archives.

D. **Update a garden already in The GCA Collection (Re-document a garden)**

Gardens by their very nature change with time. Re-documenting a garden furnishes invaluable data for researchers. Clubs are encouraged to periodically redocument gardens submitted to AAG in the past if the garden owner is amenable. A general guideline is to revisit a garden every five years or so, but certainly sooner if there are significant changes.

Any garden can be re-documented unless it has become a public space that is not eligible for AAG, e.g., a park or house museum, since it was last documented. As with the original submission, a re-documentation should adhere to this Procedures Manual. See [“Re-documenting a Garden Submission”](#) for more information. When re-documenting a garden, check with GH&D zone representative who will work with AAG to determine what information is already on file at AAG.

II. **OBTAIN APPROVAL**

Review your proposed garden with your GH&D zone representative for approval before proceeding with the property owner. Together, you will assess the eligibility of the garden: has it been previously documented, is it a public space, will you be able to secure a release from the owner, etc. This step prevents possible embarrassment in the event the garden does not meet the above criteria. If you know the make and model of the camera that will be used to document the garden, your GH&D zone representative will be able to confirm if it meets AAG minimum standards. Contact with your GH&D zone rep with any questions you have before and during the documentation process.

III. **SET UP THE WORK FOLDER AND SCHEDULE**

Once the garden is approved for documentation, set up a work folder and schedule. A great way to start is to print out the [Forms Bundle](#). The last page of the Forms Bundle, the [Checklist for AAG Submission](#) also on page 3 of this Procedures Manual, is an extremely useful tool for tracking your progress through the submission process. It provides an overview of all the forms you will need to complete the garden documentation.

IV. GATHER YOUR VOLUNTEERS AND A PHOTOGRAPHER

In some clubs, one member handles the documentation of a garden from start to finish, including serving as the photographer. In other clubs, a team of volunteers works together to complete a garden documentation, perhaps with one taking photographs, another creating the garden plans, another interviewing the property owner, and so on.

No matter how you approach the documentation, you'll want to be sure that you have a photographer whose camera meets AAG's digital requirements. These requirements are explained in the [AAG Digital Photography Policy](#) and is also discussed in Step 3 of this Procedures Manual.

A. **Have volunteer(s) and photographer(s) sign releases**

All images and documentation accepted into the AAG **must** be accompanied by all required AAG releases that have been completed and signed. Without releases, AAG does not have permission to use the garden documentation. The Smithsonian must be assured that it has the rights from garden owners, photographers, and volunteers in order to:

- Make the images and other materials available for use in publications, exhibits, related commercial products, etc., by AAG as well as by third party researchers.
- Allow the images and accompanying information to be made available to the public via the Smithsonian Online Virtual Archives (SOVA).
- Advance the important educational goals of the Smithsonian.

Note: Each volunteer and photographer working on a garden documentation must sign a [Volunteer Release](#).

Volunteer Release

The [Volunteer Release](#) should be completed (without any changes), signed and dated by each person involved in documenting a garden whether they are a GCA member or not. It grants the Smithsonian the necessary rights to use and reproduce information gathered by volunteers, and states that volunteers will not represent themselves as Smithsonian Institution employees.

Photographer's Release

There are two options. Please have the photographer sign only one option.

1. [Photographer's Release Option 1 \(Assignment of Copyright\)](#) transfers full copyright to the Smithsonian (this release is preferred by AAG whenever possible, though not mandatory).
2. [Photographer's Release Option 2 \(Non-Exclusive License\)](#) grants a non-exclusive license to the Smithsonian to allow use of the images for a variety of purposes while the photographer retains copyright to their images and can freely use them as they wish (with the garden owner's permission).

If the photographer feels compelled to amend either release form, he/she must make any strike outs or changes, and initial and date the change(s) in their own handwriting. Please note that the deletion of certain clauses may be too prohibitive for AAG to accept the images.

If there is more than one photographer of a garden, **each photographer** must fill out a **separate** release form and identify on the release the particular images they photographed.

Photographer's Release FAQs:

1. *I want to be able to use the images I photographed for The GCA Collection in the future. Which form should I fill out?* Fill out the Non-Exclusive License. This grants the Smithsonian permission and whomever they authorize to use your images, but you still retain the copyright to them.
2. *I agree to everything on the Non-Exclusive License, except I don't want anyone to be able to use the images for commercial purposes like note cards. How do I indicate this?* Cross out the particular clause(s) you wish to decline and initial and date the strikethrough(s).
3. *My club wants to reproduce an image that it submitted to the Archives of American Gardens for a postcard announcing a fundraising event. Do we need permission to do that? Anytime* you wish to use images from the AAG, please contact AAG staff at aag@si.edu with a list of the image(s) along with their intended purpose before you use them. (Contact AAG for an *Application for Permission to Publish Images* form for this purpose.) There could be use restrictions imposed on the images by the photographer or garden owner.

STEP 2: MEET WITH THE PROPERTY OWNER

I. PREPARE FOR THE MEETING

Once the garden is approved for documentation; you have set up a work file and schedule; and you have found your photographer and any other volunteers you need, you will prepare for your first meeting with the owner.

Organize a package of materials for the property owner

Prepare an “Owner’s Information package” that:

1. Informs the owner(s) of your hope to document their garden for AAG.
2. Describes the documentation work of the GCA.
3. Allows you to begin gathering as much information as possible about the garden.

Items to include in the Owner’s Information package:

- [Property Owner’s Letter](#) which explains the mission and protocols of the AAG. It also addresses privacy issues and gives a broad overview of the documentation process.
- [AAG Brochure for Property Owners](#) provides additional background information on the garden documentation project.
- [Property Owner’s Release](#) is used to secure the owner’s permission to document the garden.
- [Questions for Garden Owners](#) is an optional guide for gleaning important information about the garden and prompting additional discussion when interviewing the owner.
- The 3-page [AAG Submission Form](#) which you will begin to complete at the first meeting with the owner. Information required on the sheet includes the property’s chain of title and a detailed description of the garden, noting its layout, unique features, and design inspirations as well as persons associated with the garden. *You might need more than one meeting with the owner to complete the AAG Submission Form.*
- The [How to Search for Garden Records in the GCA Collections at the AAG](#) document (on the GH&D Committee landing page in “Smithsonian Archives of American Gardens”) and a sample AAG online catalog record page so the owner understands how and where images of the garden will appear on the **Smithsonian SOVA website**: sova.si.edu. Additional support on searching SOVA can be accessed on the [How to Search SOVA Google Doc](#) and [Video](#).

II. CONDUCT THE MEETING

If you are working with a team to document the garden, consider including all members of your team in this meeting. There are **two goals** for this first meeting with the owner:

1. To secure permission from the owner to document his/her garden, i.e., the owner agrees to sign the [Property Owner’s Release](#). Without the owner’s consent, the documentation process stops there.
2. To start gathering as much information about the garden as possible.

A. Review the process

Bring the Owner’s Information package you prepared above to the meeting and review it with the owner. Explain that once you finish documenting the garden, you will review the submission with the owner before submitting to AAG. Further explain that 2 to 4 weeks will typically elapse before AAG issues a letter of acceptance, which will be sent to the GH&D zone representative who will then forward it to the club. AAG will mail a [Certificate of Appreciation](#) to the owner 2-3 months later. Garden descriptions and images will subsequently be made available online (sova.si.edu).

If the garden owner assents to having their garden documented for the GCA Collection, discuss a timeline for the process and work out logistics for visit(s) by GCA volunteer(s) and photographer(s) to gather information and photograph the garden.

B. Have the owner complete the Property Owner's Release

Present and explain the purpose of the [Property Owner's Release](#) to the owner:

- It grants permission to the Smithsonian and to GCA volunteer(s) to document the property.
- It also gives the Smithsonian permission to use and publish images and documentation, to include information about the property in the Smithsonian Online Virtual Archives ([SOVA](#)), and to make the documentation available to third party researchers.
- The owner indicates the name of the property that they wish to use in all public records.

Ask the owner to complete and sign the [Property Owner's Release](#):

- This form must be reviewed, completed, signed and dated by the party or parties owning the property *before* the documentation process begins. If the property owner(s) feels compelled to amend the release form by striking out or adding any clauses, he or she must make these changes himself or herself, and initial and date the change(s) in their own handwriting.

Filling out the [Property Owner's Release](#) under special circumstances

Special circumstances occasionally arise that may affect how Property Owner's releases may be completed. The following guidelines help to explain how to address these atypical situations.

Who signs the [Property Owner's Release](#)? The party who owns the property at the time the photographic images were taken completes the release. If you have photographs of a property that is no longer owned by the party that owned it when the images were taken, you:

1. Need to make an effort to track down the 'original' owner and have him/her complete the release.
2. Do not need to have the current owner complete this release (*unless* you feel that circumstances warrant asking the current owner to complete a release as a courtesy to them; this may also be a good way of opening up a dialogue with the new owner to determine if he/she would allow the garden to be re-documented to show how it has changed over time).

Deceased Property Owner. If an immediate family member of the deceased can be contacted, they can fill out the release on behalf of the deceased. If this is not possible, note that the owner is deceased on the bottom of the Property Owner's Release, and write "Submitted by [name of the volunteer documenting the garden], [and the date the volunteer completes the form]."

Cannot locate Property Owner. If a property owner (or immediate family member) cannot be located after a good faith effort is made, prepare the release as follows: "[Property Owner's name] cannot be located" and "Submitted by [name of the volunteer documenting the garden], [and the date the volunteer completes the form]."

C. Gather information about the garden

The more information you can provide, the better. Think about what information will help a researcher know and understand more about this particular garden, especially its design

inspirations, challenges and evolutions. If the garden has been restored, for example, find out when and by whom. Ask the owner why certain design decisions were made, how the garden is used, and how it has changed over time. Certain garden features and design choices that might be obvious to you, might not be to someone decades in the future. Think about what a researcher would like to know about the garden a hundred years from now.

1. **Gather information to complete the AAG Submission Form.** Gather as much background and garden history information as possible to complete the [AAG Submission Form](#) including successive owners; names associated with the property such as landscape architects, gardeners, etc.; size of the property; year the garden was established; and whether plans, images or other documentation exists for the garden and where. Gather information to write the BRIEF SUMMARY OF GARDEN and the COMPREHENSIVE DESCRIPTION, also part of the AAG Submission Form. The comprehensive description of the garden and its layout, unique features, and design inspirations, as well as sculptors, historical events or figures associated with the garden, can be written by you, the owner, or both of you together. Before meeting with the owner the first time, review Step 5 of this Procedures Manual for more details about completing the AAG Submission Form.
2. **Consider using the [Questions for Garden Owners](#) form** as an optional guide for interviewing the owner and compiling statements from the owner and/or garden designer that provide valuable additions to the garden submission.
3. **Obtain a Base Map of the garden.** A base map may take the form of a designer's plan, plat or sketch (see [Sample Base Map, Features Maps, and Image View Maps](#) for more information and samples). Two copies of this map, or something similar as described in Step 4 of this Procedures Manual, will be used to prepare the Image View Map and the Features Map. Consider bringing a Google map of the property to the meeting in case the owner does not have a base map on hand.
4. **Record the garden story** by walking through the garden with the owner and either digitally or manually recording the garden story as told by the owner. Make note of what views and features you would like the photographer to capture to best illustrate the garden's story.
5. **Gather other information about the garden including:**
 - Photocopies of articles or other published information about the garden's history and design. Articles must include the title of the book or newspaper, the author, the date, and the page number. In cases where there are many articles or books written about the garden, include a full list (bibliography) instead as part of the submission.
 - Planting lists, while not mandatory, are particularly helpful if available.
 - Historic photographs or slides of the garden (numbered, captioned, and accompanied by a Photographer's Release)..

Note: Gathering as much information as you can about the garden will be ongoing during the documentation process. You will probably need more than one meeting with the owner.

STEP 3: PHOTOGRAPH THE GARDEN AND PREPARE THE IMAGES

I. AAG DIGITAL PHOTOGRAPHY POLICY

The [AAG Digital Photography Policy](#) outlines the minimum standards for digital images intended for submissions. These include minimum standards for digital camera equipment,

image quality, image/file size and file format. [These standards help ensure the long-term viability of the digital image files.](#)

Always check with your GH&D zone representative before photographing the garden to ensure that the camera being used meets AAG standards with the proper digital capture settings.

A. Equipment Guidelines

Before photographing the garden, determine whether the camera(s) being used meets the AAG minimum standards.

The best way to proceed is:

1. Provide the make and model of the camera and a sample image from the camera to your GH&D zone representative.
2. The zone representative will work with the GH&D Committee to
 - a) determine whether the camera meets the AAG minimum standard, and
 - b) confirm appropriate camera settings.
3. Review the information from your zone representative, along with all of Step 3 of this Procedures Manual, with the photographer.

Digital Camera Sensor Information

- A digital single-lens reflex (DSLR) camera with a sensor size measuring at least 22mm (or higher) along one side (i.e. 22mm x 15mm) is preferred.
- AAG also accepts images taken with Micro Four Thirds and Mirrorless cameras, large sensor compact cameras, and drone cameras with a large sensor as exceptions to the minimum sensor size standard.
- To determine a camera's sensor size, refer to the camera's user manual or google the camera make and model for specific sensor size information.
- If an iPhone or iPad is the only available option to photograph a garden, please make sure the file format and file size meets the minimum requirements outlined in the [AAG Digital Photography Policy](#).

Digital Image Quality and Image Size (Capture) Settings

The [AAG Digital Photography Policy](#) outlines the image size (capture) standards identified by AAG that will help aid in long-term preservation of the digital photography files. All digital photography images submitted to AAG should meet standards defined in the *Policy* so that they can be used for a variety of standard archival purposes including exhibitions and publications.

- For JPEG image format, set the image quality at the highest setting (referred to as JPEG Fine on most cameras).
- TIFF image format can also be used with some cameras and is preferred over JPEG images when used by a trained photographer.
- RAW image format is typically used by professional photographers and must be converted to 16-bit TIFF file format for AAG.
- Choose a Large or Medium image size setting at least 4,000 pixels (or higher) on the longest side.
- For iPhone, capture images at and sent at the largest size (Actual Size).
- To determine the number of pixels along an image's length or width:
 - For Mac users: use Finder (Dimensions), Preview (Inspector) or Photos (Get Info) to access pixel information.
 - For Window users: Right click on image and select 'Properties' then click on either Details or Summary tab for pixel information.

- Manual or automatic settings may be used.
- Do not superimpose numbers, text, or a watermark on the digital images.

Lenses

There are a variety of lenses that can be used. The most commonly used lenses are 35mm to 100mm.

- Zoom lenses provide great flexibility. They come in a range of distances.
e.g. 35-105mm, 80-100mm.
- Fixed focal length lenses
35mm is a wide-angle lens that will give a broad view of an area
50mm is similar in perspective to the human eye
100mm is a slight telephoto lens - it will make objects seem nearer. Perceived distance between objects is compacted.

B. Digital Image Processing, Digitally Scanned Images

Digital Image Processing

Review the [AAG Digital Photography Policy](#) for additional details about processing digital photography files. While digital photography images often require some amount of image processing, these adjustments need to be undertaken very conservatively. AAG digital photography images are considered to be visual evidence for the historic record.

- JPEG images should be saved as they are and in the highest quality (large) file size.
- RAW images files must be processed as 16-bit TIFF files (preferred) or high resolution JPEG files before they are submitted to AAG.
- Preferred file size is 4MB or larger. Minimum file size accepted is 2MB. Any file smaller than 2MB will be declined.

Digitally Scanned Photographs

If a garden owner has original photographs but does not wish to donate them, the images may be digitized on a flatbed scanner and saved as a TIFF or JPG. The physical size of the original photograph will affect the resulting digital image file size so it is recommended that use use a higher resolution setting when scanning small photographs.

Scanner Setting Options
Scanned Original Photographic Prints or 35mm slides

	Recommended	Accepted/Minimum
Scanner resolution setting (PPI)	600 ppi (for 8X10 in photographic prints).	300 ppi (at original size)
File format	Uncompressed TIFF	JPEG/JPEG Fine
File size (MB)	> 4MB	2MB

II. GUIDELINES FOR TAKING IMAGES

AAG has specific requirements for the images it accepts. The following guidelines are meant to help with this process. It is always a good idea to take more photographs than what you think you need so you can select from the best among them. It is helpful to have a map of the garden on hand so that you can begin to list and locate garden features before you begin photographing the garden.

Content

- Show what makes this garden special - tell its story.

- Start at the entrance to the garden and show how one proceeds through the entire space. Capture all parts of the garden, even ‘hidden’ spaces like gardening sheds and compost heaps (as long as the owner is amenable).
- Get as much information as possible in each shot.
- If possible, show the overall design by shooting from an upper window or terrace.
- Include features identified in the Garden Features list on page 3 of the [AAG Submission Form](#) such as walkways, gazebos, pools, walls, planting beds, greenhouses, etc.
- If possible, photograph particular views in different seasons to show how the garden changes during the year. It is ideal to capture the garden in all four seasons but not required.
- Show the house in relation to the garden (unless prohibited by the owner).
- DO NOT PHOTOGRAPH ANY SIGNAGE THAT SHOWS HOUSE NUMBER OR ADDRESS.
- Do not include portraits of individual plants.
- Do not include close-ups of features. Widen the view to show the context of the garden.
- Do not photograph images from books, magazines, or other repositories. Include photocopies or a bibliography as part of the general submission instead.

Garden owner or others

- Ask the garden owner(s) if they wish to be photographed in their garden for the historic record. If so, s/he should each fill out a [Subject Release](#).
- The Subject Release should be completed by anyone photographed in the garden who can be identified in the image. It grants the Smithsonian the necessary rights to use and reproduce the image showing that person.
- In cases where a child under 18 appears in the image, a parent must fill out the release on their behalf. All images showing children who can be identified in them will not be added to the Smithsonian’s Online Virtual Archive.

Composition

- Be aware of everything you include in an image. Look in all four corners of the camera’s viewfinder before you shoot.
- Make sure you haven’t left important information out of the picture.
- Don’t frame a composition too tightly. Take a step back to provide more design context if needed.
- Check for objects that block key features. Change position if necessary.
- Try moving a feature to the side, top or bottom of the image. Use curved or straight lines of pathways or walls to lead your eyes to an important area.
- Try photographing from different perspectives. Kneeling down or standing at a higher level may improve a particular shot.
- Pay attention to what is in the background. If possible, eliminate cars and highly reflective items such as metal or windows from view before shooting.
- Keep the horizon line level.
- Don’t allow the sun to shine directly into the camera lens. This will create lens flare.

Light

- The color of light will change with the weather, the season, and the position of the sun. Contrast between light and shadow will also be affected.
- Early morning is the best time to photograph a garden. The plants are fresh and may be covered with dew. The lighting is soft and warm.
- Late afternoon sun will have warmly colored light and cause long shadows.
- Bright overcast days are great for photography. Lighting is very even.
- Avoid taking pictures midday in sunny weather. There is too much contrast between light and shadow. The details of both extremes will be lost.
- Dark or rainy days give images a blue cast. Correct this with a warming filter.

- Items will photograph as blue/gray before sunrise and after sunset. The dark sky will contrast dramatically with street lights, house lights, etc. The level of light will be low and a tripod may be needed.
- Use a 'fill in' flash to brighten shadowy areas.

Historic images

- The owner might have historical or family garden photographs appropriate for submission to AAG.
- Remember to complete s [Photographer's Release](#) for these photographs. See below for guidelines on filling out the Photographer's Release in cases where the photographer is unidentified or can't be located.
- A [Subject Release](#) must be completed by any person identifiable in the photograph who is still alive.
- If the garden owner prefers to retain the original photographic images and furnish AAG with a copy, see the chart on page 13 which outlines AAG's digital scanning specifications.

Filling out a Photographer's Release for Historic Images. Issues sometimes arise with historic images that affect how the Photographer's Release may be completed. The following guidelines explain how to address these situations:

- Deceased photographer. If the photographer is deceased, check with the heirs to determine whether or not they now own the copyright to the photographs. Whoever owns the copyright must complete a Photographer's Release. If the status of the photographer's copyright cannot be determined after a good faith effort is made to track it down, write on the release "[Photographer's name] Deceased" and "Submitted by [name of the volunteer documenting the garden], and {date the volunteer completes the form}."
- Cannot locate photographer. If a photographer or photographer's heirs cannot be located after a good faith effort is made, prepare the release as follows: "[Photographer's name] cannot be located" and "Submitted by [name of the volunteer documenting the garden], and [date the volunteer completes the form]."
- Unknown photographer. If a photographer is unknown, prepare the release as follows: "Photographer unknown" and "Submitted by [name of the volunteer documenting the garden], and [date the volunteer completes the form]."

III. CHOOSE THE IMAGES

1. There is no hard and fast rule for how many images to submit for a garden. Depending on the size and complexity of a garden, 15 to 35 images may be enough to document it sufficiently. Smaller gardens may warrant fewer images while larger ones will likely require more.
2. Choose the best views and eliminate any that are repetitive, in deep shadow or bright light, are out of focus, or show close-ups of plants. Avoid submitting images that do not provide much information.
3. Furnish only the final processed TIFF or JPEG digital photography image files, not RAW or HEIC image files.
4. AAG will decline any images that are not suitable for permanent retention in the archives. GH&D zone representatives will be notified which digital images will not be added to SOVA.

IV. NUMBER AND RENAME IMAGES

A. Number and rename Digital Image Files

1. Organize the images in an order that reflects a progression through the garden.

2. Rename the images using the following information:
Image No._Garden Name_YearMonthDay_PhotographerLastName.
e.g., 01_SallysGarden_2023Jul15_Smith
3. Assign image numbers in strict numerical sequence (i.e., 01, 02, 03, etc.). Do not repeat numbers or use variants like 'A' or '1A' to indicate the same view photographed at a different time, etc.
4. Once the digital images are processed and renamed, load them onto a flash drive or upload them to a file transfer service (Google Drive, Drop Box, iCloud, etc.). See the [Digital File Transfer Policy](#)
5. Label the flash drive with the name and location of the garden.
6. Save a backup copy of the digital images in case the submission (on a flash drive) is damaged or lost in the mail.

To confirm camera and date information on an image:

- Mac: open Info window (Command I) in Photos or open Inspector/More Info/TIFF (Tools or Command I) in Preview.
- Windows: right click on image then click on either details or summary tab.

V. CREATE THE IMAGE CAPTION LIST

See examples in [Sample Submission](#).

1. List **all** numbered images - the numbers should match up to the image number assigned to the digital photography image file, slide, or photograph. Be sure to number and provide a caption for each historic image as you would for any newly generated image.
2. Write a caption for each image. This caption should include a detailed description noting the specific location in the garden or on the property, prominent features, garden structures, names of plants, etc.
3. Each caption should include the date (YearMonthDay) the image was photographed (not processed), and the photographer's name (LastName).
Double check the list for accuracy, *especially* if there is more than one photographer, shooting date, and/or camera.
4. Caption information assists AAG staff in cataloging the images by furnishing terms with which to search the images online. The more information you provide in a caption the better as this will help future researchers understand and interpret the design more accurately. Review the Garden Features List (page 3 of the [AAG Submission Form](#)) for terms to use in your captions.

VI. CAPTIONS LIST OPTIONS

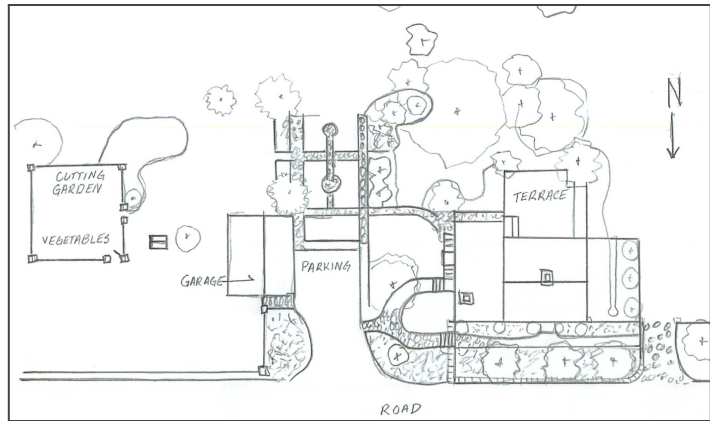
1. The Image Caption List may be created using this [Excel template for image captions](#) (preferred method). This template will aid AAG staff in connecting captions to their corresponding image in the garden slideshow in SOVA for a garden
2. AAG also accepts the Image Caption List in a Word document.

STEP 4: CREATE THE IMAGE VIEW & FEATURES MAPS

I. START WITH A BASE MAP

A simple base map of the garden and/or property is needed to document a garden. It is the map that will be used to create the Image View Map and the Features Map.

Ask the owner if they can supply you with a copy of a base map of the garden. This may take the form of a designer's plan, plat, or sketch.



for

If no base map is available, you will need to create your own. **There are so many different ways to create a base map of the garden.** Examples include copying a map from the local assessor's office/web page; printing a Google Map; getting a copy of the garden designer's plan, or sketching by hand. The goal is to provide enough information to give researchers a sense of the overall garden layout and design. See [Sample Base Map, Features Maps, and Image View Maps](#) to view different styles of base maps. You may also consider [creating maps with Google Earth](#).

The base map does not have to be made to scale but must indicate:

1. The layout of major features of the garden and property
2. The location of the house, other structures, and walkways
3. Directional north with an 'N' and an arrow.

Once you have the base map, **make two copies**. One copy will be used for the **Image View Map** and the other for the **Features Map**.

II. CREATE THE IMAGE VIEW MAP

The Image View Map indicates the location and direction from which all images for the submission were photographed. On the appropriate spot on the base map, write the number of each image, circle it and draw a small arrow indicating the direction of the view documented in the image. If more than one image is taken from this position and view (i.e., seasonal images) multiple image numbers can be combined into one circle. See Image View Map examples in [Sample Base Map, Features Map, and Image View Map](#).

III. CREATE THE FEATURES MAP

The Features Map indicates the location of the garden features cited on page 3 of the [AAG Submission Form](#). To complete the Features Map:

1. Check each garden feature on page 3 of the AAG Submission Form that applies to the garden, even if the feature is not pictured in the images that are submitted. Add any other features that are in the garden and not on the list to the "other terms" section at the bottom of the list.
2. On a separate copy of the base map, write in the number of each of the corresponding garden features (from page 3 of the AAG Submission Form) in the section of the garden

where each is located. Larger features may be indicated with a title instead of a number (e.g., “house”, “pool”, etc.). See [Sample Submission](#) and/or [Sample Base Map, Features Map, and Image View Map](#) for examples.

If a garden includes numerous features that are difficult to capture on a single plan, feel free to generate multiple plans showing individual garden areas or rooms. If you do, be sure to include an overall plan that indicates where the component plans are located.

Note: Compare the Features Map with the BRIEF SUMMARY OF GARDEN and COMPREHENSIVE DESCRIPTION, Image Captions List (in Step 3 of this Procedures Manual), and any images submitted for the garden to ensure you have listed all the garden’s features.

STEP 5: COMPLETE THE SUBMISSION

I. FINALIZE THE AAG SUBMISSION FORM

The [AAG Submission Form](#) provides space for the *minimum* amount of information necessary for documenting a garden. However, you are encouraged to include as much information about the garden as possible.

The following instructions indicate exactly how to complete each part of this form.

If you wish to type in data into the ‘fillable’ PDF version of the [AAG Submission Form](#), make sure to download the document onto your computer, and save it using the name of the garden, *before* filling it out. It may be necessary to add text to additional sheets as the number of words accepted in the ‘fillable’ fields is limited.

A. Page 1 of the AAG Submission Form

AAG Garden No.: This is for AAG use only. Please leave blank.

Garden Name (to be used in public record): Record the name of the garden property as the owner wishes it to appear in all AAG records. It could be an estate name, family name or arbitrary designation (ex. “Woodland Garden.”) DO NOT enter the name of the owner if they do not wish their names to be made public.

GCA Garden Club and Zone: Include the full name of the garden club and the GCA zone of the submitting club.

Year Garden was established: Record the year *the garden* was established.

Property Area (acres): Give approximate size of the property in acres or fractions of acres.

Approved by GHD Zone Rep: Be sure that you have cleared the garden with your GHD Zone Representative *before* documenting the garden.

Garden Status: Check which the property is: **Private, Vanished, or Semi-Public/Public.** Any Public Space requires the Public Spaces Questionnaire to be filled out, submitted to your GHD Zone Rep, and greenlighted for documentation before starting the submission process.

Brief Summary of Garden: Briefly describe the garden type, its design style and/or unique features. The fillable form has a 250 character limit (not including spaces).

Property Address: Include street address, city, county, state, zip code and GCA Zone of *property*. The street address and zip code are for AAG record-keeping purposes only and are never made part of the public record.

Brief Summary of Garden: Briefly describe the early history, owners, designers, significant features and plantings to serve as a draft for AAG’s online garden record. The fillable form has a 350 word limit. Please also provide a Comprehensive Description of the Garden that more fully documents the garden and its history in a separate Word document.

Comprehensive Description of Garden: Describe the garden in detail, noting its type, layout, interesting historical information, unique features, and design inspirations. Review the Garden Features list from page 23 of the AAG Submission Form for terms to use in the description. Identify the image number when describing something shown in a specific

image. Note sculptors, historical events or figures associated with the garden as well as factors that inspired the garden design. This information will be used in the AAG catalog record so it is important to be accurate and objective. Please prepare as a Word document. Include the garden name and location in a title block as well as the name of the author(s).

B. Page 2 of the AAG Submission Form

Person(s) to credit with design in AAG's online garden record: Record any names that are directly important to the history of the property. Identify their roles (ex. Landscape architect, architect, gardener, horticulturist, etc.). These names will be part of the AAG catalog record, including the online garden record. Give dates of involvement, if known. If the garden owner is also the designer, be sure to note that.

Successive owners important to history or design of garden (past to present): Record the names of owners of the property and the dates of their ownership if they are important to the history or design of the garden. (Past owners' names are often helpful for historical context.

Garden Documentation Materials NOT Included in Submission

Do plans/drawings of the garden exist? Yes or No. If Yes, note where documents can be found (e.g. family records).

Do other photographs or images of the garden exist? Yes or No. If Yes, note where images can be found.

Other documentation: List any other documentation NOT included in the submission, including archives, family histories, articles, websites, You Tube videos, or other references and their locations. For articles and books, please provide a separate bibliography.

Mailing Address for AAG Certification of Appreciation: Please be sure to ask the garden owner if the address they want the Certificate mailed to differs from the property address. This is particularly important if the owner uses a P.O. Box or has moved since the garden was documented. Delivery delays will occur if AAG is not notified of the correct mailing address to use.

C. Page 3 of the AAG Submission Form

Garden Type and Features List

This page was most likely completed in Step 4. Check all type(s) of garden/landscape and garden features that are found in the garden even if they are not pictured in the images that are submitted. These listed features use subject terms from the Library of Congress and Getty Art and Architecture Thesaurus and are used by AAG staff for cataloging purposes. Add any features at the bottom of the list if you don't see a likely term to use.

II. ORGANIZE THE SUBMISSION MATERIALS

Use the [Checklist for AAG Submission](#) to organize all the submission materials..

III. REVIEW WITH THE OWNER

It is important for the owner to see what is being submitted to AAG to ensure that it accurately documents their garden. Please review the entire submission with the owner before mailing/delivering/transferring it to your GH&D zone representative.

IV. MAKE COPIES

If you wish to make a copy of the garden documentation for your club files, include the following statement on the front cover and/or page of each copy: *“Use of any images or documentation requires prior approval from the Archives of American Gardens. Please contact AAG staff at aag@si.edu for all use requests.”* Any part of the submission that includes Personal Identifiable Information (names, addresses, email addresses, and phone numbers) should not be copied, retained, or distributed by the club.

V. DIGITAL TRANSFER OR MAIL TO YOUR GH&D ZONE REPRESENTATIVE

OPTION 1: The [Digital Submission File Transfer Policy](#) spells out how garden submissions can be submitted via a file sharing service (e.g. Dropbox or iCloud) to your GH&D Zone Representative. **Do not send to AAG.** Please contact your GH&D Zone Rep before submitting files digitally.

QUESTIONS? Please contact your **GHD Committee Zone Representative** if you have any questions about the digital file transfer process.

OPTION 2: Mail the submission to your GH&D Zone Representative. **Do not send to AAG.** When mailing a submission, use a padded envelope or box sturdy enough so that no damage can occur to the contents. Anchor the thumbdrive in the package by taping it securely to the inside of a 3-ring binder, piece of cardboard, etc.

Go through the Checklist for AAG Submission as you put all the following in secure packaging:

1. All signed Releases
2. AAG Submission Form (3 pages)
3. Features Plan and Image View Plan
4. Flash drive loaded with digital photography, Image Caption List and Comprehensive Description of Garden
5. Any additional materials: Questions for Gardens Owners, planting lists, copies of newspaper or magazine articles (with sources and dates cited), Bibliography, and/or any other sources for information related to the garden.
6. Checklist for AAG Submission
7. Public Spaces Questionnaire, if applicable.

ACCEPTANCE OF THE SUBMISSION

The document [What happens after I send a Smithsonian garden submission to my GH&D Zone Representative?](#) explains in detail what happens to the completed garden submission. The following is an overview:

Approximately two to four weeks after a completed submission is submitted to AAG, the GH&D zone representative will receive a letter of acceptance by email from AAG. The GH&D zone representative will email a copy of the letter to the submitting club.

The Smithsonian will send a letter of thanks and a Certificate of Appreciation directly to the property owner approximately two to three months after the garden has been accepted by AAG. See the [Sample Smithsonian Institution Certificate of Appreciation](#).

The submitting club is encouraged to send a letter of thanks to the property owner.

Three to six months after a garden has been accessioned by AAG into The GCA Collection, the submission will be cataloged by AAG staff and images made available on the Smithsonian Online Virtual Archives (SOVA) website: sova.si.edu

Referencing the Smithsonian's Archives of American Gardens in Articles, Press Releases, etc.

in the Archives of American Gardens. The Smithsonian's name, logo, or images should not be used in connection with any commercial enterprise or activity or to suggest or imply a connection to or endorsement of any kind. For example, a garden owner should avoid promoting the documentation of their garden in AAG as a selling point in any print or online real estate announcement and caution any realtor or writer to do the same. Owners of garden spaces that are used for commercial purposes should not prominently highlight the name of the Smithsonian on a website or signage.

Should an owner, photographer, garden club member, writer, etc. wish to publicize the inclusion of a garden in the Archives of American Gardens in a blog post, print publication, online, etc., see the [Overview of the Archives of American Gardens for use in Articles, Press Releases, etc.](#) for guidance.

Not sure how to refer publicly to AAG or the Smithsonian in conjunction with a garden that's documented in the GCA Collection? Please send your inquiries to aag@si.edu.

ARCHIVES OF AMERICAN GARDENS HOW TO USE OR ORDER IMAGES

PERMISSION TO USE IMAGES

- AAG permits and encourages personal and educational use of unrestricted images that fall within the Copyright Act's doctrine of Fair use. Use of restricted or copyrighted images requires special written authorization from the AAG and may also require authorization from other parties.
- For print or electronic publications (books, magazines, newsletters), exhibitions, or film use, please contact AAG at aag@si.edu to clear intended use of the images.
- Be sure you have your finalized list of AAG unique identification numbers (example: VA037001) for images you wish to use along with the purpose for their use.
- Please submit requests at least 2 weeks in advance of your deadline.
- Once you contact AAG you will be asked to fill out and submit an Application for Permission to Publish Images. AAG staff will respond back and indicate which images are cleared to use along with a credit line.
- Please cite the following credit line with using any images from AAG: "Smithsonian Institution, Archives of American Gardens, [Collection Name], [Photographer Name]."

[Read the full AAG Policy on How to Use or Order Images HERE](#)