

NATIONAL GARDEN CLUBS INC. 2020 award of excellence

NGC's Award of Excellence recognizes exceptional individuals, organizations or institutions that have made significant contributions to their communities in such areas as environmental and civic responsibility, conservation or community beautification through gardening projects.

The 2020 Award of Excellence recipients are slated to accept their awards at NGC's 92nd Annual Convention in East Rutherford, New Jersey, May 17-20, 2021.

“The Award of Excellence is our organization's highest honor for non-members. By recognizing these deserving recipients from different parts of the nation, NGC hopes to educate and inspire others in communities coast-to-coast.”

GAY AUSTIN
2019-2021 NGC President

William Radler is the creator of the Knock Out® family of roses, which revolutionized the rose-growing and gardening industries.

His successful journey began as a hobby involving the cultivation and

hybridization of roses in the basement of his home in Greenfield, Wisconsin. Introduced in 2000, the Knock Out Rose's self-pruning habits, generous blooms and disease-resistant qualities quickly became the industry standard. It is the most widely sold rose in the world, with more than 90 million and subsequent varieties sold at independent garden centers, big box stores and many online retailers throughout the United States, Canada, Europe, Australia and Japan.

As a growing testament to the many years devoted to research and testing, Radler created the Radler Rosarium on his two-acre property, which showcases a wide variety of roses in beautifully landscaped settings. In addition, he collaborates with the Greenfield Beautification Committee to provide scheduled public tours.

For 26 years, Radler was the director of Milwaukee County Parks, headquartered in Wauwatosa, Wisconsin, while serving 13 of those years as director of Boerner Botanical Gardens, a popular destination and part of the parks system. Radler holds a bachelor's degree in landscape architecture from the University of Wisconsin in

Madison. He also is the author of “Rose Growing Simplified,” and co-author of “Rose Gardening.”

The commercial success of the Knock Out Rose gave root to Radler's philanthropic efforts locally and regionally. In 2002, he formed Rose Innovations LLC, which focuses on research, development, education and philanthropy. He also created a donor-advised fund for the Greater Milwaukee Foundation, with royalties received from the sales of Knock Out Roses in support of the Friends of Boerner Botanical Gardens. Donations to other organizations include the American Rose Society and the AIDS Resource Center of Wisconsin. In addition, he designed the Radler Terrace at the Greenfield Community Center and created a landscape design for a community park and children's playground in his neighborhood.

Radler was nominated for the 2020 NGC Award of Excellence by the Wisconsin Garden Club Federation.

Jon Carloftis is an award-winning landscape designer, author and popular lecturer, whose career in creating beautiful gardens spans more than 30 years.



Radler at work (left) at The Radler Rosarium (right).
Photos by Sara Stathas.



▲ Photo courtesy of JonCarloftis.com.



In recent years, **Jon Carloftis**, a 10th generation Kentuckian, returned to his roots in Lexington to purchase and restore **Botherum**, one of the city's most historically and architecturally unique residences. Built in 1851, the complex, two-year project included the restoration of the home's interior and exterior, as well as landscaping and gardens. He and partner **Dale Fisher** were recognized for their work at **Botherum** with a 2014 **Ida Lee Willis Memorial Foundation Preservation Award**, Kentucky's most distinguished award for historic preservation excellence.

Considered a pioneer in the industry for the design of rooftop and small-space gardens in New York City, Carloftis launched his career in the Big Apple in 1988, where his skills and talent for creating iconic gardens in small spaces captured the attention of noted celebrities, including Julianne Moore, Edward Norton and Mike Myers, as well as a number of renowned art collectors. In addition, Carloftis designed rooftop gardens for a number of corporate clients, including the New York City headquarters of Google® in Manhattan's Chelsea neighborhood.

He is owner of **Jon Carloftis Fine Gardens**, **Rockcastle River Trading Company**, joncarloftis.com, a unique retail shopping destination situated on 50 bucolic acres on the Carloftis family homestead in Lexington, Kentucky. The store offers luxury items and quality lines of products for the home, seasonal treasures and invites shoppers to explore the garden and landscaping vignettes that showcase garden tools, statuary, pottery, outdoor furniture and garden supplies.

A popular author in the garden industry, his books include "Beautiful Gardens of Kentucky," an introspective of 21 public gardens throughout the Bluegrass State, "Beyond the Windowsill: Add Style to Your Home with the Beauty of Indoor Plants," and "First a Garden," which he co-authored with Susan Smith-Durisek.

In addition, Carloftis crafted garden designs for institutions throughout the Bluegrass State, including the Kentucky Governor's mansion in Frankfort; Eastern Kentucky University in Richmond; University of the Cumberlands in Williamsburg; Corbin Middle School in Corbin; and in 2016, the Baptist Health Lexington Cancer Center Garden, which was dedicated in memory of his mother, Lucille Bowling Carloftis. Ongoing

commercial and residential projects in Kentucky include the **Maker's Mark Distillery** in Loretto and the **Castle Key Distillery** in Frankfort, as well as rooftop gardens in Louisville and Lexington.

A longtime supporter of the mission of **National Garden Clubs Inc.**, he designed a custom pink ceramic birdhouse as part of his collection for **Louisville Stoneware** in support of NGC's **Plant It Pink** program, a national initiative that promotes breast cancer awareness. In 2019, he designed and implemented a plan for the refurbishment of the atrium garden at NGC headquarters in St. Louis, Missouri.

Carloftis holds a bachelor's degree in communications from the University of Kentucky in Lexington, where he cites his classes in business communications as the impetus for his entrepreneurial spirit. In addition, to foster his love of horticulture, he completed intensive courses of study at the University of Kentucky's College of Agriculture, Food and Environment.

Carloftis was nominated for the 2020 NGC Award of Excellence by The Garden Club of Kentucky Inc.

▼ Photo by Rachael Montejo.



John Forti, an award-winning garden historian, ethnobotanist, garden writer and local foods advocate, is the executive director of **Bedrock Gardens**, a leading regional resource for horticultural education and agritourism, in Lee, New Hampshire. Under his leadership as

founder director, Forti is guiding the transition of the 37-acre site from a historic farm and private garden to a public oasis of art, horticulture and inspiration.

Forti is a regional governor and biodiversity specialist for **Slow Food USA**, a national chapter of **Slow Food®**, a global organization and international grassroots movement that connects food producers and consumers to champion local agriculture, farmers' markets and traditional, regional cuisine.

He previously served as director of horticulture for the **Massachusetts Horticultural Society**, the oldest horticultural society in the United States, where he transitioned the society's grounds into a public garden, restored a beloved children's garden and spearheaded a statewide school garden collaboration.

During his tenure as curator and director of historic landscapes at **Strawbery Banke Museum** in Portsmouth, New Hampshire, Forti created an ethnobotanical herb garden; an award-winning historic landscape app; a Victorian hothouse exhibit; a World War II victory garden restoration; and the first living history children's garden in the nation at the historical site. **Strawbery Banke Museum**, listed on the **National Register of Historic Places**, features 32 historic buildings, 12 original historic gardens ranging from the 17th to the 19th centuries and



▲ Photo by John Forti.



Photo by Nanci Horton.

diverse educational and preservation programs. In addition, he served for 12 years as director of horticulture at Plimoth Plantation Museum in Plymouth, Massachusetts, where he researched, designed and led on-site classes in the museum's Native American and colonial gardens and developed a historic seeds program that garnered international attention for the preservation of the Pilgrim and Wampanoag heirloom crops.

A celebrated author and frequent contributor to gardening, lifestyle and food publications, Forti is a regular media guest and popular lecturer nationally and internationally. He also hosts "The Heirloom Gardener – John Forti," a daily blog visited by more than 60,000 people around the world. His new

book with Timber Press is due out in spring 2021.

Forti was nominated for the 2020 NGC Award of Excellence by the New Hampshire Federation of Garden Clubs Inc.

About Bedrock Gardens

A premier garden of New England, Bedrock Gardens bedrockgardens.org, is an emerging public garden in Lee, New Hampshire, that integrates unusual botanical specimens and unique sculpture into an inspiring landscape journey. Situated on 37 acres on land that once served as the site of a historic dairy farm, Bedrock Gardens offers beautiful vistas that guide visitors along paths through distinct garden areas, which include an acre of native grasses designed like a painting;



▲ Photo by Peter Michaud.

an extensive espaliered Belgian fence; a serene Japanese teahouse garden; elegant lotus rill; rock garden; pinetum; apiary; wildlife ponds; pergolas; and two miles of garden and woodland trails, which visitors can explore and take inspiration from for their own home landscapes. ■