

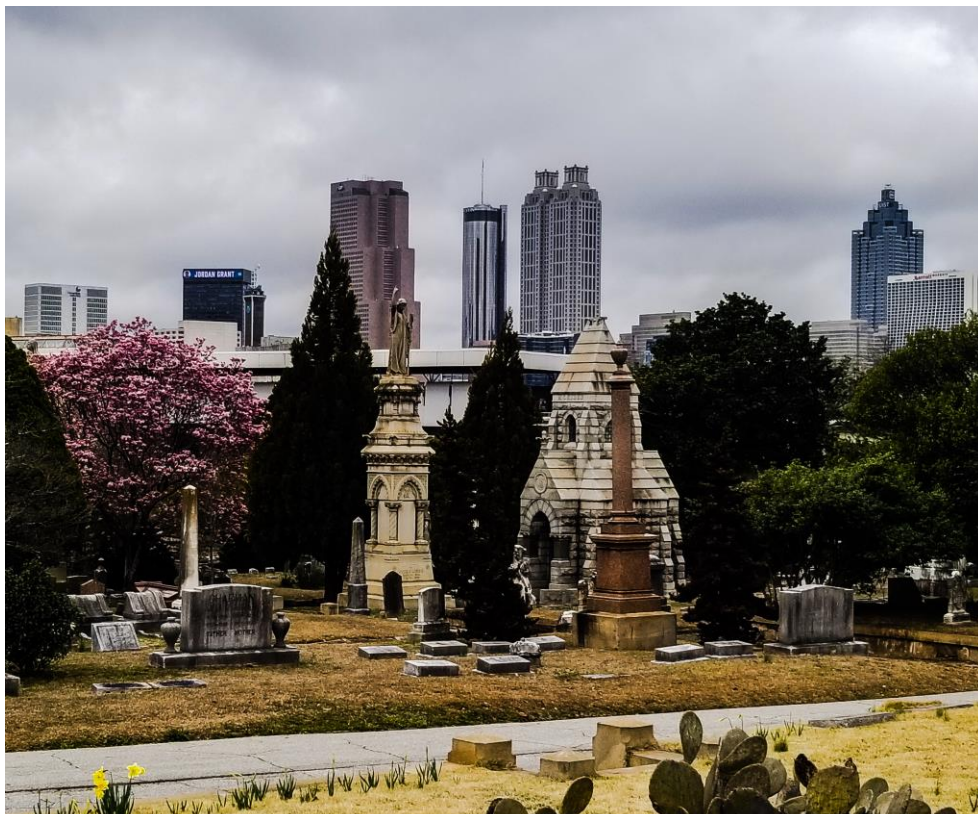
# Greg Freeman's Garden Chronicle



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**December 2024**



**On previous page...Contrasting with the contemporary architecture of Downtown Atlanta's skyline are historic mausoleums, gravestones and myriad textures, colors and shapes among the trees, shrubs and flowers (including a stunning *Magnolia x soulangeana* and daffodils from the Captain John Lipscomb Historic Daffodil Collection) at Historic Oakland Cemetery on overcast February days like this one in 2022.**

Punctuated by days of record heat, the summer of 2024 was brutal at times, taking its toll on my garden. Some well-established plants succumbed to the drought. Still, some plants flourished. I suppose that's the way the cookie crumbles.

Needless to say, by autumn's arrival, I was thrilled with some seasonal changes, although they were not consistent. Nights had become cooler early on in September and October, but many days were still in the high temperatures.

South Carolina has that ability to display signs of all four seasons in a matter of days without much warning, depending on the time of year. Not even the most insistent of meteorologists, however, had prepared us for the arrival of Helene. The strongest hurricane on record to strike the Big Bend of Florida and the deadliest hurricane in the mainland United States since 2005, Helene, a Category 4 hurricane, made landfall in Florida on September 27. It made its way northward, still maintaining tropical storm status hundreds of miles inland. Worth pointing out, Helene was reportedly 500 miles wide. Here in Upstate South Carolina, we were being bombarded with heavy rain and serious wind many hours before its full fury actually passed through the area. Here in South Carolina, Governor Henry McMaster declared a state-wide state of emergency.

From early Friday, 27 September until mid-day on Wednesday, 3 October, a total of six days, I was without electricity, which took its toll on me. Food in the refrigerator and freezer had to be thrown out, and I found myself growing stir-crazy

every evening between the fall of darkness and the time to go to bed. It is amazing how dependent we are on modern conveniences and technology.

That said, many more individuals – tens of thousands, in fact – continued without power in my area well after mine was restored. Beyond that, my inconveniences paled in comparison to the loss of life, homes and livelihoods just a few mountain ridges away from me in North Carolina and further on into Tennessee due to catastrophic flooding. Even now, so many individuals remain displaced and forever changed, and they merit our prayers, financial support and tourism dollars infused into their communities as soon as travel is feasible.

I was indeed one of the fortunate ones. My property remains intact, with only the loss of a tree limb or two and some other minor damages to report. Through it all, I am still upright and breathing, I still have a home and my horses fared well. Thank you, Jesus!

All of these months later, I am grateful that hurricanes are now past and spring will be here before we know it. I am always looking forward to the shortest day of the year in December. It serves as a reminder that springtime is on its way, warmer temperatures will soon arrive and daffodils will shine in all their glory. Until then, we can dream, right? I wish you the very best as we say goodbye to another year and welcome 2025. Happy Gardening, my friends!

*Greg Freeman, Publisher*

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## “I’m Still Standing”...Spider Lilies Prove Resilient in the Face of Tropical Cyclone Helene

Scores of old home places in the American South are graced by the presence of the fall-blooming *Lycoris radiata*, otherwise known as spider lilies or naked ladies. These Asian natives and popular pass-along plants earned the latter moniker because the flowers emerge unadorned with foliage. Leaves grow from the bulb after flowering has ceased.

I was stunned to see these flowers still standing and thriving after Tropical Cyclone Helene’s widespread destruction here in Upstate South Carolina. These flowers survived the heavy, blowing rains and wind gusts up to 65 and 70 miles per hour, prompting me to look on in awe after the storm had passed.

Days before the storm, I had photographed the flowers. After observing their persistence following the storm, I snapped another photograph and shared the images on my [X account](#), referencing Sir Elton John’s hit song, “[I’m Still Standing](#).”

Plants are resilient, and it is always amazing to observe nature at work. My spider lilies proved that, in spite of their tenderness and fragility, they could weather the abuse of Helene while a century-old tree fell on my neighbor’s property and other trees and plants were ravaged.

Freeman, Greg. [@TheSouthernGuru](#).

“If flowers could sing karaoke, my spider lilies (*Lycoris radiata*) would sing [@eltonofficial](#)’s “I’m Still Standing” after surviving the tropical storm winds and rain from Helene. The first image is from today while remnants of the storm are still here. The other pic, two days ago.” X, 27 September 2024, 11:28 a.m., <https://x.com/TheSouthernGuru/status/1839688549391544509>



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If flowers could sing karaoke, my spider lilies (*Lycoris radiata*) would sing [@eltonofficial](#)’s “I’m Still Standing” after surviving the tropical storm winds and rain from Helene. The first image is from today while remnants of the storm are still here. The other pic, two days ago.



11:28 AM · Sep 27, 2024



## Philadelphia Flower Show Heralds Coming of Spring

Whether Punxsutawney Phil -- that cute, predictably unpredictable groundhog -- gets it wrong (or right!), lovers of flowers and gardens can always take comfort, even amid the gloom of winter, that spring is just around the corner, thanks to the Philadelphia Flower Show. Held annually since 1829 around early March, the event is produced by the Pennsylvania Horticultural Society. The largest indoor flower show in the world, the flower show has been held at the Pennsylvania Convention Center nearly every year since 1996.

### Ending the Winter Blues

For the exhibitor, the show is a prestigious venue where one can enter as a novice or compete at a more serious level.

The late Joyce Jarvis – who, with her husband, Ken, had moved to South Carolina upon retirement – shared with me years ago of how she and her daughter once traveled to the Flower Show from their residence in New Jersey and were thrilled to take second place among stiff competition with their African violets.

Don Caton of Downingtown, Pennsylvania, about an hour's drive west of Philadelphia, exhibited a first prize winner at the show in 2019. "Because of this win in 2019, I am henceforth forbidden to enter the novice collection. So this year I am planning, or at least hoping, to enter five different daffodils in different sizes of pots," Caton says.

The logistics of competing at the Flower Show involve unloading flowers at a certain entrance, parking vehicles in designated parking areas and adhering to strict time deadlines. Exhibitors are not allowed on the show floor after 8:00 A.M. Furthermore, the timing of blooms can prove challenging, too. Caton explains, "I am still trying to learn the art of forcing bulbs to be in full flower the day the PFS opens." These are mere distractions that leave serious exhibitors undeterred, however.

Horticulturalist Kate Carney says, "I love the show and its many dimensions," but she adds, "The horticulture competition is my favorite." Carney and husband Mitch are known for their



Kate Carney

***Narcissus 'Tête Bouclé', a sport of 'Tête-à-Tête', the cute miniature daffodil that is marketed by the millions annually, was introduced by Jan de Winter of the Netherlands. This stunning container of the delightful little double was photographed at the 2019 show.***



South Mountain Flower Farm in Boonsboro, Maryland, where they occasionally offer a catalogue of daffodil cultivars, including those increasingly popular intermediates that fall between the size ranges of standards and miniatures.

The Flower Show has a long, distinguished history that has included the support of passionate and well-to-do benefactors. "Mrs. du Pont [Copeland] still has a presence in the new display area that she had built for the horticulture section of the show," Carney says, referencing the late Pamela Cunningham Copeland (1906-2001), the noted horticulturalist and philanthropist often referred to as Mrs. Lammot du Pont Copeland due to her husband's family's prominence. "Her famous yellow clivia, now being cared for at Longwood Gardens, is always a part of the show," Carney states.

For flower lovers who are not necessarily interested in exhibiting in the horticulture division, there are other aspects of the show that are of great interest. Carney says, "There is a competition for commercial growers, and the orchid display from Waldor

Orchids was stunning last year." She goes on to say, "There are also artistic competitions with flower arranging, and one of my favorites is the pressed flower arrangements. In 2019, they tried to embrace the hippie generation of



Kate Carney

**Daffodil judges Kathy Welsh and Mitch Carney discuss their selections at the 2019 Philadelphia Flower Show.**



Kate Carney

**Whether or not you were a 1960s flower child, as pictured in this 2019 Hippie-themed work, you are sure to enjoy the amazing pressed flower creations!**



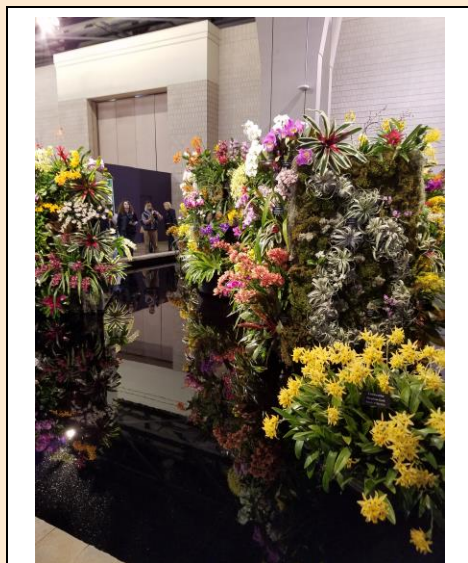
Kate Carney

**Jimi Hendrix in Seeds!**

the '60s. So how about Jimi Hendrix in seeds?" Additionally, vendors fill a large area where Carney says attendees can purchase "dozens of roses, pussy willow, tools, jewelry, plus lots of plants."

Whether you need motivation to leave the warmth and comfort of home to travel across town, or the entire country, for that matter, to attend the Flower Show, Carney shares the reminder that "from the winter of Philly you walk into spring with all the forced spring-flowering trees and plants." Most encouraging of all, "it's a great way to end the winter blues," she concludes.

The 2025 Philadelphia Flower Show will be held 1 – 9 March.



Kate Carney

**A display from Linwood, New Jersey- based Waldor Orchids.**

A version of this article was originally published on 22 February 2020 by PhillyDally.com, a former Greg Freeman Media website.



Kate Carney

### *Clivia miniata* 'Sir John Thouron'

**This famous clivia, now residing at Longwood Gardens outside Philadelphia, was named for Sir John Thouron K.B.E., who had received the plant as a gift from Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II on a visit to Scotland in the 1950s. A specimen entered by Mrs. Lamot du Pont Copeland (1906-2001) in 1999 received the Pennsylvania Horticultural Society award for the highest-scoring blue ribbon entry.**

"Philadelphia Flower Show: Show Info," *Pennsylvania Horticultural Society* (PHS), <https://theflowershow.com/plan-your-visit/show-info/>. Accessed February 21, 2020.

Electronic mail communication with Kate Carney, Horticulturalist, Lerner Corporation, Tysons, Virginia on February 18, 2020

Daffnet.org reply from Don Caton, Downingtown, Pennsylvania to posted query on February 16, 2020





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## The Immeasurable Impact of Atlanta Nurseries, 1869-1885

Post-Reconstruction in Atlanta was both a time of continued renewal and economic growth. Union troops led by General William Tecumseh Sherman had devastated Atlanta near the end of the American Civil War (1861-1865), but in the decades immediately preceding the Cotton States and International Exposition of 1895 the city “underwent a renaissance, experiencing a transformation from railroad town and regional hub to a cosmopolitan place of diversified commerce and burgeoning culture where garden design and pleasure gardening would become more commonplace and perhaps even *en vogue*” (Freeman 2020, 5).

Enjoying greater prosperity, many property owners had more expendable income, some of which they spent on ornamental and fruit trees, shrubs, bedding plants and infrastructure for both formally- and informally-designed gardens. Various nurseries served the growing demand for plants and supplies, and among the most influential of these was the business concern owned by Moses A. Cole and his various partners and successors herewith referred to interchangeably as Atlanta Nurseries. Throughout the late 1800s, Atlanta Nurseries, in one ownership manifestation or another, played no small part in impacting agriculture, transforming landscapes and promoting gardening in Atlanta, its environs and certainly well beyond, and business proved lucrative as the city continued to grow

### In Perspective

As Atlanta forged ahead during the years of discussion, namely 1869-1885 (even though Atlanta Nurseries continued to operate beyond that point), the nation and, indeed, the world at large faced its own struggles and challenges. Atlanta, in its own way, was a mere vignette of this transitional period as it stood juxtaposed midstream between the comfortable familiarity, regional ethos and sense of place of its past and the modernity ushering in by the ensuing twentieth century. To comprehend this era, it is perhaps beneficial to note some of the contrasting happenings of the day. For instance, Egypt’s Suez Canal opened in 1869. France’s *Belle Époque* period began in the early 1870s. Custer and his troops were massacred by Native Americans in the Battle of the Little Bighorn in 1876 in the American West. British India’s Great Famine of 1876-1878 claimed millions of lives during the reign of Queen Victoria. Edison patented a much improved incandescent light bulb in 1879. And New York’s Brooklyn Bridge opened in 1883.

As for Atlanta, good ole Henry Grady would not orate about his concept of a “New South” until 1886, just barely outside the parameters of the years in which Atlanta Nurseries and the blossoming city are being explored. Even *Gone with the Wind* author Margaret Mitchell would not be born until 1900. Still, one might say the idea of a strictly agrarian South had vanished with the breeze, and a more industrialized region and urbane Atlanta was in the making. Like the Phoenix, the city would rise from its ashes toward the close of the nineteenth century, at which time the desire of residents to beautify their properties and perhaps flaunt their ability to splurge on gardens and plants to “keep up with the Joneses” would ensure that nurserymen were provided with an eager clientele, which included the occupants of Peachtree Street’s opulent mansions and residents of



long-established neighborhoods, as well as those putting down roots in one of the new residential plans that, at the time, was regarded as suburban.

## A History of Distinguished Owners

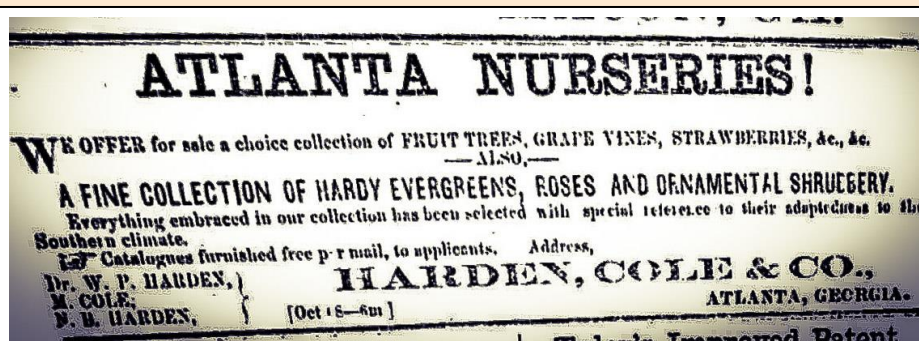
“One of the most interesting places in the vicinity of Atlanta,” an *Atlanta Constitution* article states, “are the extensive nurseries belonging to M. Cole & Co., a firm composed of Moses Cole, an educated and experienced horticulturalist, and Campbell Wallace, the well-known banker and capitalist.” The

article states that the nursery was originally started in 1869 “under the care of Messrs. William P. Harden and Moses Cole,” before discussing the nursery’s location at the time as follows:

*A pleasant drive over a good road, taking Forsyth Street and its continuation, brings one to the nurseries, which are located upon the McDonough Road, south from the city limits, about three fourths of a mile. From the office upon the grounds one can see the tall buildings and spires of the city in the distance, and the surrounding scenery is beautiful and engaging.*

Dr. William Preston Harden (1821-1885), whose nursery partnership with his father, N. B. Harden, would serve as the foundation from which Atlanta Nurseries would emerge, had served as a surgeon during the Civil War and was a noted physician associated with local hospitals. As a prominent Atlantan, his papers, including military orders and business correspondence from the years 1862-1885, wound up in the collection of the Kenan Research Center at the Atlanta History Center. A Digital Library of Georgia webpage devoted to Dr. Harden’s papers states, “Additional biographical information about Dr. William Preston Harden has not been determined,” which is perplexing since various authors have shared assorted bits of information about him in multiple books, further expounding on his contributions. One of Harden’s sons became a physician, and his extended family produced at least one more medical doctor and more than one politician. The Harden and Cole partnership dissolved in 1873.

Moses A. Cole (1836-1885), a native of Dorchester, New Brunswick, Canada, capably navigated Atlanta’s transitional years as he grew his nursery and developed a following, which extended far beyond the American South. He was eloquently eulogized upon his passing at 49 by *The Gardener’s Monthly and Horticulturalist*, who published the following:



**This late 1860s advertisement in *Southern Cultivator* demonstrates that Harden, Cole & Company offered both ornamentals and plants for producing edibles immediately following the American Civil War. Atlanta was moving on, and the popularity of pleasure gardening was on the rise.**

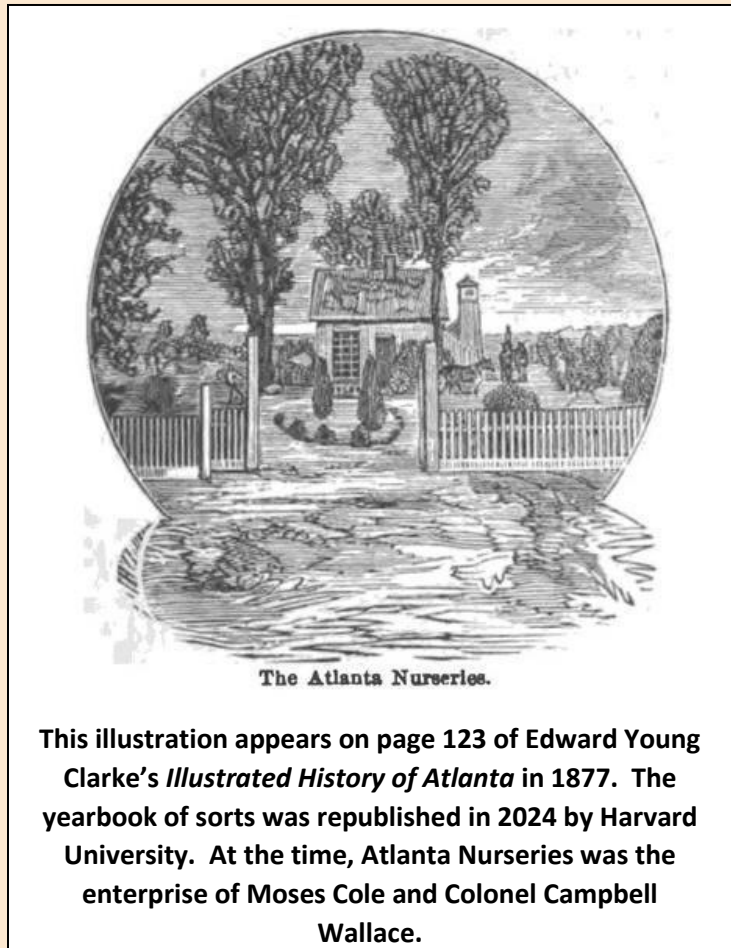
*The history of American gardening will some day be one of the interesting branches of general study, and it is well to place on record notes of the departure of those who have been instrumental in advancing it in the different sections of our country, as well as some of their successful work. As we go to press, we learn of the decease of Mr. Moses Cole, long known in connection with Georgia nurserymen. The nursery interest of Georgia has grown to be one of great importance, and possibly no one has had so great a share in bringing about this great work as Mr. Cole. By reason of advancing years, he resigned his very successful nurseries at Atlanta to younger hands about a year ago, after over 20 years of labor in connection with the trade (p. 29).*

Interestingly Moses Cole, Dr. Harden, Colonel Campbell Wallace (1806-1895) and William D. Beatie (1864-1953) had more in common than business at various junctures of the nursery's history. All were members of Central Presbyterian Church. Wallace and Cole made local news in 1875 when they protested Dr. J. T. Leftwitch's acceptance of a pastorate with a congregation in Lexington, Virginia. Also supporting a unanimous resolution to urge Dr. J.T. Leftwitch to stay on in Atlanta as Central's pastor was livestock trader and local politician D. A. Beattie, father of future Atlanta Nurseries owner William D. Beatie. The "proposed meeting of the church and congregation to take action concerning the call of Dr. Leftwitch to Lexington, VA, was organized with Col Campbell Wallace as chairman and Moses Cole, Esq. as secretary" (1875, 3).

Eight months prior to Cole's death, a change of business name was reported for Atlanta Nurseries in April

1885: M. Cole & Co. became Cole & Cook, named after Clarke Palmer Cole (1863-1907), Cole's son borne from his first wife, and Afton B. Cook (1862-1887), a nephew of Cole's second wife.

They were followed by William D. Beatie. Beatie earned a Bachelor of Arts degree in 1882 from Emory College and then "embarked in the nursery business in the vicinity of Atlanta and was thus engaged for many years building up a large trade" (Howell, 215) before entering the real estate field in 1900. He was described in his obituary as a "pioneer builder who was instrumental in developing the Capitol View section of Atlanta," having "served for 50 years as president of the Suburban Realty Company" (1953, 13). He had resided at 707 Peachtree Street for many years.





Following Beatie, ownership transferred to R. C. Johnson, a charter member of The Capital City Club (Garrett & Martin, 2011), whose tenure as nursery owner is not relevant to the years being explored herewith.

Upon their passing, the elder Cole, Wallace and Beatie were interred at Atlanta's Oakland Cemetery while Dr. Harden was buried in Watkinsville, Georgia. William D. Beatie would later serve as a pallbearer for the burial of Maria Winship Cole, Moses Cole's widow, who upon her passing in 1905, had been described as living at 8 Druid Circle, Inman Park, Atlanta's first suburb and a moneyed and racially segregated (as was the norm) plan noted for its breathtaking Victorian houses, including, of course, the Robert Winship (1834-1899) mansion (since razed) on Edgewood Avenue. Winship, a brother to Maria Cole, would become the grandfather to Robert Winship Woodruff (1899-1985), who would preside over The Coca-Cola Company for decades, and for whom the Woodruff Arts Center, Woodruff Park and the Robert W. Woodruff Library are named.



**The Robert Winship house on Edgewood Avenue in Inman Park was representative of the lovely homes that filled the then-suburban locale. Winship was the grandfather of prominent Atlanta businessman Robert Winship Woodruff of Coca Cola fame and brother to Maria Winship Cole, who was married to Atlanta Nurseries' Moses Cole and also resided in Inman Park at 8 Druid Circle. Business concerns such as Atlanta Nurseries thrived because of developments such as Inman Park.**

## **The Role of African Americans**

During the late 1860s, various letters to the editors of the Athens, Georgia-based *Southern Cultivator* occasionally divulged the authors' sense of racial superiority and a resentment of African Americans' newfound freedom, in spite of the publication recommending the use of emancipated slaves as sharecroppers. Though Atlanta's enterprising nurserymen would not have operated on a sharecropper basis, it would be interesting to know how *they* viewed African American labor and what kind of relationship they maintained with those under their employee. It has been difficult to ascertain if one of the *Cultivator's* regular advertisers, Atlanta Nurseries, employed African Americans at any given time or held to racial prejudices.

While one might ask whether nursery workers were considered laborers or gardeners, one might assume that, given the times, the most laborious tasks were doled out to African American labor, regardless of job title. A search through Stokes and Company's *Atlanta City Directory* of 1878,

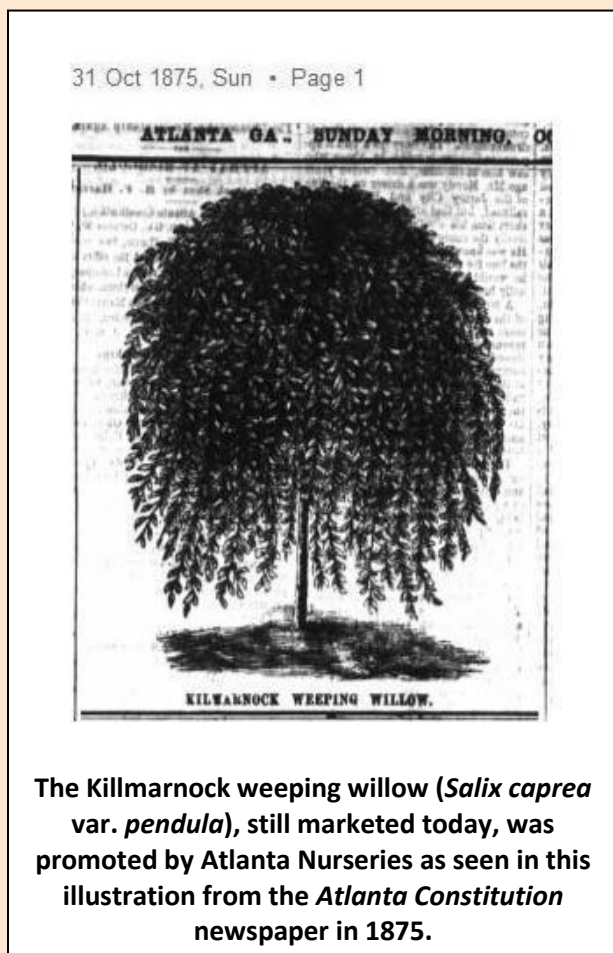
for example, lists a number of white and black men identifying themselves as gardeners, and some of them resided in close proximity to Atlanta Nurseries.

Through her own research about Atlanta's nurserymen during the late 1800s, gardening historian and daffodil authority Sara Van Beck has determined that Lambert of Fulton Nursery "hired both blacks and whites, and some worked for him for a number of years" (Van Beck). She further explains, "'Gardener' was a specific occupation, and different than 'laborer,' and blacks could be gardeners." Job titles of 1878 are a moot point, though, as neither gardeners nor laborers are listed under the employee of Moses Cole & Company or Cole as an individual. Most listings in the *City Directory* included names of employers especially when they were particularly prominent ones, as was the case with black gardeners employed by businessman William Jennings, J.B. Campbell (the father of future businessman and philanthropist John Bulow Campbell Jr., a young boy at the time) and then-Governor A.H. Colquitt.

### Influenced by Fruitland, Rivaling Fruitland

Inevitably, the Augusta, Georgia-based Fruitland Nursery (site of today's Augusta National Golf Club), founded in 1858 by Belgian immigrants Louis Berckmans and his son, Prosper, had considerable influence on nurserymen throughout the region, and was a force with which to be reckoned. Berckmans established "the first large-scale horticultural nursery in the southeastern United States" (Reynolds). Prosper Berckmans' contributions as a breeder alone were significant, as he garnered the title "Father of Peach Culture" across the American South. "In addition, the vast stock of azaleas and camellias at the Berckmans' nurseries greatly contributed to the early and continued popularity of those flowers throughout the South" (Reynolds), prompting Atlanta Nurseries to follow their lead and market both Fruitland peach varieties, such as Prosper Berckmans' Elberta and Chinese Cling selections, and an array of azaleas, camellias and other Berckman introductions.

In spite of Fruitland's mammoth size and vast influence, one must not dismiss the sheer size and stand-alone impact of such operations as Atlanta Nurseries. Sara Van Beck states, "I think we overrate Fruitland a bit, but not by much. They weren't the only large operation going. I think he was just one of the best politically connected (in the hort[iculture] world), left the biggest footprint somehow, and was a smart guy, too." As for Atlanta Nurseries, the company had some eighty acres devoted to 600,000 fruit trees, including forty-five apple varieties and fifty-five varieties of peach.





While Atlanta Nurseries was a go-to source for fruit trees, the company offered a generous stock of ornamental trees, shrubs and bedding plants. A lengthy *Atlanta Constitution* piece noted in October 1875 that Cole was pushing the Kilmarnock weeping willow. “It is attaining wide popularity and being extensively planted,” the writer notes. The willow had been discovered by botanist and nurseryman James Smith (1763-1848), a Scotsman who founded the Monkwood Botanic Garden and is hailed as the “father of Scottish botany.” Still grown and marketed widely in the twenty-first century, the Kilmarnock weeping willow, most often referred to as weeping pussy willow or its botanical name *Salix caprea* var. *pendula*, is offered by everyone from nursery powerhouse Monrovia to long-established plant catalogues.

A November 1875 newspaper article recounts major and important sales for Atlanta Nurseries, demonstrating the firm’s willingness and wherewithal to ship across the country and abroad, if called upon to. Given its location along the West Point rail line (present-day beltline), Atlanta Nurseries was poised to embrace a national and international clientele. Reporting of a shipment of trees and plants to Chico, California, the article also states, “To day Mr. Cole has an order for Gov. [William] Robinson, at Nassau, New Providence, Bahama Islands, West Indies, for trees and plants. M. Cole & Co.’s Atlanta nurseries are earning a world-wide fame. Fruit trees and shrubbery have gone from these nurseries to nearly every state in the union and some to Europe” (p. 3). Edward Young Clarke published in 1877 that “ten thousand feet of lumber was used last season by these nurseries for shipping cases, and probably an equal amount of packing was done in bales” (124). “The freight paid to one railroad line alone,” Clarke wrote, “exceeded twelve hundred dollars.”

Atlanta Nurseries responded to gardening trends and perhaps set trends by offering its own unique stocks of plants as compared to competitors. Van Beck writes that in 1874 Atlanta’s Rosehill Nursery promoted its extensive options. “Shrubs included gardenias, mock orange, roses, spirea, deutzia, hydrangea; hedge plants included boxwoods, althea (“Rose of Sharon”), euonymous and privet, and the wide array of evergreens included four varieties of arborvitae, three varieties of cypress, and varieties of junipers, firs, cedars, laurels, etc” (2018). In contrast, she writes, “M. Cole and Co., meanwhile in 1875, advertised oleanders for the lawn and a large assortment of fragrant shrubs including banana shrubs and tea olives. By 1882, Cole was touting his collection of cape jessamines (gardenias) as the largest in the South.”

In addition to buyers seeking fruit and ornamental trees and shrubs, Atlanta Nurseries catered to florists and the cut flower market. “How many greenhouses are there about Atlanta?” an 1882 *Atlanta Constitution* article asks. “A large number,” the piece goes on to say, as it explains that Cole “runs a greenhouse in connection with his nursery and pays most attention to evergreens” (6). The March story humorously indicated that florists had “been kept busy by the ladies who, having been kept in doors during the rainy spell, hurried out doors with the first sunshine, as pretty, as happy and almost as noisy as birds.” Pansies were described as favorite bedding plants, averaging \$1.50 a dozen, and camellias commanded the highest prices among cut flower bouquets.

A testament to Atlanta Nurseries’ reach, the company’s name can be found in any number of regional directories of its day, and in 1879 the company proudly advertised that it was employing a telephone, declaring, “Any orders sent us by the telephone will be promptly attended to.”

## **Expo Time and Beyond**

By the time the Cotton States and International Exposition was held in 1895 at the site of present-day Piedmont Park and the Atlanta Botanical Garden’s Fuqua Orchid Center (where,

incidentally, only the Expo's original large stone planters and steps remain), Atlanta Nurseries had already provided abundant horticultural material for a bustling city that would see neighborhoods such as the decidedly affluent Druid Hills, designed by Frederick Law Olmsted (1822-1903), further transform the cityscape. No doubt, purchases from the firm were used to beautify the 1895 exposition as visitors from far and wide descended on what is now Midtown Atlanta.

Though dauntingly impossible, it would be interesting to measure Atlanta Nurseries' continued influence by accounting for its sales that remain alive and thriving today, whether they be ancient specimens of *Magnolia grandiflora* or *Camellia japonica*, or perhaps something equally stately or more exotic. In spite of the company's various owner and partner configurations, the impact of Atlanta Nurseries was no more measurable over a hundred years ago than it is today, a true sign of the firm's dedication to Moses Cole's original vision.



Greg Freeman

Since 2009, the year of this photograph, even the Atlanta Botanical Garden has undergone changes. Still, this image reveals the original stone planters that were in place at the time of the Cotton States and International Exposition of 1895. Today, from various vantage points around the Dorothy Chapman Fuqua Orchid Center (pictured above), one is afforded incredible views of Midtown and Downtown Atlanta, areas that were beginning to come into their own at the time of Atlanta Nurseries. Moses Cole & Company quite literally played a role in shaping the landscape of Atlanta before the dawn of the twentieth century.

**AUTHOR'S NOTE:** As stated in a piece I published in the May 2020 issue of *Greg Freeman's Garden Chronicle*, I had been asked by Sara Van Beck to write an article on Atlanta Nurseries. It was to be potentially published as part of a series on Atlanta nurserymen between the Civil War and the 1890s. *Garden Citings* magazine, published by the Cherokee Garden Library at the Atlanta History Center, was to be the target publication. At the time of Sara's call in the fall of 2019, my father was ill and would soon pass. The following year, we experienced COVID-19 and the shutdown. I lost my mother in 2021, and one thing after another impeded me from writing or completing the article. This year, I finally wrote the essay but it was deemed too lengthy by *Garden Citings*. Editors of *Magnolia*, published by the Southern Garden History Society, wanted me to conform to the Chicago Manual of Style and perform some other edits. I declined and opted to publish the story here, and have since added even more content! Other writers had been tasked with writing about other Atlanta nurserymen, and I am unsure of where any of that stands. If any of those articles do wind up in print or otherwise, I will keep you, my readers, informed. I, for one, think these are some fascinating stories and are worthy of publication.



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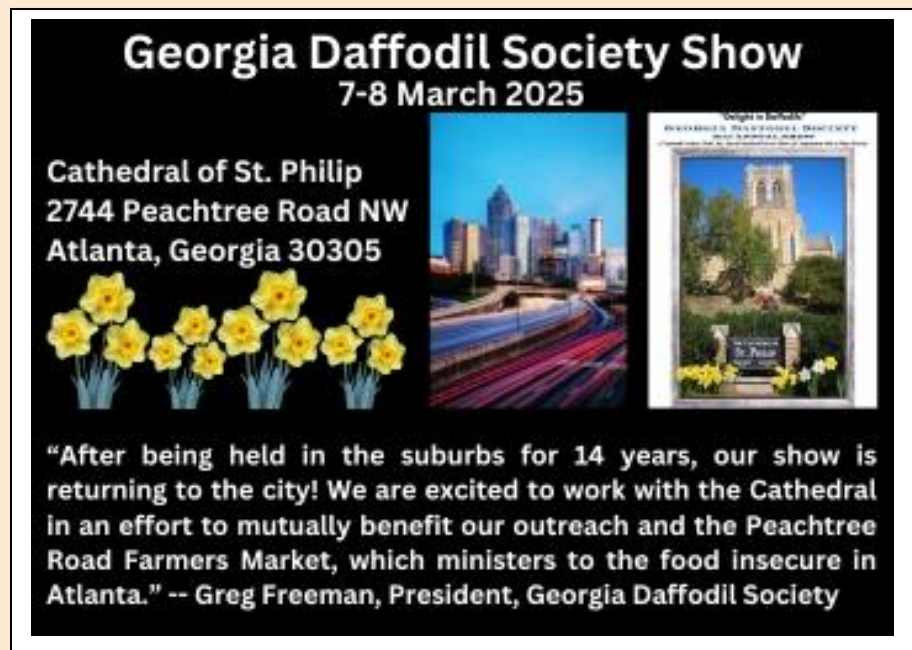
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# The Adventure of Acquiring a Japanese Imari Charger

## A Collector's Story

To tell of how I came to possess a late nineteenth century Imari charger, I must incorporate the details of the backstory. As any good storyteller knows, the art of conveying information always involves a good backstory, whether it be factual or otherwise. After all, a backstory is a means to an end, and everything we cherish, every experience we have, is often a boring stated fact without the retelling of preceding events. I believe that, in many instances, things just fall into place for one reason or the other, and we get to take a special holiday trip or the opportunity to buy something we have always wanted comes along at just the right time, often at just the right price. As for the case of a certain Imari charger that neither cost me money nor required blood, sweat and tears, there is no rhyme or reason why it should have ever been mine and yet it is, and do I have a story to tell.

### Especially for You

Around December 1997, I decided I would purchase as many Christmas gifts as possible from local sources. Shamefully, I had never paid much attention to most of the shops along Main Street in Walhalla, the South Carolina foothills town near where I live. I knew that many people, especially Atlantans and even a few Floridians, pass through the town each year in search of cooler climes in summer or colorful leaves in autumn, as Walhalla serves as a gateway to the Blue Ridge Mountains. Still, I had never fully appreciated the charm of my town! So, off I went to town for something besides gas or a fast-food sandwich, and I came home with gifts in tow that I had purchased from an antiques store called Especially for You.

The proprietor of Especially for You, Millie Poole (1925-2017), became a dear friend, and I wound up selling art and antiques at her establishment as well as one in Atlanta. As a collector, I always looked forward to seeing her recent acquisitions and the latest items offered by her dealers, as her standards were pretty high. Millie was a character, to say the least. We could engage in hours-long conversations, debate politics



Greg Freeman

**Millie Poole, posing in late 1997 or early 1998 with some of her antiques and a pot of *Narcissus papyraceus* at her antiques shop, Especially for You, 124-B East Main Street, Walhalla, South Carolina**



and compete with each other in the art of storytelling until kingdom come. With both of us being strongly opinionated, it was not unusual for us to disagree on some points, but we were good friends, nonetheless. Behind her tough, independent, stubborn, take-no-nonsense-off-of-anyone exterior was a loving person and a bright spot in the town.

Millie relished telling a story about an item. She was very knowledgeable about a lot of things and I generally found her information to be accurate where antiques and collectibles were concerned. I vividly recall, however, one day in which I was stocking my booth with items newly purchased from an auction or thrift store, and I had a beautifully painted wooden bowl with a lid. I asked Millie if she knew what it was, and she replied that she didn't. We both agreed it was too small to be a humidifier. The paints were likely toxic on the inside, therefore making it unsuitable for food storage. So I stuck a random price on it, simply called it a painted wooden bowl with lid and placed it on one of my shelves. Within minutes, a shopper who had eavesdropped on our conversation took it to the checkout counter to pay for it, and Millie stunned me with her reaction. "Lady, you have some damn nerve, buying this piece without letting me first tell you a story about it." We all laughed hysterically, but I, to this day, do not know if she was being funny or meant exactly what she said.



Millie Poole

"Millie Poole, upon learning that I needed a quality photograph for use in an entry for a national talent search, offered the use of her store. She secured a blue sheet to the wall, and I even included a pot of forced *Narcissus papyraceus* bulbs I had grown. She snapped pictures of me. I took some shots of her, using my 35 mm film camera, long before everyone walked around with killer digital cameras and editing apps on their smart phones. At the time, I thought of myself as ugly and overweight. Also at that time, I fought with my hair to minimize the curls. Now over twenty years later, I am certainly heavier and greyer, and I gave up on fighting the curls a long time ago. While I did not use this photograph with my entry in the singing contest, I did end up going to Nashville as a top-ten finalist out of hundreds of entrants. I have since released recording projects, written songs for other artists and have fans of my songs all around the world. In a sense, Millie not only helped me expand my collection, she played a small role in encouraging me as a singer. She also enjoyed reading my latest published articles and essays, as my writing journey was just beginning to take place at the time our friendship began." -- Greg Freeman

It was not long after I began selling my own inventory of antiques and collectibles at Especially for You that my father became acquainted with Millie. Ever the horse trader, he was constantly attending auctions, often buying what I considered utter junk and turning a profit. At one Friday night auction, he bought what he termed a “wartime” chair. Since Dad and I were in the upholstery business at the time, I knew not to question his judgement calls regarding upholstered furniture. He had seen it all throughout his decades-long career.

As I recall, he paid five dollars for the chair and reupholstered it with some fabric remnant he had on hand and promptly went with me on one of my trips to Millie’s shop just days after purchasing the chair. His intention had been to place the chair in her store on consignment. She occasionally permitted him to place attention-getting items near the front of her store and in some instances she even used items he had consigned or select items from my booth in her window displays, which were regularly among the best in town.

On the day we entered Especially for You with the chair in tow, a friend of Millie’s, a woman named Harriet – who was convinced she looked just like Bea Arthur of *Maude* and *Golden Girls* and even maintained that she entertained strangers’ requests for autographs because she had grown tired of telling people of the mistaken identity – happened to be paying Millie a visit. We had met previously, and Harriet immediately chimed in. “Mr. Freeman, I love that chair.” He replied, “It’s a wartime chair,” prompting some strange looks from Millie and Harriet. Dad went on to explain that when he was a boy, all of the steel was being used for the war effort and not much else. Millie concurred, “Yes, I remember those days.” Chairs built during World War II, he pointed out, did not have springs. The chair in question had a frame similar to a ladder back chair but was fully upholstered all over. Its seat, instead of having eight-way tied springs underneath with a loose cushion on top, was sturdy jute webbing with layers of horse hair and cotton beneath the upholstery. If memory serves me correctly, he had used a drab fabric that I did not find particularly attractive, but Harriet liked it nonetheless.

She remarked to Dad that she would make him a deal. Being the wheeling and dealing sort, Dad took the bait and asked what she had in mind. She pointed to an octagonal porcelain charger with oriental figures and flowers on it and a pierced berry bowl with intricate painting and subtle hairline crack and said, “I’ll trade you those for the chair.” I seem to recall that he insisted on getting ten or fifteen dollars in addition to the porcelain pieces and that sealed the deal. Since Dad did not care so much about provenance, I asked Harriet what she knew about the pieces. She replied, “I really don’t know what they are or how much they are worth. A good friend of mine down in the Low Country inherited them from her mother’s estate. She didn’t want them and gave them to me.”

For the next year or two, I did much reading and pondering. As a collector of Japanese porcelain, I was familiar with Nippon (1891-1921), “Made in Japan,” and Occupied Japan (1945-1952) distinctions. The charger had tell-tale signs that it might be Imari, but I was not knowledgeable enough to make the determination at that time. The pierced berry bowl, with its scalloped shape and Kutani-like painted details, could be Nippon, I reasoned. The lack of any maker’s mark or backstamp indicating place of origin, I reasoned, was irrelevant since a mark would have been on the bottom of the under plate, which was obviously missing

## **A Visit to Walker McIntyre Antiques**

A year or more later, I ran across an advertisement in *Southern Living* magazine by Walker McIntyre Antiques in Atlanta’s decidedly upscale Buckhead community. I discovered that Mr.



McIntyre specialized in fine antique furniture and porcelain, including Japanese Imari. I summoned up the courage to phone the dealer and was able to speak directly with Mr. McIntyre, who – upon learning of my plans to come to Atlanta a few days later – generously offered to take a look at Dad’s piece and give his expert opinion. The following Saturday, I ventured to Atlanta and made Walker McIntyre Antiques a priority on the itinerary of my daytrip. Located at 2300 Peachtree Road, a complex of galleries and antiques dealers, McIntyre’s business was about as far removed from an ordinary antiques mall as Beverly Hills is from a mobile home park.

One could not enter some of the businesses at 2300 Peachtree without first buzzing at the door and being sized up to determine if one might be a threat or potential paying customer. At Walker McIntyre’s, I was warmly greeted, although I am sure I looked like a country hick as I entered with a cardboard box

containing my newspaper-wrapped items. Mr. McIntyre kindly looked over the charger and confirmed, “It’s Imari. I’d say late nineteenth century, around 1870s.” “Do you mind estimating its worth?” I asked. He replied, “If I were selling it, I would price it somewhere around \$650-700. If I were buying, I would pay around \$300.” He dismissed a minor chip on the bottom and a splotch beneath the glaze (visible in the white area on the ground behind the figures) as inconsequential to the value or collectability of the charger. As for the other piece, the pierced berry bowl, he simply remarked that it was Japanese. I asked if I could place the box of items underneath a nearby table and browse around while I was there. Mr. McIntyre kindly obliged.

Most antiques dealers live by the adage “If we break, we cry. If you break, you buy,” and I knew to be extra careful. That said, I was followed by a sales lady throughout the entire expansive



Greg Freeman

**This Japanese Imari charger (circa 1870s) features Japanese figures clad in traditional kimonos amid a garden of chrysanthemums and what one could assume is an artistic interpretation of *Wisteria floribunda*. The butterflies in flight are an added bonus. While the octagonal shape is less common, the motifs are fairly typical of late nineteenth century Imari porcelain.**

showroom. As I glanced over countless chargers, nearly all of them round, and most priced in the hundreds of dollars, some significantly more, I could not help but notice the price tags on furniture items. I remember one desk alone was well into the five figures. Before departing, I asked Mr. McIntyre how much I owed him for the appraisal. He declined to accept any money, probably sensing that I was clearly out of my depth. I thanked him again and departed for home, excited to share the news with my father about the value of his Imari charger that he had acquired in the unlikeliest of trades. Upon telling my father, he asked, “Where’s my \$300? You should have sold it to him!”

For over twenty years, the pierced berry bowl has been displayed in a case with other items in my Nippon collection. The Imari charger has been wrapped in bubble wrap for two decades out of view. Upon the passing of my father in November 2019, items like the Imari charger became the property of my mother. When Mom passed in May 2021, the will clearly dictated that contents of the house would become mine, hence my possession of the Imari charger today.

Recently, I reflected on that unusual deal that brought such a unique piece of porcelain into our lives. As I further reminisced of the overall story and did a few internet searches, I discovered that Walker McIntyre, a Mississippi native, had passed away from esophageal cancer on 31 March 2006, just a few years after his appraisal of the Imari charger. He was only 57. His obituary in the *Atlanta Journal-Constitution* states, “Mr. McIntyre was the leading U.S. authority on fine English porcelain and the foremost dealer in fine antique furniture and porcelains throughout North America” (2006).



### **So What’s the Big Deal? And What Does Any of this Have to Do with Gardening?**

Two types of Japanese Imari – both desirable in their own right – exist, and it had been important for me to ascertain whether the charger acquired by father was truly Imari and into which category it might fall. The visit with Walker McIntyre in Atlanta had cleared this up. “Compared with the pottery of other Japanese kilns, Ko Imari ware – literally “Old Imari” or Imari ware produced during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries – is uniquely colorful, vigorous and varied,” Takeshi Nagatake writes in an authoritative resource, adding, “It was treasured by the Japanese of the Edo period (1615-1868), and was also popular overseas” (2003, 49). The author explains that influences outside Japan were instrumental in the development of Imari porcelain around Arita in the province of Hizen in northern Kyūshū. Nagatake states, “The Imari tradition was quickly established, with the characteristic cobalt blue underglaze decorated porcelain known as *sometsuke*, and the polychrome enamel overglaze decorated porcelain known as *aka-e*,

produced for both the domestic and export markets” (2003, 49). The Chinese and Europeans would produce their own Imari-type porcelains, even employing the term “Imari.”

As for Imari in Japan, the porcelain experienced a late nineteenth century resurgence, and collectors today perceive the mid-Edo period Imari as distinctly different from that of the Meiji era (1868-1912) when my Imari charger was produced. And, to be clear, the name Imari is derived from the port from which the porcelain was shipped, not the region from which it originated, or a manufacturer’s name.

As for the gardening connection, I fully expected to find a correlation between the flowers illustrated on Imari porcelain and certain meanings or symbolism. However, I have found no such indication as of yet in Japanese culture. That said, the Japanese have long been noted for their lovely gardens. Their plants – many of them proving to be invasive – have traveled to other continents from Japanese shores, thanks, in large part, to botanists and horticulturalists who claimed discovery during the age of empires. The hand-painted scene on my



Greg Freeman

**“This Japanese pierced berry bowl was the other porcelain item discussed in this article. Like the Imari charger, it, too, displays flowers, including ubiquitous cherry trees in blossom. It is likely from the Nippon era (1891-1921), because the painting is very similar to a Nippon sauce server in my collection. That said, it is also very similar to a Kutani cup that I have as well, demonstrating the masterful skills of Japanese porcelain artists and how their painting traditions could have transcended eras and even generations.” – Greg Freeman**

Imari charger includes two figures amid chrysanthemums and perhaps an artistic interpretation of *Wisteria floribunda*, reminding the beholder that admiration for beautiful art, thoughtfully-planted gardens and fragrant, colorful flowers transcends time. Two otherwise seemingly insignificant items in my collection are able to bring back so many vivid and fond memories, as well as bring me to laughter, and that is reason enough to keep sharing the story.

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## Photograph: *Japanese Garden at the Atlanta Botanical Garden*



Greg Freeman (b. 1974), *Japanese Garden at the Atlanta Botanical Garden*, 2022, digital photograph

Japanese gardens, though adhering to Japanese philosophical ideas and aesthetics, often appear to be natural with no artificial ornamentation. Year-round interest is typically provided as Japanese gardens contain both evergreen and deciduous trees and shrubs, many of them blooming at various seasons and offering an array of colors and fragrances. The above photograph taken at the Atlanta Botanical Garden in February 2022, depicts a Japanese garden with a flowering specimen of *Edgeworthia chrysantha* ‘Winter Gold’ in the foreground. Though native to China, *Edgeworthia chrysantha* is naturalized in Japan. The shrub was named in honor of Michael Pakenham Edgeworth (1812-1881), an amateur botanist employed by the East India Company. The selection, ‘Winter Gold’, is said by some to differ from the species only subtly. A delicious fragrance fills the air where *E. chrysantha* is planted and, like the Japanese garden in which it so aptly belongs, it provides multi-seasonal interest, and is much admired by visitors to the garden.



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In addition to being an avid gardener and daffodil hybridist, judge and exhibitor, Greg Freeman is an author, editor, recording artist, songwriter, amateur visual artist and life-long horse lover. Freeman's nonfiction writing on a number of subjects has appeared in magazines, encyclopedias and books of academic and scholarly interest, as well as his various websites, including [Southern Edition](#), his digital publication devoted to the American South. Published academic/encyclopedic contributions by Freeman include a chapter in Nadine Farghaly's edited volume, *Gender and the Modern Sherlock Holmes: Essays on Film and Television Adaptations Since 2009* (2015), as well as multiple entries in: *Race in American Film: Voices and Visions That Shaped a Nation* (2017), edited by Dr. Daniel Bernardi and Michael Green; *The British Empire: A Historical Encyclopedia* (2018), edited by Dr. Mark Doyle; and *Music around the World: A Global Encyclopedia* (2020), edited by Drs. Andrew R. Martin and Matthew Mihalka. In 2015, Freeman released a country music radio single, "Sunlight and Shadows," garnering international airplay, and his gospel music has received global exposure through television broadcasts, radio airplay and commercial recordings, including the Collingsworth Family's GMA Dove Award-nominated album, *Just Sing!* (2021), on which his song, "I Owe You Everything," appears. His gospel EP, *Blessing and Blessing* (2018), features guest vocalists Babbie Mason, a Grammy-nominated artist, and Gospel Music Hall of Famer Calvin Newton. An owner of Belgian draft horses since 1987, Freeman's horse interests expanded into the world of Thoroughbred racing and breeding with the purchase of shares in Authentic in 2020. Authentic soon after won the Haskell Stakes, the Kentucky Derby and Breeders' Cup Classic before retiring to stud at Spendthrift Farm, Lexington, Kentucky, USA. Additionally, in 2023, Freeman acquired the proven Belgian draft sire and show champion, Remlap DVP, a son of Remlap Constance Edie Johnne, a broodmare extraordinaire and undefeated show winner. Remlap DVP was bred by noted breeder Beth Palmer, Tottenham, Ontario, Canada, and named to honor her late father, the illustrious horseman, Douglas Victor Palmer.

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M u s i c

