



Land & Garden Preserve
2018 & 2019 Annual Report



THE LAND AND GARDEN PRESERVE SHARES HISTORIC LANDS AND GARDENS FOR THE ENJOYMENT OF THOSE WHO WANT TO CONNECT WITH NATURE AND TO BE INSPIRED AND RESTORED IN ITS BEAUTY AND PRESENCE. THE PRESERVE NURTURES THE ESSENTIAL INTERCONNECTIONS BETWEEN HUMANITY AND THE NATURAL WORLD THROUGH CAREFUL AND RESPECTFUL STEWARDSHIP OF SOME OF THE MOST BEAUTIFUL PUBLIC LANDS AND GARDENS IN NEW ENGLAND.

June 5, 2020

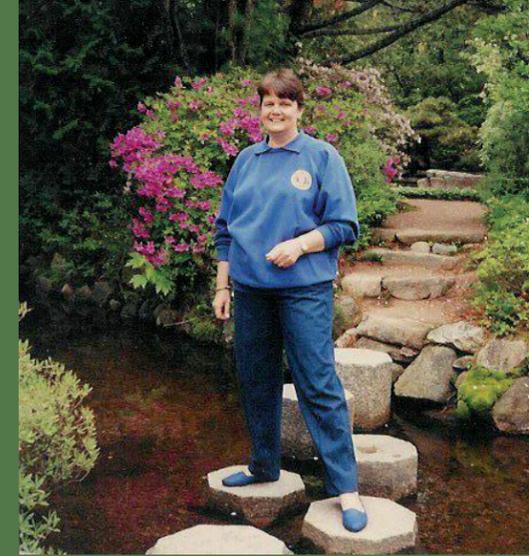
Dear Preserve Friends,

On behalf of the staff, volunteers, board and committee members of the Preserve, I hope you enjoy our combined 2018 & 2019 Annual Report as a token of our thanks and gratitude for your support in helping us more fully achieve our mission to share the beauty of historic lands and gardens on Mount Desert Island. This Annual Report provides an intimate look and insight into who we are and what is important to us. In addition to the high value we place on our precious lands and gardens, we also treasure our people who work so hard, typically behind the scenes, to protect and share these special places, including you: our visitors, volunteers, and supporters.

Within these pages, you will read direct quotes from some of our staff and volunteers sharing what inspires them in their work at the Preserve. The year 2018 marked a major transition for the Preserve as we gratefully accepted David Rockefeller Sr.'s generous bequests and our lands and three gardens became one Preserve – fulfilling the patient, generous long-term vision and planning of our founders. This annual report reflects that unity. As you peruse these pages and soak in the beauty of our gardens, lands, and people featured herein, we hope this report brings you welcome glimpses of the joy, serenity and respite our lands and gardens provide until you are able to make your next visit.

The year 2018 also marked the inauguration of the Preserve's membership program. We are grateful for your positive response to this program thus far. Your membership provides essential operational support enabling us to deliver our programs and fulfill our mission. As we look to the future, we continue to promote ecological health and long-term sustainability of our resources as we also strive to deliver a positive and inspiring visitor experience. This work will require thoughtful planning and significant capital investment to both protect long-familiar features of our lands and gardens loved by many and make gradual refinements aimed at improving the visitor experience. The staff and board have embarked on a master planning process to support these efforts, and from time to time we will reach out to you for support and input.

This note is written in early June as the Azalea Garden is about to burst forth with a variety of perennial colors and fragrances, faithfully renewing its annual natural display. When I saw Nikolai Fox's photo in this report, featuring the stepping stones in Asticou stream flanked by brightly hued azaleas and a glimpse toward the iconic sand garden, I was happily reminded of a photograph of my mother taken almost 30 years ago from a similar perspective standing mid-stream on those stepping stones. Mom celebrated a June birthday and in the picture wore a joyous smile being in a garden she loved, a garden she knew from its infancy and her own childhood when her neighbor and cousin Charles Savage created it in the late 1950s. Mom was a youthful optimist at her core and fond of invoking Alexander Pope's saying "hope springs eternal in the human breast..." even when (or perhaps because) life brought challenges.



In the current moment, we are facing an unprecedented global health crisis and the existential challenges it brings. I am grateful now more than ever for the Preserve's precious lands and gardens with the peace, joy, serenity, and reassurance they provide. Springtime at the Azalea Garden and hearing my mother's "June optimism" voice in my head reminds me there will be renewal of life and beauty in the future as we confront the struggles of today.

What is it about the Preserve that inspires you or brings you comfort and joy, even during times of challenge? We look forward to hearing from you and welcome you to share your stories with us. As conditions allow, we look forward to seeing you and welcoming you back in person to the lands, trails, and gardens of the Preserve. In the meantime, we send you wishes for good health and thank you for your care and support of the Preserve.

Gratefully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Sam S. McGee". The signature is fluid and cursive, written over a light blue horizontal line.

Sam S. McGee
Board Chair



Dear Preserve Friends,

In August of 1997, my then fiancée and friends planned a trip to Mount Desert Island to visit Acadia and the Abby Aldrich Rockefeller Garden. Not knowing what to expect, I did some preliminary research about the garden to find out that it was still privately owned by the Rockefeller Family and that Beatrix Farrand had led its design.

On that first visit, I have this vivid memory of walking down the Spirit Path and through the wooden gate to the flower borders. I was absolutely blown away. The garden seemed otherworldly. The rich colors overflowing the bed edges, the perfectly built stone walls, and carefully raked pathways. It was perfect in so many ways.

This discovery was the highlight of our trip and I could not thank our hosts enough for not only insisting that we visit but also for the time it took to obtain a ticket. After we visited the Abby Garden, we ventured over to Thuya. I knew we were in a special place when we first saw the intricately carved gates. I admired the workmanship and care it must have taken to create them. By the time we finished touring the beauty at Thuya, we were nearly out of daylight, so we took a slow drive-by of Asticou. Looking out over the pond and billowy azaleas, I desperately wanted to stop but knowing my place as a guest, decided to keep my mouth shut.

Twenty-two years after these first encounters, it is a continuous honor to be a part of these lands and gardens we call the Preserve, especially during this exciting time of change. I am so thankful to those who conceived, created, and cared for the gardens, as well as our friends who so many years ago gave me an initial glimpse of these beautiful landscapes that now make up the Preserve.

Thank you for being a part of this journey as we continue to sustain what is special about these places. In the coming years, we will continue to graciously steward these landscapes so that these needed moments of awe and wonder are there for us to turn back to and for newcomers to discover.

With gratitude,

Rodney Eason

CEO

Land & Garden Preserve

CEO Letter



John B. Gibb © 2019

ABBY ALDRICH ROCKEFELLER GARDEN

This special garden at the Preserve holds a prominent place in American garden history, both as the work of a distinguished designer and as the representation of a time of significant growth and development in American landscape design. The combined artistry, imagination, and passion of the garden's designer, Beatrix Farrand, and her clients, Abby and John D. Rockefeller Jr., gave life to one of the most impressive gardens in the United States. East meets West in the garden through the insertion of an English flower garden within an Asian inspired landscape framework.

Abby Aldrich Rockefeller Garden



My experience as an Abby Garden volunteer is an exceptional opportunity to help, to learn, to share, and to educate. For me, the Abby represents a very special combination of the love of gardening and nature with the unique cultural, family, philanthropic, and natural histories of the Preserve.

– Deb Jarosz,
Abby Garden
Volunteer 2019

details

Garden design began in 1926, with construction starting in 1928.

The garden consists of 3 acres within the walls.

The garden beds are planted with approximately 70% annuals and 30% perennials. All of the annuals are grown in the Preserve's McAlpin Farm greenhouses.

Approximately 6,000 annuals and new perennials are planted each year, with a "hot color side" (east) and a "cool color side" (west).

The naturally growing mosses are irrigated and kept clear of debris (leaves, branches, needles) to maintain their vibrant, carpet-like effect.

Over 5,000 people visited the garden each year in 2018 and 2019.

highlights

The main goal during 2018-2019 was to maintain the horticultural quality of the garden through the transition from the Rockefeller family to the Preserve.

2019

The **Eyrie Terrace**, a remainder of Abby and John D. Rockefeller Jr.'s summer home with southerly views over the Atlantic, was opened for public visitation. The home was 160' long, had 20 fireplaces, 20 bathrooms, and 2 elevators. The original home was purchased by John and Abby in 1910 for \$26,000.

In early July, a replica of the Buddhist Votive Stele was unveiled and placed at the north end of the **Spirit Path**. From the Chinese Qi dynasty (550-77), the original stele was donated to the Museum of Fine Arts in Boston by David Rockefeller Sr., and a replica carving made to replace the original.

2018

Neva Goodwin became chair of the newly formed Abby Garden Committee which advises staff on horticultural care, landscape management and preservation of all the collections comprising the garden.





Asticou Azalea Garden

ASTICOU AZALEA GARDEN

The Asticou Azalea Garden is an inspiring garden at the Preserve, combining the best natural features of Mount Desert Island with design elements inspired by classic Japanese gardens. Gravel paths wind throughout like a stroll garden; the view ahead is hidden by a bend and then, a few steps later a lovely vista emerges framed by fragrant shrubs and trees. Japanese-style stone lanterns are nestled within foliage, and granite benches offer a place to rest. Native pitch pines, familiar sights on rocky verges around the island, grow here in bonsai-like shapes pruned by discreet hands. The garden seems in harmony with the rocky soil of this Northeast Harbor setting.



One of my favorite flowers is a really fragrant azalea, the *Rhododendron prinophyllum*. It hits me vanilla.

– Cynthia Robbins,
Gardener since 1990

details

Charles Savage began the Asticou Azalea Garden in 1958 with prized azaleas and rhododendrons moved from Beatrix Farrand's Reef Point garden in Bar Harbor.

The garden consists of 4 acres plus 2.2 acres of the Stream Path.

Notable trees in the garden include a 160-year-old russet apple, a crabapple, and mugo, pitch, and white pines. The most eye-catching of all is a remarkable Japanese cherry, believed to be a hybrid of two species which blooms for up to five days in the spring.

There are more than 70 varieties of azaleas in the garden.

Plants are selected based on multiple criteria including color, form, aesthetic features, evergreen foliage, bloom time, ability to be sheared, texture, fall color, and the general ability to express an Asticou aesthetic, which recalls a fusion of Acadia with classic Japanese garden design.

The original sand for the Sand Garden was shipped by boxcar from a West Virginia quarry. It was chosen for its color and grain size.

highlights

2019

Planning began for the renovation of the iconic Sand Garden, a unique opportunity for historic preservation and the inspired engagement of future generations of garden visitors, designers and historians.

The biennial Lantern Stroll was held in July, once again delighting visitors and passersby as the garden glowed in the light of dozens of Japanese lanterns.

New plantings: *Rhododendron* 'Bellringer' and *Rhododendron* 'Bellefontaine,' and *Rhododendron calophytum*, a wonderful addition that blooms early and maintains a beautiful form.

2018

New plantings: five *Rhododendron* 'Yaku Fairy,' the holy grail. Wonderful, hardy, soft yellow, on a dense, low growing evergreen plant. Such perfect features for Asticou, to balance existing plantings.



photo by Nikolai Fox



THUYA GARDEN

The Preserve's beloved garden on a hill, Thuya Garden is a quiet place to wander, reflect and enjoy nature's beauty. The mossy, granite-stepped Asticou Terraces provide an ethereal approach to the door of the Thuya Lodge and the garden beyond. The hallmark carved wooden gates welcome visitors. Named for the white cedar trees, *Thuja occidentalis*, growing around it, this garden in the woods has an intimate and private feel though it is open to all.

Thuya Garden



I sometimes wonder about whether Joseph Curtis and Charles Savage recognized the special nature of the Thuya property, or whether they created it. I was having this conversation with a long-time visitor one afternoon, and their response was that it was surely a combination of both.

– Ellen Gilmore,
Thuya Docent
since 2007

details

The Asticou Terraces Trail was constructed in the early 1900s by Joseph Curtis, inspired by time he spent on the lands of his beloved harborside retreat. Curtis built Thuya Lodge in 1916 as a summer home for his family.

Thuya Garden was built in the late 1950s by Charles Savage, the first Trustee of the property bequeathed by Joseph Curtis to the Town of Mount Desert in 1928. The garden was built on the site of an old apple and cherry orchard. One apple tree remains, gracing the central border gardens. The garden opened to the public in 1962.

24 acres make up the garden, terraces and, the shoreside dock and landing at the base of the hill.

44 species of insect pollinators have been identified in the garden.

The garden is planted with equal amounts of annuals and perennials. Its borders have 16 different varieties of *Hemerocallis* spp., better known as Daylilies.

highlights

2019

Granite edging was installed around two of the border beds to improve aesthetics and function.

The renovation of the landing and floats began to improve this location for visitors to enjoy.

The Garden Club of Mount Desert donated two benches, placed at the garden entrance, in memory of former Club members and longtime Thuya Committee members Patricia Blake and Janneke Neilson.

A beautiful and more functional egress was created with the replacement of the back gate, which was original to the garden.

2018

New native plant additions, including many spring ephemerals, were planted in the brook garden and along the woodland path.

Work continued on upgrading the Asticou Terraces, ensuring that the climbing path to the garden and the lodge remains safe and sustainable.



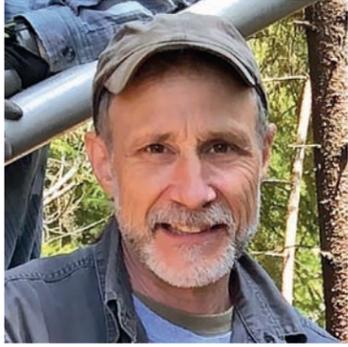
John B. Gibb © 2019



LITTLE LONG POND & NATURAL LANDS

A special place at the Preserve, Little Long Pond is a beloved meeting place and a beautiful, tranquil spot for many on Mount Desert Island and beyond who come to hike the trails and discover the fascinating living things that make their home here. The generations of environmental stewardship has allowed the pond and the surrounding lands to thrive. It truly is a place of conservation of the environment, history, and tradition.

Little Long Pond & Natural Lands



It is great to work with people who are environmentally aware. We are all on the same page. We care about protecting the land.

– Dave Ouelette,
Land Steward
Worked for
Mr. Rockefeller’s
Greenrock
Corporation
beginning in 2015.
Joined the Land &
Garden Preserve
during the 2018
transition.

details

Little Long Pond and surrounding areas are a biodiversity hotspot. On a one-hour walk, a visitor could potentially hear the croak of a frog, watch an osprey dive for fish, spot a pileated woodpecker, and take in breathtaking views of surrounding mountains.

The Preserve’s management of Little Long Pond is focused on maintaining this high-quality ecology while providing opportunities for people to connect to nature. The conservation of these lands is vital to the survival of this important ecosystem.

17 acres of meadows

12 acres of freshwater marsh

1 bog

Nearly 1,000 acres of forests

10 miles of hiking trails and 10 miles of carriage roads

highlights

2019

Completed and planned erosion control projects including hardscaping at the pond’s edge to allow easy and sustainable water access for dogs and people.

Approximately 50,000 visits were recorded, and 25,000 of those were with dogs.

Trail work commenced at Little Harbor Brook Trail, the Richard Trail, Friends Trail, and on lands at Day Mountain and Hunters Cliffs.

Restored areas around Little Long Pond were planted with approximately 1,000 native plantings.

2018

Hired Tate Bushell in the newly created position of Natural Lands Director.



LAND & GARDEN PRESERVE



Northeast Harbor

ASTICOU AZALEA GARDEN

THUYA GARDEN

NATURAL LANDS AT LITTLE LONG POND

Little Long Pond

ABBY GARDEN

FACILITES HEADQUARTERS

Acadia National Park

NATURAL LANDS AT DAY MOUNTAIN & HUNTER'S CLIFFS

MCALPIN FARM GREENHOUSES & ADMINISTRATIVE HEADQUARTERS

Atlantic Ocean

Cooksey Dr.



John B. Gibb © 2019

McAlpin Farm & Greenhouse

BEHIND THE SCENES AT THE PRESERVE

The people who keep our gardens and lands maintained and our buildings and machinery running smoothly are generally not seen by public visitors to the Preserve.

MCALPIN FARM & GREENHOUSES

The Preserve's year-round plant growing operation and administrative offices are housed at McAlpin Farm in Seal Harbor. For many years, cut flowers, vegetables, and annuals for the Rockefeller family as well as annual plants for the Abby and Thuya Gardens were grown at McAlpin Farm. Today, the McAlpin Farm buildings house six administrative staff and a variety of gardeners and groundskeepers throughout the seasons. The Farm area is not open to the public.

details

- 6,000 square feet of greenhouse growing space
- 1.5 acres of outdoor plant holding and growing space
- 13,000 annual plants grown each year for the three gardens of the Preserve
- 18,000 pounds of soil purchased annually



I like working at the Preserve because I work with a great group of people

from many backgrounds and have been able to learn so much from them. The Preserve also supports me taking classes to further my knowledge.

– Katie Hughes, Gardener

Worked for Mr. Rockefeller's Greenrock Corporation beginning in 2013. Joined the Land & Garden Preserve during the 2018 transition.



Facilities

FACILITIES

Headquartered at a location known as Greenrock on Peabody Drive in Seal Harbor, the Facilities team is responsible for maintaining the Preserve’s infrastructure. They work behind the scenes grading carriage roads and garden paths, placing coping stones, repairing buildings, and managing our compost production. If something breaks, they see that it gets fixed. Their responsiveness and versatility are as remarkable as their ability to anticipate and prevent problems.

details

47 structures dot the Preserve. The collection includes the simple and the complex, from Thuya’s sheds and lookouts to the Cobblestone Bridge across Jordan Stream near Little Long Pond. The diverse Preserve infrastructure includes both new and old construction, including several century old wooden structures such as Thuya Lodge and the Abby Garden Playhouse.

highlights

2019

Abby Garden water pumps were automated to ensure a steady supply of water without manually adjusting pump timers.

McAlpin Farm barn was renovated from a seasonal apartment to a year-round office space for administrative and garden staff.

2018

Portions of the carriage roads around Little Long Pond were re-surfaced with pink gravel as part of an ongoing project to improve aesthetics and durability.

I like the trend that the Preserve has chosen of maintaining our lands in a natural way so that the soil benefits from the leaves and wood that come down.



– Codie Abbot,
Equipment Operator

Worked for Mr. Rockefeller’s Greenrock Corporation beginning in 2009. Joined the Land & Garden Preserve during the 2018 transition.



Fiscal Care & Stewardship

FISCAL CARE AND STEWARDSHIP

Ensuring the long-term financial stability of the Preserve is accomplished by two main methods: 1) raising money to support essential operations, and 2) managing our resources wisely. Over the past few years, the Preserve has undergone remarkable and historic changes. Generous gifts from David Rockefeller Sr. were transformative for the Preserve. These gifts included over 1,000 acres of natural lands in 2015, the iconic Abby Aldrich Rockefeller Garden in 2018, and endowment funding.

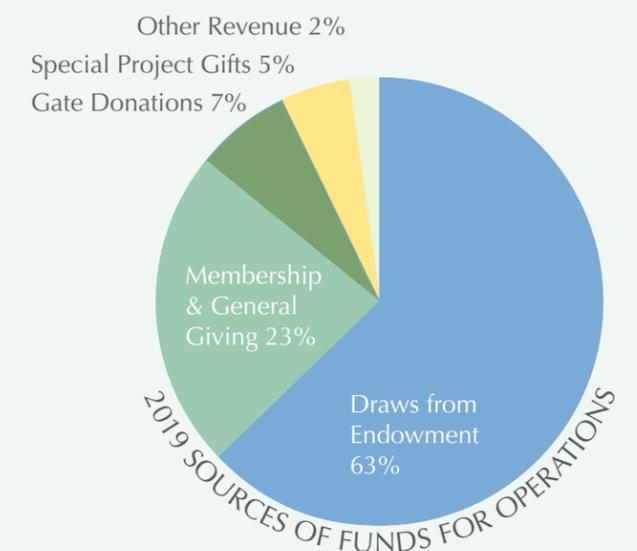
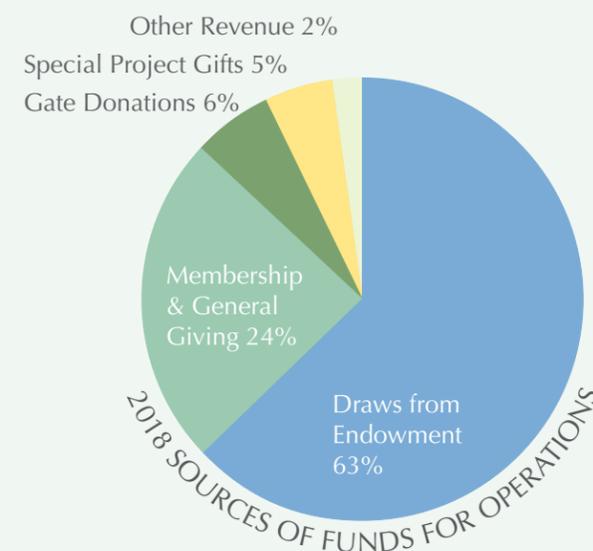
fundraising & financials

The Preserve's membership program, introduced in 2018, has provided funding needed to support essential operations that do not receive funding from our endowment. Those areas include the Asticou Azalea and Thuya Gardens and a portion of Preserve overhead. Donations also fund capital projects at all the Preserve's gardens and natural lands.

Our magnificent delphiniums, the well-placed granite steps on the Asticou Terraces path, the new water access areas for people and dogs at Little Long Pond are examples of improvements made possible by our members.

Membership is an invitation to re-discover the interconnectedness between people and nature, to recharge and restore, and to appreciate land conservation and stewardship. Our members enjoy special access to the Abby Rockefeller Garden, guided hikes through our natural lands, horse-drawn carriage rides, and book discounts.

From 2018 to 2019 Total Unrestricted Revenue increased 13% ~ Number of Active Donors increased 10%





People of the Preserve

PEOPLE OF THE PRESERVE

The Preserve's greatest assets are our people – board of trustees, staff, and volunteers. Our people are committed to a culture of respect and care for the lands and gardens, and for each other. Their mindful attention to forward-thinking conservation, preservation, and horticultural practices is remarkable. Their common passion for protecting and sharing the beauty of the Preserve is perceptible in every garden bed and hiking trail.

Land & Garden Preserve

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Director of Farm & Gardens
Grace Brown
Lead Gardener - Asticou, & Plant Recorder
Tate Bushell
Director of Natural Lands
Whitney Ciancetta
Development Coordinator
Deb DeForest
Development Associate
Erin Dilworth
Lead Gardener - Abby Garden
Wendy Dolliver
Head Gardener - Thuya Garden
Rodney Eason
CEO
Emma Flaherty
Groundskeeper - Thuya Garden
Alice French
Gardener - Thuya Garden
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Docent - Thuya Lodge
Margaret Handville
Gardener - Thuya Garden
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Land Steward
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Gardener, Abby Garden & McAlpin Farm
Ethan Klein
Lead Groundskeeper, Abby Garden & McAlpin Farm
Jon Knight
Manager of Abby Garden & McAlpin Farm
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Thuya Garden Manager
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Helen Townsend
Docent - Thuya Lodge
Linda Thayer
Docent - Thuya Lodge
Larry Tozier
Equipment Operator
Jacob Wartell
Gardener - Asticou Azalea Garden
Rick Whelan
General Tradesperson
Gene Williamson
Gardener - Asticou Azalea Garden

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Debbie Ehrlenback
Elaine Fernald
Tod Foster
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* Board Member



Gratitude

The Preserve would not exist without the generosity of countless people. Members make donations year after year. Visitors leave gifts in our donation boxes at the Asticou Azalea Garden, Thuya Garden, and Little Long Pond. Donors make bequests as part of their estate planning. Thank you to all.

Tribute Gifts in 2018 & 2019

In Honor Of

Jessica Savage Anderson
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Martha Beckett
Tate Bushell
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Thank You



front cover photo by Jack Ledbetter

Land & Garden Preserve

PO BOX 208 SEAL HARBOR, MAINE 04675 207-276-3727 WWW.GARDENPRESERVE.ORG