

Garden History: Salubrity Hall - 2259 Cumming Road

Built in 1929 by Olivia Antoinette Helme Herbert and her husband Attorney John Warne Herbert from New Jersey (parents of Gertrude Herbert). 11,000 square feet. 3 acres - Includes home, caretakers' cottage, large carriage house and five elaborate gardens designed by Olivia Herbert.

He was an avid golfer, a founding member of the Augusta National Golf Club and she was a philanthropist, artist and horticulturist. They spent May-October in Augusta each year when the Augusta National was open. The rest of the year they stayed at their home in California.

They named their estate Salubrity Hall after the Ladies Academy at Mount Salubrity, a girl's school that had stood on the site since the 1870's.

Portions of the old structure that housed the academy were used in building the new structure. Stained glass windows from the 5th century were dismantled from an English manor home.

Olivia Herbert lived at Salubrity Hall until her death in 1946 at the age of 82.

Home changed owners 9 times between 1947 and 2002. In 2003, Karon and Dr. Donald Williamson bought the home and began restoration of the structure. They hired Bill Smith of William T. Smith and Associates Architect from Atlanta in 2006 to begin updating and redesigning the gardens. His designs were implemented by the Williamson's over the next 12 years.

The circular driveway in the front of the house was filled with trees that obscured the house. He removed these immediately so that the house could be seen. When the current owners, Christine and Frank Anderson moved into the house in 2019, they removed the low-clipped boxwood hedge around the edge of the drive so that the front lawn could be opened up for events.

Gardens: Salubrity Hall - 2259 Cumming Road

The East Terrace is adjacent to the east side of the house and is enjoyed on summer afternoons by the pool. The fountain on the wall is original. From the terrace you can step down to the pool added by the Anderson's in 2021. The Japanese maple trees on either side of the steps are almost 100 years old. Knock out roses form a small garden to the right. Tree form ligustrum have been planted along the wall recently. Indian Hawthorne are along the waterfall along with agapanthus (that did not do well with the recent freeze). Just down from the pool and bordering the next garden are bricks bordering original gristmill stones. This feature is repeated at each of the four corners of the Perennial Garden. Thyme is planted in the center of each.

As you enter each garden you will notice the repetition of plantings in a pattern unique to each garden, especially in the four corners. This was the design implemented by Bill Smith in 2006 for the Williamson family.

On this level you will enter the Perennial Garden. This garden is enclosed by boxwood hedges and an opening of tall conical evergreens. Here you will see a variety of summer flowers. The homeowner is especially fond of lilies and keeps several varieties here. She separates the iris bulbs often to fill up the garden. She likes to purchase a few new ones each year. Ginger Lilies line the back of the garden and grow five feet tall. They bloom in August. Peonies in this garden like the cold and are doing well this year. Wild blue indigo is on the left and is very invasive. It has a blue flower and grows in a clump but its roots can spread throughout the garden. Fox gloves are planted here every year.

The four planters have butterfly bushes with perennials in the container that like full sun: Ornamental grasses (Mexican feather grass and Japanese Rush), marigolds, zinnias and trailing Blue Veined Supertunias. From the Perennial Garden to the right (over the hedge) you will see the original tea house, built in 1929, that once was on the property. The current homeowner's mother grew up in the teahouse and later bought it back. She and her husband live there currently. At the back of the Perennial Garden, along the walkway, is a Deodar cedar that was on the property when the house was built. Camelias line this walkway.

From the Perennial Garden you will enter the Great Lawn. This is the location where many functions are held. The Anderson's make this space available for weddings, receptions and local organizations events and fund raisers.

Miniature Japanese Maples anchor each side of the steps and will turn brilliant red in another month. Currently a privacy hedge is being planted at the back of the property, consisting of foster hollies, snowball viburnum, podocarpus and centered with a miniature magnolia tree. Plants are being recommended by Campbell Vaughn, Richmond County Extension Agent, to insure they will do well in the soil and sunlight.

Next you will enter the Fruit Garden and Rotunda. June Apple Trees and Blueberry bushes line the edges of this garden. To the left you will find Chinese fringe plant in bloom, lorapetulum and Virginia Sweet Spire. As you look through this garden you will see the original Carriage House, built in 1929, used by the Anderson's as a rental residence. To the right and behind the Carriage House is the Caretaker's Cottage. The caretaker lived on the grounds year-round as the original home owners (the Herberts) only spent 6 months a year at Salubrity Hall.

Olivia Herbert was not only a horticulturist but an avid artist. It was in this garden that she invited her artist friends to come and paint "plein aire" – outside.

The centerpiece of the Fruit Garden or Rotunda Garden is the large stone circular bed with a decorative planter at its center. The planter is marked 1319 on its base. The planter sits on a decorative

base that is believed to be a part of an old well. This feature was added by the Williamson's when they renovated the gardens and was patterned after a garden in Versailles. The blue stone tile was recycled from an English Manor. Lavender is planted here as well as knock out roses. Limelight hydrangeas flank both sides of the edges of the garden and lead up the steps.

Steps from the Fruit Garden will lead up to the Sunken Garden or Grotto. This area has the original brick work set in a diamond pattern and wrought iron from when the house was built in 1929. The pool is flanked by two wrought iron benches. The small pool is composed of irregular stone and now serves as a coy pond. It has recently been stocked. Lenten roses (one of the home owners favorite flowers) are to the right of the pond along with cast iron plants, spreading yew and Japanese wood ferns. The hedge along the drive at the entrance to the grotto is an invasive privet hedge that takes a lot of pruning. Trees surrounding the grotto are shade bushes and have a spring berry.

Take a left up the steps and you will enter the White Garden. As its name implies, the garden is designed with all white plants that bloom early spring and all summer. Most of the plants are planted in October to give full color/growth for the spring and summer. Giant tea olives line the walkway. White Lady Banks Roses line and cover the arbor and are magnificent in the spring. The iron work along the brick wall is all original. Wooden beams on the arbor have been replaced (2008).

The magnificent cloverleaf fountain is original to the home. The homeowners rarely clean it out as the algae in the fountain is beneficial to the fountain structure. Cherubs sit at each corner of the fountain along with urns planted with umbrella palms which thrive in the sun. Perennials such as sun loving begonias, stonecrop ground cover are often used in the urns.

The beds of the White Garden are filled with perennials – impatiens, vinca, dianthus, snap dragons and fox gloves. White wild indigo, day lilies, ginger lilies, white azaleas and white hydrangeas serve as anchor plants. The four corners of the garden each contain impressive snowball vibernum trees that just bloomed in March and were magnificent. They are huge and healthy and are only 12 years old. At the far left corner and adjacent to the house is the Herb Garden. The homeowner grows her favorites - mint, fennel, sage and oregano – here, close to the kitchen door. Sugar snap peas are in the containers in this garden. She often also uses this area as her “plant hospital” when she has plants that need special attention.

The motor court or curved drive was added by the Williamson's as per Bill Smith's design. Smith had the “motor court” paved with terra cotta colored stone inset with a double row of bricks that form a cross and intersect at a historic millstone.

Please go back down the steps you came up and follow the motor court to the front of the house. Along this drive you will see the front of the Carriage House. It has a four-car garage with occupied living quarters above. Follow the curved motor court to the arrows pointing to the Woodlands Garden that borders the front of the property. Along this drive you will see a large Winter Honeysuckle bush that has a white fragrant flower in the spring and also Spirea “Bridal Veil” and large tea olives.

The last garden is the Woodlands Garden. This is very shady and sandy soil. This garden is left very natural filled with native azaleas called Tallulah Sunrise, silky dogwood, bridal veil spireas, oakleaf and limelight hydrangeas. Notice the Chinese fringe plants with flowers that bloom in the summer at both ends of the garden. The large silver thorn olive in the center of the garden has leaves that turn silver in winter.

A weeping bottle brush plant is in the center of the garden and will be replaced because it obviously doesn't like the sandy soil or the shade of this garden.

You will exit this garden to the street. Thank you for coming.