



The Trillium

Piedmont Chapter
North American Rock Garden Society
Chapel Hill, Durham, Raleigh, NC

Sculpture Featured in the Finkel Gardens

by Helen Yoest

Wild turkeys cleared the gravel path as I entered the Finkels' property on a cold January day, 2007. The sky was blue - that Carolina blue we are often noted for. I was visiting the garden of Marty and Alan Finkel for the first time for what I thought would be an enjoyable couple of hours but the visit lasted well past dark!

The word about the Finkels' garden was spreading. In 1986, the Finkels bought a 44-acre property in southern Granville Country. After living on 5 wooded acres in Raleigh with those acres surrounded by even more woodland and no neighbors within sight or sound, their serenity began to change as the surrounding land was being developed. It was time to move.

The Finkels' new property was chosen for its, "Beauty, privacy, and the many attributes we were seeking," according to Marty. Deep down into the earth of their new land spread the old roots of hardwoods, mostly, along with pines and understories. On the surface were several cleared areas and paths, as well as water running through with frontages on both the Tar River as the south boundary and Fishing Creek on the eastern side.

What brought me to Oxford was the prospect of the Finkels opening their garden for the Garden Conservancy's Open Days tour. What I didn't know was that on this particular day, Thomas Sayre, a man I had admired from afar, was arriving with a crew to install *Duet*, the prototype for *Axes*, a sculpture commissioned by the University of Oregon, Eugene, Oregon. Each of the pair measures ~11-feet tall by 6-feet wide, made with two sides on each pair -- one side is of concrete cast rough and the opposite side is of sanded and polished cementitious terrazzo. *Duet* are set on a footing with a 3" diameter rod which has a bearing system on the top as well as one of the bottom to keep movement smooth and stable, allowing the position of the two sculptures to be changed either with a determined push or a gust wind at 20 mph or more. According to Sayre, "The two sides reflect light and create shadow in very different ways in relation to the sun making the piece significantly different visually depending of what surface is facing what direction in relation to the sun."

There was no fanfare, no press, no TV cameras. I just happened to be there at the same time. To me, and indeed, to the Finkels, it was an important event. I still count my blessings to have been there on that particular day. Fortunately, I was carrying my camera; otherwise, I would have left Oxford for just long enough to retrieve my Canon Rebel.

The morning turned into evening as I spent the day watching *Duet* being installed. While I waited between the unloading from the truck, the crane lifting, and installation of *Duet*, I toured the property -- the gardens, the goats, the water views. But the garden art, sculpture actually, struck and surprised me. Their acreage wasn't chock full of garden accents whispering for attention among the foliage and flowers, although there were a few nicely placed pieces of this type of art; their garden housed large, magnificent pieces of garden sculpture.

I knew of Marty's reputation as a plantswoman, but I learned that day that Alan and Marty were also patrons of three notable garden sculptors -- not only Thomas Sayre, but of Phil Hathcock and Edwin White, as well. Their sculpture collection began with works by Thomas



Photo By Helen Yoest

Duet by Thomas Sayre/Clearscapes

Sayre. As the Finkels remember, “We met Thomas [Sayre] where he cast his spell on us at a New Year’s day gathering about 15 years ago.”

River Reels were cast on the Finkel property, Sayre’s first attempt at a full scale earthcasting, using a backhoe to dig two round trenches that were fitted with steel reinforcing rods and then filled with concrete. After the concrete cured in the earth for a month, a crane birthed the reels by raising them, to be installed where they today grace the land. The birthing area is filled with Blue lyme grass (*Leymus arenarius* 'Blue Dune'). Alan shares, “As with all site-specific pieces, Thomas [Sayre] wished to appropriately complement the Reels with the birthing site to connect them unmistakably. The locus of the actual molds is marked with a torus of river stones. The grasses beautify and bridge the transition between the hardness of the piece with the natural gentleness of the landscape.” Thomas Sayre adds, “Visually, the significance of the grass is to mark the two birthing places of the castings. There is still the original steel pin marking the center of the circles from which the entire project flowed.”

The title *River Reels* refers to the Tar River property boundary and the shape of a reel. Today, the pair of reels stand 18-foot diameter frames with a changing view of the surrounding landscape with every step.

The Finkels have several pieces of Sayre’s works, including the prototype for *Wapiti* commissioned by the City of Portland, Oregon called *Tree and Pump House* which serves as the Finkels’ well cover. Various vessels and smaller pieces,



Photo By Helen Yoest

River Reels by Thomas Sayre/Clearscapes

including a model of *River Reels*, a personal favorite of mine, serve as accents, as well.

As the gardens developed, the Finkels wanted to add a small water garden to connect two decks. After seeing the Asian garden at Duke, Marty learned of Phil Hathcock of Natural Stone Sculptures as he was recommended as the go-to person for gardening with rocks, Asian Design, and implementation. Marty says, “Struck with the beauty of this garden and structures at his stone works in Apex, we asked him to design and install a small pool.” After seeing the Finkels’ site, Phil recommended a low-maintenance water feature in a moss garden and subtle Asian influence. A few years later, Hathcock returned to do another garden in a larger wooded area.



Photo By Helen Yoest

**The Pump House by Thomas Sayre/
Clearscapes**

There are also two works by the metal sculpture artist, Edwin White. Installed about 10 years ago, *The Cloud*, approximately 9 feet tall, is made of steel and suspended from a large sourwood tree where it turns on just a breath of wind. Alan says, “When *Cloud* catches a breeze, the light creates *moiré* patterns that are seldom seen elsewhere -- very pretty accoutrement to a nature setting.” The second White piece, sited in the woodland garden, is a 4-foot high ground-standing complement to the *Cloud*.

Like the great sculpture artists who have left their mark on this important property, so too has Suzanne Edney of Custom Landscapes, in her design of the bones of the garden. Marty shared “Most of the design has been done by Suzanne Edney, to whom I am grateful, since I have almost no sense of design creativity.”

The garden is filled with unique plantings that Marty has collected over the years. “I really love to look at the plants I have and the gardens are repositories for them. A great many of the plants came from the JC Raulston Arboretum while J.C. Raulston was there and I have continued to collect from the Gala in the Garden, Connoisseur plants, arboretum plant sales, and from time to time I come home with a trunk-full of plants from area nurseries.”



Photo By Helen Yoest

**Stonework by Phil Hathcock,
Natural Stone and Gardens**

Touring the gardens, you will view the sculpture, enjoy the gardens and experience artists' influences. One notable was when crossing the dry stream bed, designed by Phil Hathcock and Mac Hulslander, on a bridge made of curved steel designed, fabricated and installed by Thomas Sayre.

When choosing plants for their gardens, Marty wasn't too keen on adding certain plants, conifers in particular. "I'm narrow-minded about using conifers. Alan and I are surrounded by mostly deciduous native trees and shrubs and I don't like the artificial look of conifers in this setting. There are native very tall pines and eastern red cedars and I have allowed Suzanne's choice of *Juniperus virginiana* 'Grey Owl' in the area we named "The Edney Garden."

As with most gardeners, Marty Finkel has preferences. I don't think of these as being narrow-minded at all. Marty continues to reflect on her plant likes, "I love white and green variegation on leaves and if the occasional pink is there, I go crazy with lust for the plant." Marty enjoys being surprised by some plant placements, color combinations and various textures that work together when she didn't plan it that way. "We derive great pleasure from this view from the breakfast room, especially when the double file viburnum is in full bloom."

As you can imagine, deer are a problem in the country. "Since we are surrounded by such a variety of native flora, including oaks with delicious acorns, I have no sympathy for deer who try to eat the ornamentals," says Marty. To keep the deer out of the beds, "Alan has surrounded most of the beds with a strand of electrical wire, at browsing height, which I bait with deer attractant. When their noses or mouths come in contact with the wire, they go to Durham."

Visiting the Finkel garden that day and on several visits since, I've learned that as you enter the long driveway approaching their gardens, like approaching the speed of light, time stops. When you go, plan to pause that day to let the uniqueness of the area sink in. Linger to enjoy the gardens, stroll to the river, visit the Pygmy goats, see the sculpture and most of all, enjoy time spent conversing with Marty and Alan. Both have the gift of gab, enchanting you with stories from yesterday to decades ago.

And even though the Finkels have not yet agreed to open for the Garden Conservancy, they have created a charming place that has become a friend of many a gardener and artist for a chance to see how good design melds with life on a large, country property. ❧



Photo by Helen Youst

Garden path through Marty and Alan Finkel's garden, pump house in background

To view more photos, go to: <https://picasaweb.google.com/100263801876343875979/SculptureAtHome?authuser=0&authkey=Gv1sRqCKnZ3qC994LmvQE&feat=directlink>

The Piedmont Chapter members have a real treat in store this spring as Marty and Alan Finkel have kindly offered to host our Spring Picnic in their garden.



Eudora Welty: the Writer in the Garden

by Bobby J. Ward

Years ago, while attending an event at N.C. State University's student union, I stumbled upon a touring exhibition of photos by the noted American writer, Eudora Welty. Taken while she worked for the Works Progress Administration (WPA) as a "junior publicity agent," they were starkly black and white, depicting daily life of Southern men and women during the Depression, including their houses, fields, and gardens. One I particularly recall had daylilies in it. That was my first awareness of Welty as a photographer and it gave me the first hint that she was also a gardener.

Eudora Welty (1909-2001) was born in Jackson, Mississippi, and was educated at Mississippi State College for Women, the University of Wisconsin, and Columbia University. She was a Guggenheim Fellow and won a Pulitzer Prize in 1973 for the novel, *The Optimist's Daughter*. Jimmy Carter awarded her the Presidential Medal of Freedom for Literature in 1980. Among her writings are five novels and several dozen short stories.

Southern garden writer Elizabeth Lawrence, who lived in Raleigh and later in Charlotte, corresponded with Welty. They met in the late 1930s in Raleigh, probably through a mutual friend. Through their correspondence Lawrence became acquainted with Eudora's mother, Chestina. According to Emily Wilson's *No One Gardens Alone*, a biography of Elizabeth Lawrence, there was a closer affinity initially with Chestina, who was a "kindred spirit in the garden." That friendship began when Chestina wrote Lawrence a letter praising her on the occasion of the publication in 1942 of *A Southern Garden*. Chestina had an interest in the blooming dates of flowers, which Elizabeth also carefully noted in all her books. When Lawrence was on a lecture tour in 1944 in Mississippi, she visited Chestina and Eudora in Jackson for the first time and immediately became at ease when she entered the garden to admire Chestina's roses around the Tudor-style house. When Lawrence moved to Charlotte, Eudora visited her there, the last time in 1982 (Lawrence died in 1985).

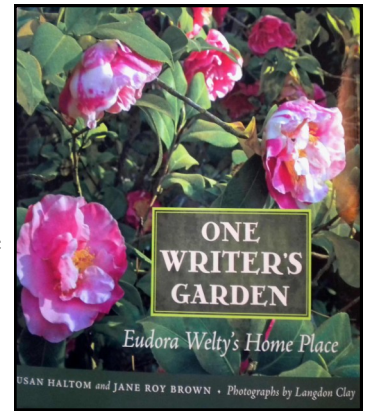
Lawrence credits Welty for introducing her to the Mississippi Market Bulletin, which both Chestina and Eudora read. Lawrence writes in *Gardening for Love: the Market Bulletins*: "Years ago Eudora Welty told me about the ladies who sell flowers through the mail and advertise in the Mississippi Market Bulletin . . . She put my name on the mailing list." In these bulletins, farmers advertised, free of charge, their crops, cattle, and horses—even dogs—while their wives advertised garden seed and bulbs "for pin money." "Their advertisements show the customs of the country people, their humor, and their way of speaking. Like Eudora's novels, the market bulletins are a social history of the Deep South," Lawrence wrote.

The Welty garden was Chestina's but gradually it became Eudora's as her mother spent less time in the garden during years of declining health. After Chestina died in 1966, Eudora took full charge of the garden, although, according to Susan Haltom's new book, *One Writer's Garden: Eudora Welty's Home Place* (University of Mississippi 2011), Eudora always referred to it as "my mother's garden." It included an Upper Garden and Lower Garden separated by an arbor with roses, a collection of camellias, a cut-flower garden and woodland, and numerous bulbs, annuals, and perennials such as bearded iris and daylilies.

In 1980, Welty gave the house and garden to the Mississippi Department of Archives and History (MDAH) with the right to live there until she died, directing that the house become a museum after that. In 1994, Haltom, who was working at the MDAH, visited the Welty garden, then grown up with weeds, bushes, and tangles of vines and poison ivy. She recalls Welty, frail and no longer able to care for the garden, telling her, "I cannot bear to look out the window and see what has become of my mother's garden." Haltom began a long-term effort, with volunteers and professional assistance and advice from organizations such as the Garden Conservancy, to rehabilitate the garden, and eventually "the lost garden was coming to light." The significant period for Chestina's garden appears to have been 1925 to 1945, thus presenting Haltom and her crew with challenges on how to present the garden based on its current condition and future use. She drew upon Chestina's logs, plant lists, and notes, as well as Eudora's photographs, her papers, and writings. The garden was opened to the public in 2004 and the house in 2006; the site is now a National Historic Landmark.

Haltom says that when Eudora died in 2001, few people knew or understood that she had been a gardener and that her numerous references to flowers and plants in her writings grew from experience, learned first from her mother and then from her own hands-on, dirt-under-the-fingernails efforts. When Haltom had several opportunities to interview Eudora in her last decade, Eudora told her "I think that people have lost the working garden. We used to get down on our hands and knees. The absolute contact between the hand and the earth, the intimacy of it, that is the instinct of a gardener."

One Writer's Garden chronicles the garden—first Chestina's, then Eudora's—from its heyday to its decline and eventual rehabilitation. It is co-authored by Jane Roy Brown, a landscape historian, who focuses on historic gardens and land-



(Continued on page 7)

JCRA Xeric Gardens

by Charles Kidder



At an arboretum nationally known for its collection of rarities, it could be difficult to single out a particular garden area containing the most unusual plants. Still, a good case could be made that the JC Raulston Arboretum's xeric gardens fit that description. Cacti and other desert plants don't usually come to mind when thinking of the North Carolina Piedmont. The term "xeric" comes from the Greek *xeros*, for dry. Xerophytes are plants adapted to dry conditions, either low rainfall or exceptional drainage. Although many people think these plants require constant heat, their greatest enemy is cold combined with moisture. Many can be grown in the humid eastern U.S. if they're given the proper soil conditions.

A note about nomenclature in this article: when spelled with a lower-case "x", xeric is being used as a descriptive adjective that includes three garden areas at the JCRA, namely the Scree Garden, the Rooftop Garden and the Xeric—with a capital "X"—Garden. The latter garden includes the former Southwest Garden, but considerably expands on it. But before we take a look at all these gardens, we should answer the question I hear most often, "What is scree?"

In case you've forgotten most of your geomorphology (the study of land forms, for example, hills, mesas, cuevas, tombolos, as well as other arcane terms), scree is rocky debris that collects at the base of a slope, i.e. "scree=debris". Due to the action of freezing and thawing, bedrock on a mountain slope breaks into smaller pieces and eventually tumbles downhill to form areas of scree, sometimes also known as talus slopes. Scree particles generally range from fist-sized down to gravels. There is usually a scarcity of fine particles and organic matter in scree; therefore, drainage is very sharp.

Most of the soils in the Raulston Arboretum's xeric gardens have been amended with a special gravel sold under the trade name PermaTill, sometimes also marketed as VoleBloc. PermaTill is made from slate mined in central NC, which is then heated to several thousand degrees. The slate explodes and becomes very porous, and is ground into gravel. When PermaTill is added to clay, the soil becomes much lighter and more airy and gives xerophytes the conditions they require to thrive. When the new xeric areas were established starting in the



Photo by Charles Kidder

Dasyliirion teeth

late summer of 2006, many cubic yards of PermaTill were brought in and mixed with sandy topsoil to create the berms that you now see. Carolina Stalite Company has been very generous to the Arboretum with its donations of Permatill and soil mixes.

The oldest xeric gardens at the JCRA, dating to the early nineties, are in the southwest portion of the Arboretum, near a tall holly hedge. These older plants actually defy conventional wisdom and have survived in clay, although they do have a PermaTill mulch. Here you will find most of the larger true cacti—primarily the prickly pears, genus *Opuntia*—displaying a variety of leaf shapes and colors. Some even lack the typical cactus spines, but still possess the much more insidious tiny hairs (glochids) that can work their way through clothing and into your skin.

Also in this area are some large succulents sometimes known as the woody



Agave parryi subsp. parryi var. huachucensis

Photo by Charles Kidder



Agave leaf

Photo by Charles Kidder

lilies—the agaves, yuccas, nolinias and dasylirions. At one time these plants were in the Lily family, but are now generally considered to be members of the *Asparagaceae*. One of the yuccas, *Y. treculeana* or Don Quixote’s Lance, has a ten-foot trunk topped with fiercely pointed rigid leaves and sports clusters of creamy flowers in April. Unlike their agave cousins, the yuccas will bloom year after year. Working under this plant can be dangerous: you forget where you are, straighten up quickly and receive a sharp jab in the head. This yucca was installed in June, 1991 and was one foot in height at that time.

Nearby is one of the Arboretum’s larger and older agaves, the Hardy Century Plant, *A. americana* subspecies *protoamericana*. This agave came to the Arboretum in 1996, but records indicate that it was not planted in this bed until 1999. It may be getting to the age where flowering will occur soon.

There are at least 250 species of agave native to the southwestern U.S. and Mexico, with about sixty different taxa at the JCRA. Agaves have long been used to make rope (from the sisal agave), as well as a variety of beverages such as tequila and pulque. You may have encountered agave nectar, a sweetener now commonly seen on grocery shelves. Agaves are generally grown for their foliage, which ranges from swords several feet in length, to much smaller oval spatulas, or even elongated needles, with colors varying from olive green to bluish-grey. Their leaves are usually armed with a terminal spine, as well as with teeth along the edges that are often tinged with burgundy hues. Another attractive feature of agave foliage: when the new leaves are still tightly held together, the teeth of one leaf will press into another. As the rosette opens up, these subtle teeth imprints will persist on the leaves.

One reason that agaves are grown primarily for their foliage is their unusual flowering habit. Most species flower only one time, following several years of growth, and then die. In arid areas this process reputedly took a hundred years, giving them the name century plant. With abundant water agaves grow more quickly, flowering after ten to fifteen years in our area.

The term “flowering” hardly does justice to what happens when an agave decides that its time has come. For example, on the *Agave salmiana*, an asparagus-like stalk starts to emerge from the rosette of leaves. Over the next couple of months, this four-inch wide stalk shoots up to a height of fifteen feet and creamy white flowers appear on the hat rack of branches toward the top. When flowering and fruiting is complete, the mother plant slowly dies. If you look at the *A. salmiana* on the roof of the



Pulsatilla flowers

Photo by Charles Kidder

McSwain building, you’ll see that all is not lost, however. Underneath the remains of the parent plant that flowered in the spring of 2010 are several offshoots known as pups that will live on and repeat the trick in a few years. These can easily be dug up—assuming you’re wearing good gloves—and transplanted to a different area.

Not all of the Arboretum's xeric plants are prickly succulents, however. The *Salvia greggii* provide a shocking display of red, purple and pink flowers. Small shrubs, as opposed to the annuals used as bedding plants, they have the characteristically pungent leaves of the sages. They start blooming in mid-spring, slow down a bit in the heat of summer, then pick up again in the fall, often going strong into November. These salvias can get a bit tatty with age, but can take a hard cut-back in spring, as long as you leave some green leaves. Plus, we have seen a few seedlings here and there, so we can look forward to some interesting unplanned color combinations.

If you prefer more subtle displays of color, rain lilies are scattered about the xeric



Vernonia lindheimeri

Photo by Charles Kidder

gardens. Their grass-like foliage is relatively inconspicuous, but following a good rain, white and pastel flowers will suddenly add a delicate beauty to the gravelly beds.

The JC Raulston Arboretum's xeric gardens merit a visit at any time of year, whether it's for the vibrant colors of spring and summer or perhaps just for the variety of foliage color and texture that persists throughout the year. If you encounter me in the xeric gardens staring at the light shining through the teeth of an agave or daisy-lirion, feel free to tap me on the shoulder and interrupt my reverie. I probably need to get back to weeding. ☞



Salvia in the xeric garden - JC Raulston Arboretum

Photo by Charles Kidder

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scapes. The book has scores of period black and white Welty family photographs, including some from Welty's WPA work, and a collection of contemporary photos by Langdon Clay (supplemented by Haltom).

In reading *One Writer's Garden*, there are many places where Eudora Welty's writings caused me to linger over a phrase and savor it. But one of Haltom's caused me to pause as well. Haltom writes that, as Eudora watched her mother expend her grief in the garden after her father's death in 1931, "Eudora discovered the solace of gardening for herself, and a kind of joy."

For fifteen years, I have made daily use of an email program called Eudora. The software, developed in the late 1980s by Steve Dorner at the University of Illinois, pays homage to Eudora Welty's short story, "Why I Live at the P.O." In Dorner's busy life, he apparently saw a connection between Welty's "post office" and his daily e-mail fetching, naming the software "Eudora" in her honor, a reference that pleased the author. Sadly, I am being forced to give up Eudora, the e-mail software, because it, just like the post office Welty wrote about, is becoming obsolete and outdated by newer software and technological changes. Thankfully, there's nothing outdated about Eudora, the author and gardener, especially as lovingly preserved in Haltom's admirable book, *One Writer's Garden*. ☞



**Piedmont Chapter,
NARGS Programs**

JC Raulston Arboretum
Saturday, March 17, 2012 9:30 am

**“One Writer's Garden:
Eudora Welty's Home Place”**

Susan Haltom
Ridgeland, Miss.

The Trillium, Newsletter of the Piedmont Chapter
The North American Rock Garden Society
1422 Lake Pine Drive, Cary, NC 27511

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BOARD OF DIRECTORS

- David White, Chair
dmwhite_nc@yahoo.com
484-7885
3 Ontario Court, Durham, NC 27713
- Marlyn Miller, Sec. marlynmiller@earthlink.net
919-467-3554
1107 Imperial Rd. Cary, NC 27511
- Bobby Ward, Past Chair
biblio@nc.rr.com
919-781-3291
930 Wimbleson Dr, Raleigh 27609
- Bobby Wilder, Treasurer
wilder@nc.rr.com.
919-755-0480
2317 Elmsford Way, Raleigh 27608

BOARD MEMBERS AT LARGE:

- Tim Alderton tim_alderton@ncsu.edu
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4233 Laurel Ridge Dr, Raleigh 27614
- Kirt Cox kirtley@nc.rr.biz.com
919-489-7892
2539 Sevier St, Durham 27705
- Joann Currier uniqueplant@nc.rr.com
919-402-0117
4207 Oak Hill Rd. Chapel Hill 27514
- Dave Duch dduch@nc.rr.com
919-467-0653
1422 Lake Pine Dr., Cary 27511
- Vivian Finkelstein vivfink@earthlink.net
919-847-3658
3601 Charterhouse Dr. Raleigh 27613
- Tom Harville tomhar@bellsouth.net
919-851-5369
104 Birklands Dr., Cary 27511
- Charlie Kidder charles67@bellsouth.net
919-380-0596
1518 Wonsloe Ct. Cary, 27511
- Elsa Liner elsa_liner@hotmail.com
919-942-1766
331 Burlage Circle, Chapel hill 27514

TRILLIUM EDITORS:

- Dave Duch and Marian Stephenson
marian42836@yahoo.com
919-918-3580.
750 Weaver Dairy Rd, #205,CHill 27514

OTHER SIGNIFICANT POSITIONS:

- Sept. Plant Sale Manager: Kirtley Cox
- Refreshments: Gwen and Maurice Farrier

Food Goodies to Share

If your last name begins with the letter below, please consider bringing something to share.

March Sp-A April Any and all

Piedmont Chapter NARGS through April, 2012

Piedmont NARGS Speakers Program—Spring 2012
All Meetings at the JC Raulston Arboretum
All programs are on a Saturday begin at 9:30 a.m except as noted

“Extra Dry, On the Rocks”

April 21, 2012
Charlie Kidder, Cary, N.C.

Spring Potluck Picnic

May 19, at 10:30 a.m.
Marty and Alan Finkel’s Garden
Oxford, N.C.
See directions appended.

Lasting Impressions'

6th Annual Open Garden Art & Plant Sale,

Saturday, April 21, 2012, 9am-4pm,
4904 Hermitage Dr., Raleigh, NC 27612.

Spring will be showing all over the garden! Local artists with jewelry, potter, metal art, fiber art, sculpture, concrete leaf art, and hypertufa will be in the garden.

Hosted by Amelia Lane and Beth Jimenez