ARCHIVES OF AMERICAN GARDENS

All Things Photography

GCA Garden History & Design Committee

September 2016
This presentation covers:

◦ EQUIPMENT/SETTINGS
◦ CAPTURING THE BEST IMAGES
◦ INFORMATION THAT’S NEEDED FOR EACH IMAGE
◦ DELIVERY OF IMAGES TO AAG
◦ USING IMAGES
Review these requirements before starting a garden submission

- Think 'front-end' prep work

- By the time a submission is completed it’s too late to incorporate much of this guidance if it hasn't been already

Things to consider before taking on a digital submission

- Is there a DSLR camera available to photograph the garden and is the photographer well versed in how to use it?
- Is the person processing the images familiar with how to use a computer and how to move images off the camera?
- Is there someone from the club’s Photography Committee to consult for technical guidance?
DIGITAL CAMERA STANDARDS
AAG Digital Submission Policy

- Outlines **minimum** standards for digital files
- Digital images need to start out as robust digital files
- Standards are in place to help ensure:
  - images are of a high enough resolution to be used for publications, exhibits, etc.
  - AAG is responsibly expending Smithsonian resources to preserve these images in the long-term
AAG’s 1st Digital Submission

Mary Carter McConnell, photographer.
Camera Type - DSLR

- **DSLR** (digital single-lens reflex) model
- At least **22mm sensor** size
  - Check the sensor size of any camera on the Digital Photography Review’s website at [www.dpreview.com/reviews/specs.asp](http://www.dpreview.com/reviews/specs.asp), by looking up your camera model under “Camera Database”
- Four Thirds cameras also acceptable
- ‘point and shoot’ cameras have very tiny sensors
  - Smaller sensors mean smaller pixel sites in a concentrated area which mean lower quality images
Future Digital Developments

- Digital technology changes at a rapid pace
- AAG will review the Digital Submission Policy each year to determine what changes and updates can be made
DIGITAL CAMERA SETTING STANDARDS
Camera Setting – File format

- Set camera to shoot in RAW or Highest JPEG Setting (JPEG Fine)
- RAW images are “unprocessed” files, the equivalent of a “digital negative”
  - Professional photographers often shoot in RAW
  - If you are an amateur photographer, shoot in TIFF or the highest JPEG setting
Camera Setting – Image format

- Choose an Image Size setting **at least 3,000 pixels** (or higher) on the image’s longer side

- Some examples:
  - 3008 x 2000 - OK
  - 4896 x 3672 - OK
  - 1450 x 900 - NOT OK

- Smaller files (i.e. less than 3,000 pixels on the long side) are unsuitable for publications, exhibits, etc.

- Once a digital image is shot, you can’t make it bigger (i.e. add more pixels to it)

- Any image less than 2MB in size will be rejected!
DIGITIZING ORIGINAL PHOTOGRAPHS
Some garden owners have older photographic prints that document their gardens over time.

Entire submissions may only have ‘historic’ images that document a ‘lost’ garden.

While AAG prefers original photographs to be submitted to the Archives, scans of ‘historic’ images from the garden owner’s personal archives are acceptable.
Minimum Requirements for Digitizing Original Photographs

### Scanned Images

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Options for Scanning Original Photographs or 35mm Slides</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>If a garden owner does not wish to transfer original photographs or 35mm slides with the submission materials to the Smithsonian, the images may be digitized on a flatbed or slide scanner and saved to a CD. (Duplicate photographs are also accepted if scanning is not a feasible option.)</td>
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<table>
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<tr>
<th>Resolution</th>
<th>- 300dpi/px at a minimum for all images</th>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- 600dpi/px is preferred for photographs</td>
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<tr>
<th>File Format</th>
<th>TIFF (preferred)</th>
<th>JPEG at the highest quality setting (also accepted)</th>
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<tr>
<th>Compression</th>
<th>None</th>
<th>All JPEGs are automatically compressed</th>
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<table>
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<tr>
<th>Compression Ratio</th>
<th>N/A</th>
<th>Excellent or Highest Image Quality</th>
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<table>
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<tr>
<th>Minimum Image Size</th>
<th>Preferred: Large</th>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Approximately 3,000 to 4,000 pixels on image’s long side</td>
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<table>
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<tr>
<th>Minimum Image Size</th>
<th>Also accepted: Medium</th>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Approximately 2,100 to 2,400 pixels on image’s long side</td>
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Digitizing Original Photographs

Please remember to:

◦ Caption these images

◦ Determine if the photographer is known or unknown

◦ If photographer is known, obtain a release

◦ Assign unique numbers to these images in addition to any contemporary images that are submitted

The Grace Edwards Garden, Beverly, MA. c. 1950s. From the Lois W. Poinier Collection.
DIGITAL PROCESSING AND FILE-SAVING STANDARDS
Quick Overview: Converting Camera Raw Files

- RAW images **must** be processed as TIFFs
- AAG does **not** accept RAW image files at this time
Image Processing: Accepted Minor Adjustments

- **RAW Image Processing:**
  - minor overall tonal or color adjustments to reflect actual conditions
  - cropping

- **JPEG Image Processing:**
  - cropping (only)

- AAG digital images are considered visual evidence for the historic record. It is critical that documentation be authentic.
Image Processing: Prohibited Adjustments

- Erasing or “Photoshopping” in or out garden features
- ‘Manipulated’ images
- Changing dimensional proportions
- AAG maintains documentation on actual gardens, not invented ones
Numbering the Digital Files

- After selecting images for submission, rename each digital file with image #, garden name, date and photographer.

Examples:
- 001_SmithGarden_2016July15_SmithsonJames
- 002_SmithGarden_2016July15_SmithsonJames

- Do not rename .jpg file extensions to .tif — this will make the file unreadable.

- File names & numbers must correspond with entries on Image Caption List and Image View Plan.
REQUIREMENTS FOR SENDING DIGITAL IMAGES TO AAG
Delivery Method

- Download images onto disk(s) or flash drive(s)
  - Name brand or Gold Quality disks
  - DVD-R’s have more storage than CD-R’s

- Do NOT create separate folders for digital images on disk or flash drive!
Other things to keep in mind

- Do NOT write on or label disk
  - Label CD case or insert paper label into case

- AAG continues to accept 35mm slide and slide/digital ‘hybrid’ submissions
**Before a submission goes to AAG...**

- Club should save a copy of submission images as back-up
  - Some disks sent to AAG have been damaged in the mail!

- If you want to preview a garden submission at an upcoming GHD Committee meeting:
  - Either hang onto submission until it is previewed OR make a copy of images, garden description, captions, etc. **before** sending to AAG
  - Make low-res .jpg copies on a separate disk or flash drive for previewing if they are larger than 2MB
    - Large files take a looooooooong time to open on a laptop

Before a submission goes to AAG...
PHOTOGRAPHING GARDENS FOR GCA COLLECTION
Composition (a.k.a. do some homework first)

- Walk through the garden before taking any photos to get a feel for the space
  - Visit the site at different times of the day or even seasons to determine the best lighting and seasonal features

- Look for vantage points like a terrace or second story window

- When photographing, start from the entrance of the garden and make your way through and around the space(s)
  - Tell the story of the garden as you move through it -- show what makes it special

Tips

- Photograph from different perspectives
- Keep the horizon level
- Don’t crop the composition so closely that it loses its design context
- Turn off camera’s date feature

Lighting

- Early morning is often the best time to photograph a garden.

- Avoid taking pictures mid-day in sunny locations to cut down on excessive shade.

- Do not point camera directly into the sun.

- ‘Dappled’ shade is ok; ‘high noon’ shade is not.

Provide Design Context

- Take a mix of wide views and more detailed shots
- If the garden owner is amenable, photograph the garden as it relates to the house

Meadow Rue, Asheville, NC. June 2013. Susan Kosma, photographer.
Perspective

- A view from a high vantage point helps show the overall garden design

Garden Details

- Details of garden features like fountains, furniture, plant containers, or hardscape are encouraged.

- Make sure to capture enough context to show how the feature fits in the garden’s design.

The Frierson’s Hidden Retreat, New Orleans, LA. March 2012. Laura C. Williams, photographer.
For Every Season…

- Photographing a garden in different seasons can show dramatic changes.

- Not mandatory, but highly encouraged.

Lowrey Garden, Greenville, SC. Pedrick Lowrey, photographer.
Capture the garden’s full story

- All of a garden’s elements help tell its story
  - garden rooms
  - paths
  - structures
  - ornamental features
  - ‘hidden,’ often utilitarian, spaces

People in the Garden

- AAG Subject Release needed in instances where someone can be identified in an image
- Close-ups of children will not be added to SIRIS. They may, however, be retained in the archives

Can anyone in this image be identified?
Things to Avoid in Photography

deep shadow

washed out
Things to Avoid in Photography

- Lack of garden context
- not in focus
Things to Avoid in Photography

* rather, show plants in context of garden’s design

Things to Avoid in Photography

- Images from books, magazine articles, other repositories, etc.

- Photocopies or bibliographic citations are welcome
The Not So Good, the Bad, and the Rejected

- digital files that do not meet minimum standards outlined in AAG Digital Submission Policy
- deep shadows or high contrast in lighting
- out of focus
- garden features shown without garden design context
- primary focus is on non-garden elements
- horticultural details
- redundant views
DOCUMENTATION
Choosing Images to Submit to AAG

- Identify the best, most informative images

- Edit out images that:
  - have quality issues
  - duplicate other images for the most part
  - do not provide valuable information
  - focus on horticultural or non-garden details

Editing down numerous digital images is especially important.

How many images does it take to document a garden?
It takes what it takes!

Jones Valley Urban Farm, Birmingham, AL. May 2009. Heather McWane, photographer.
Numbering Images

- each image must get an image number
  - both contemporary and scanned images
  - whole numbers only!
    - avoid decimals, letters, parallel lists of contemporary and historic images, etc.

- each image number must key into both the:
  - Image Caption List
  - Image View Plan
Captions are Critical!

For each image:

- provide a descriptive caption
  - explain in detail what the image shows (features, uses, challenges, solutions, etc.)
  - point out details, plantings, etc.
  - think about what a garden historian would want to know a century from now
  - don’t assume anything!

- date photo was taken
- photographer

AAG catalog records are only as good as the caption information that is supplied!

Newington, Sewickley, PA. May 2008. Diane Viall, photographer. Bryant Fleming, L.A. designed this yew garden in 1906. The hedges have been clipped in the shape of “Hershey Kisses,” most appropriate for a Pennsylvania garden.
Image Caption List Lacking Important Details

Doesn’t have:

- detailed description
- date
- photographer

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Slide List – Hazel’s Haven

1. Entrance courtyard with wall fountains.
2. Covered entry with well head.
3. Another view of the entrance courtyard.
4. Round Garden and birdbath.
5. Patio, benches, and container plantings.
6. Perennial garden, path, and arbors.
7. Lily pond and seating area.
8. Kitchen herb garden.
9. Ivy and rose-covered arbor.
10. Fire pit and seats surrounded by arbor.
11. Holly and flower bed.
12. Wall fountain.
Better, Descriptive Captions

Have:

- detailed description
- date
- photographer

PIERCE GARDEN IMAGE LIST

Elsie N. Dunklin, Photographer

001 A view of the front of the house facing Tulip Lane. Roses are enclosed in raised railroad ties. Roses left of the entry walk are (left to right) Gina Lollobrigida, Rose Rhapsody, Jardin de Bagatelle, and Alec's Red. On right side of entry walkway and closest to walkway are (left to right) Victor Borge, Canary Diamond, Sweet Surrender, Out of Africa, Veteran's Honor, Polar Star, Lanvin, and Velvet Fragrance (dark red.) May 5, 2014

002 A view from the corner of Edgemere Road and Tulip Lane. Raised rose beds enclosed with railroad ties on left of picture feature yellow, orange and pink multicolor Sun King and red Royal William. Red roses on right are Trojan Victory. May 5, 2014

003 As seen from Edgemere Road, we see a series of raised eight foot railroad tie enclosed rose beds. The red rose in the back on the left is Marilyn Welfan. The pink and orange roses in the middle are Dream Time (pink) and Dora (orange.) The owner propagated Dream Time from cuttings. Dora won “King of Show” in the Dallas Rose show in 2004. Yellow rose on right is St Patrick. May 5, 2014

004 A view from Edgemere Road looking inside the fence showing two eight foot railroad tie enclosed rose beds close to the corner of the guest house. May 5, 2014

005 Three separate raised beds enclosed with railroad ties feature Crimson Glory, Exotica and Hople Girl. May 5, 2014
Image View Plan

◦ Indicates where images were taken
  ◦ numbers should key directly to Image Caption List

◦ Range of quality is perfectly o.k.
Historic Images

Still need to supply:

- Image number that’s keyed into Image Caption List and Image View Plan
- Descriptive caption
- Date (circa date if unknown)
- Photographer (if known)

Mrs. Walter Douglas in her garden. Aranjuez, Phoenix, AZ, 1941. Photographer unknown.
Submitting a Garden to AAG

- By the time a garden submission is ready for review by a GHD Zone Rep, its photography components are already in place
  - digital camera used
  - pixel size of digital files

- That said, please review the submission to make sure that each image is numbered, captioned, charted on an Image View Plan, & its photographer identified
  - make and model of DSLR noted on Photographer Release(s)

- Contact AAG if you have any questions

‘the genie’s out of the bottle’
Additional Guidance

- AAG Digital Submission Policy
- GHD One Minute Reports
IF YOU NEED AN AAG IMAGE FOR A GH&D EXHIBIT, GCA BULLETIN ARTICLE, ETC.
Using images from AAG

◦ Images are available for non-commercial educational purposes
  ◦ They can be saved directly from SIRIS

◦ Contact AAG if you need to order high resolution images for publications or exhibitions
  ◦ Give AAG at least 3-4 weeks lead time for any duplication requests

◦ Please notify AAG of any images you use for exhibits, lectures, newsletters, etc.
Smithsonian's online catalog
- contains a sampling of images from gardens documented in the GCA Collection

Two major search options
- SIRIS
  - the preferred access point for saving images
- Collections Search Center
- CRC ‘truncates’ saved images
SIRIS catalog records

- Note alpha-numeric ‘local’ or ‘call’ number for reference purposes
  - (e.g. CA375026)
DEMO: SAVING AN IMAGE FROM SIRIS