ANNE SPENCER GARDEN
1313 Pierce Street
Lynchburg
Virginia

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

HISTORIC AMERICAN LANDSCAPES SURVEY
National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior
1849 C Street NW
Washington, DC 20240-0001

HISTORIC AMERICAN LANDSCAPES SURVEY

ANNE SPENCER GARDEN

HALS NO. VA-59

Location: 1313 Pierce Street, Lynchburg, Virginia

Located within Lynchburg's *Pierce Street Renaissance Historic District*

Latitude: 37.40380, Longitude: -79.15201 (center of site, Google Maps, Simple Cylindrical Projection, WGS84)

Significance: This landscaped site is significant because it was created by an African American woman, Anne Spencer (1882–1975), who was a distinguished poet of the Harlem Renaissance. Spencer was a librarian and educator in the segregated school system of Lynchburg, Virginia, a co-founder in 1919 of the local chapter of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), a civil rights activist, and a gardener.

Anne Spencer and her husband Edward built the house at 1313 Pierce Street in 1903 and lived there until their deaths. Anne planted and tended the garden behind the house throughout her life. It served as a place of refuge during the troubled times in which she lived, as well as a source of inspiration for much of her poetry. The Spencers had numerous visitors to their house and garden, including James Weldon Johnson, Langston Hughes, and W.E.B. DuBois.

The garden is no less significant because of the intervention and faithful restoration of Jane Baber White, a landscape designer in Lynchburg, Virginia, beginning in 1983. Not long after Spencer's death in 1975, the garden became overgrown and unrecognizable. As White says in an article she wrote for *American Horticulturist* in July 1987, "I did go see the remnants of the garden. Nothing about my life has been the same since then! […] At the little broken English boxwood, the pond with the African [sculpture] no longer able to spit water, just the feeling of the place said Anne Spencer had loved this garden." (White 3) Along with the support in time and money of the Hillside Garden Club of Lynchburg, White undertook a loving restoration, faithful to Anne Spencer's original vision, which is still ongoing today even after 30 years.

Description: The entrance to the garden is from the brick paved driveway on the right side of the Spencer house at 1313 Pierce Street, Lynchburg, Virginia. The brick paved tire paths lead you to a low sign that says "Garden Entrance." The garden is 40' wide and extends 195' from the rear of the house to Buchanan Street.

Every square inch of this garden has been well-tended and restored with original plantings and new plantings that match old photographs (see plan illustrations

below). The architectural items, Edankraal cottage, pergola, original cast concrete bench, fencing, paths, pond, sculpture are all in excellent restored condition. Anne Spencer's original ground cover bulbs, *Ipheion*, magically appear where planted decades ago. Shrubs and trees that are not original were added from earlier historic photographs as interpreted by White.

The overall condition is excellent. The day I visited and took photographs, the Garden was ready for Garden Day in Virginia and the spring plants were in full-bloom glory.

History: This history of the Anne Spencer Garden is best told by Rebecca Frischkorn and Reuben Rainey in their 2003 book *Half My World*:

"As a young mother in the first decade of the 1900's, Anne planted a small vegetable garden adjacent to the back porch of her and Edward's new home. In 1923 Anne, with Edward's help, expanded her garden dramatically to encompass an area stretching from the back porch of their house all the way to Buchanan Street, which bordered the rear of their property. The garden now was a narrow rectangle approximately 40 feet wide and 195 feet long. Edward constructed 3-ft. high retaining walls on the northwest corner to level the site and installed water lines to supply the garden pools. In 1924 Edward build Edankraal, Anne's cottage study. The three-car garage adjacent to it was later demolished and the vegetable garden was removed. This enlargement of Anne's garden was emblematic of her expanding career as a poet. Her first poems had been published nationally in the early 1920's, and the construction of her cottage study shortly thereafter bore witness to her deep commitment to her vocation as a poet. The new garden was an economic luxury as well, since it encompassed a vacant residential lot at the rear of the house, which would have sold for a handsome price in the rapidly developing neighborhood. From the 1920's on Anne continued to enrich the plant palette and architectural detail of her garden." (Frischkorn and Rainey 27)

By the end of the 1920's Anne Spencer "had completed the garden's basic structure, which included her cottage study, a pool and fountain, three paths, a pergola, a grape arbor, a new gate and flowerbeds. […] She threads her garden on a central axis like the unified structure of her poems, yet avoids monotony through rich variety and asymmetry. She skillfully uses a pergola and a grape arbor to frame views and create thresholds and transitions. Her crisply delineated gravel paths have begun to replace earlier ones constructed of turf. They lead us on diagonals and semicircles, providing ever-changing views and long vistas down corridors of bloom." (Frischkorn and Rainey 28)

"Anne's garden reveals the vitality and bold experimentation of the self-taught designer that she was. Her design work appears to nod a bit in the direction of the plans and details for the 'small residential gardens' in her extensive collection of popular garden magazines of the 1920's and 30's, *Country Life*,

Garden and Home Builder, *Better Homes and Gardens*, *House Beautiful*, *American Home* and *House and Garden*." (Frischkorn and Rainey 28)

The site was owned by the Spencers until Anne's death in 1975, when it then passed to her three children and eventually to her son Chauncey. [Chauncey Spencer was an aviation pioneer and charter member of the National Airmen's Association of America.] Between her death and the beginning of White's restoration in 1983, the garden went into decline. Chauncey Spencer called White to see if she could take a look at the ailing landscaped site.

"The restoration effort was meticulous and energetic. …Three hundred feet of the original cast iron trim on the top of the bordering fence was removed in one-foot segments, carefully cleaned and stored. It was later reinstalled. Hillside Garden Club volunteers carefully dug up all surviving flowers and bulbs and planted them in holding beds in Jane White's vegetable garden…while the site was being cleared of weeds. Like dedicated archeologists, on hands and knees, with trowels and boxes in hand, they sifted the earth seeking the smallest bulbs, working rapidly in front of the excavating equipment that was clearing the site for restoration. So overgrown was the garden that volunteers had to remove twenty-five dump truck loads of debris." (Frischkorn and Rainey 93-94)

"The Anne Spencer home and garden remains an important cultural resource for the city of Lynchburg and the surrounding region. The site has been designated a Virginia Historic Landmark, a Friends of the Library USA Literary Landmark, a Historic Landmark by the Association for the Study for Afro-American Life and History in association with the Amoco Foundation, Inc., and is included in the National Register of Historic Places. After his retirement from a distinguished career in aviation, civil rights, and public administration, Chauncey Spencer hosted informative tours of the house and the restored garden until his death on August 21, 2002." Today, under the leadership of Shaun Spencer-Hester, Anne Spencer's granddaughter, the Anne Spencer House and Garden Museum, Inc., "supervises field trips for local elementary, junior high and high school, and college students, and sponsors seminars dealing with African-American history and culture." (Frischkorn and Rainey 96)

Jane White has written a book, *Lessons Learned from a Poet's Garden*, which details the entire process of restoring the Anne Spencer Garden. [The book was a recent gift to the HALS Library from the author.] It shows exact record keeping and faithful lists of volunteers; structural, architectural, and planting methods; and materials. White saw what needed to be done and called into service many devoted gardeners to aid her in getting the job done. When I first looked at this garden, spring of 2013, it was a sight to behold, perfect in every way, a finished product of years of loving restoration by Jane Baber White and the women of the Hillside Garden Club. Certainly not absent were the men who helped with reconstruction of architectural and site elements, but the vision of one woman for another's passion surely makes this worthy of all possible citations.

Sources: Books about Anne Spencer:

1. *Half My World: The Garden of Anne Spencer—A History and Guide*
   By Rebecca T. Frischkorn and Reuben M. Rainey
   Warwick House Publishing, 2003

2. *Lessons Learned from a Poet's Garden: The Restoration of the Historic Garden of Harlem Renaissance Poet Anne Spencer, Lynchburg, Virginia*
   By Jane Baber White
   Blackwell Press, 2011

3. *American Horticulturist*, a publication of the American Horticultural Society, "Restoration of a Poet's Garden," by Jane Baber White, October 1987

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July 10, 2013

2013 HALS Challenge Entry: *Documenting the Cultural Landscapes of Women*

Anne Spencer in her garden in the 1920s (from *Lessons Learned from a Poet's Garden* by White, 2011).

Anne Spencer's granddaughter Shaun Spencer-Hester and Jane Baber White in the garden (from *Lessons Learned from a Poet's Garden* by White, 2011).

This 1937 photograph of Anne and Edward Spencer sitting by the pond in the garden was the inspiration for Jane White's restoration of the garden beginning in 1983 (from *Lessons Learned from a Poet's Garden* by White, 2011).

A similar view of the garden taken in 2010, just before the second restoration of the grape arbor (from *Lessons Learned from a Poet's Garden* by White, 2011).

Anne Spencer Garden and 'Edankraal' Cottage before restoration (Richard Cheek/HABS, 1977).

Front of Anne and Edward Spencer house showing original colored concrete walk (Elizabeth Blye Delaney, 4-16-13).

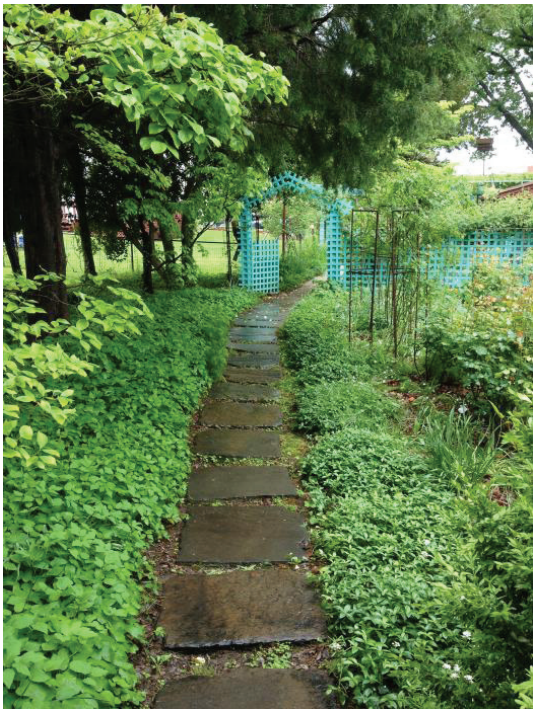
Front of Spencer house showing driveway entrance to garden on right side (Elizabeth Blye Delaney, 4-16-13).

Driveway entrance to garden in rear
(Elizabeth Blye Delaney, 4-16-13).

Drive paths ending at Edankraal cottage
(Elizabeth Blye Delaney, 4-16-13).

Ground gutter to left of drive paths (Elizabeth Blye Delaney, 4-16-13).

Rear of house steps and path that lead to the garden (Elizabeth Blye Delaney, 4-16-13).

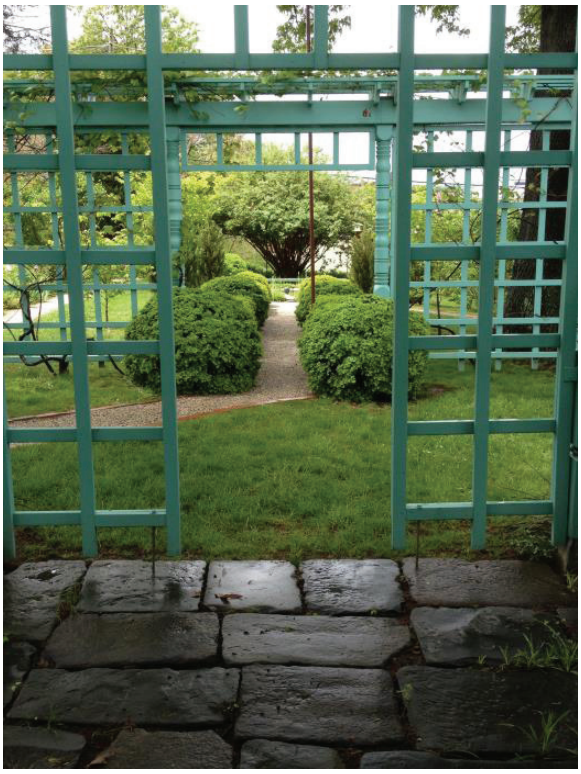


View from rear of house to garden entry Gate (Elizabeth Blye Delaney, 4-16-13).

Birdbath and pergola (Elizabeth Blye Delaney, 4-16-13).

Edankraal, Anne's writing cottage in the garden (Elizabeth Blye Delaney, 4-16-13).

View of pergola and wisteria vine (Elizabeth Blye Delaney, 4-16-13).



View to Buchanan Street end of garden (Elizabeth Blye Delaney, 4-16-13).

View looking back toward the pergola from pond (Elizabeth Blye Delaney, 4-16-13).

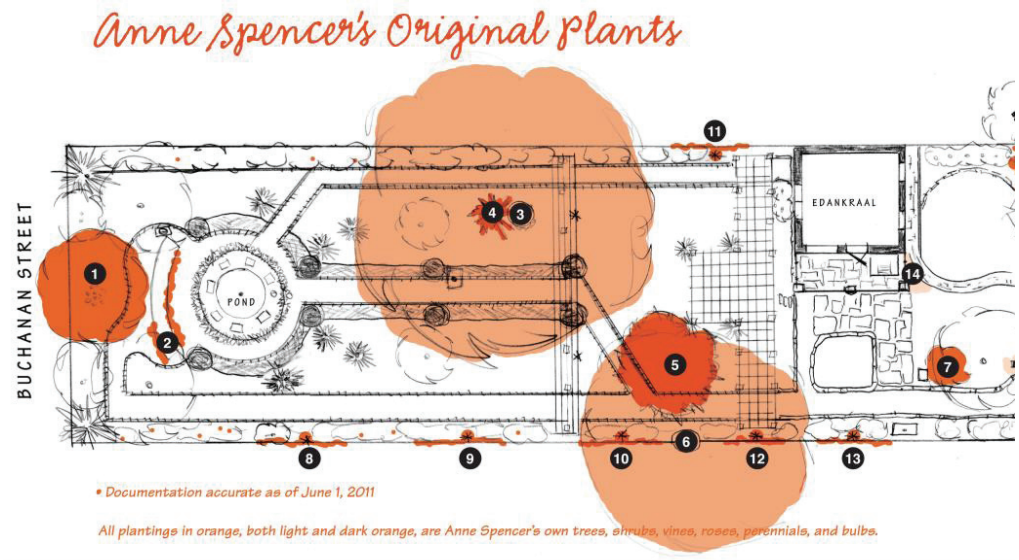
End view showing pond and poured concrete (Elizabeth Blye Delaney, 4-16-13).

View of pond showing Prince Ebo fountain (Elizabeth Blye Delaney, 4-16-13).

View toward pergola room and Edankraal (Elizabeth Blye Delaney, 4-16-13).

All of Anne Spencer's original roses were salvaged, including 'Spanish Beauty' pictured here (from *Lessons Learned from a Poet's Garden* by White, 2011).

Sample Plans from *Lessons Learned from a Poet's Garden* by Jane Baber White (2011)
(Top and bottom images fit together side-by-side to make complete plans)



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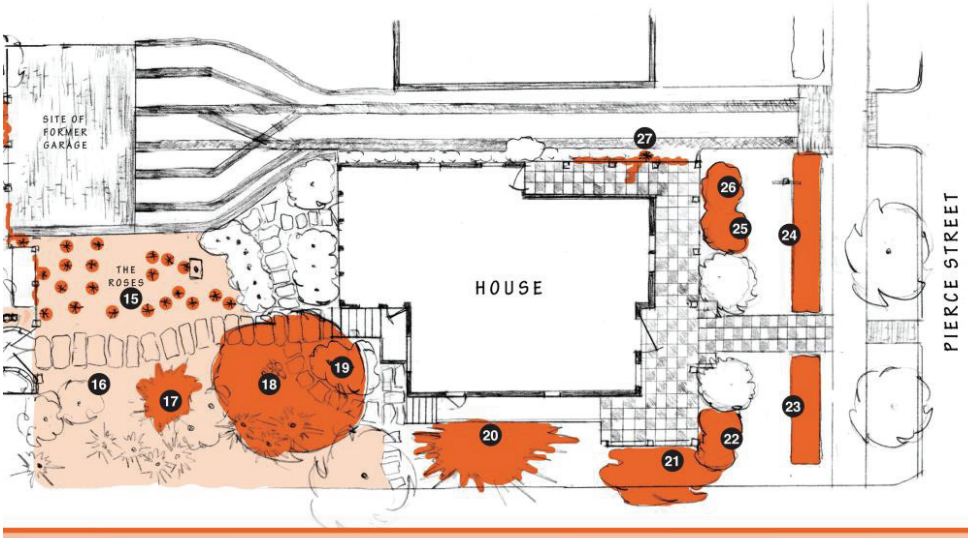
1) Double flowered deutzia (*Deutzia scabra plena*)
2) English ivy (*Hedera helix*)
3) Red oak tree (*Quercus rubra*)
4) Leatherleaf Mahonia (*Mahonia bealei*)
5) Virginia cedar (*Juniperus virginiana*)
6) Pecan tree (*Carya illinoinsis*)
7) Gold dust acuba (*Acuba japonica 'Variegata'*)
8) "Anne Spencer Multiflora" rose
9, 10, 11) American Pillar rose
12) Blaze rose
13, 14) Mme. Grégoire Staechlin or Spanish Beauty rose
15) Bed of roses
16) Throughout this area, many bulbs reappeared, including iphelion and scilla and other ground covers including periwinkle and bishop's weed
17) Virginia cedar (*Juniperus virginiana*)
18) Crepe myrtle (*Lagerstroemia indica*)
19) English boxwood (*Buxus sempervirins 'Suffruticosa'*)
20) American holly (*Ilex opaca*)
21) White dogwood (*Cornus florida*)
22) English boxwood (*Buxus sempervirins 'Suffruticosa'*)
23, 24) Privet hedge (*Ligustrum vulgare*)
25) Laccap hydrangea (*Hydrangea macrophylla 'Blue Laccap'*)
26) "Nikko Blue" hydrangea (*Hydrangea macrophylla 'Nikko Blue'*)
27) Mme. Grégoire Staechlin or Spanish Beauty rose



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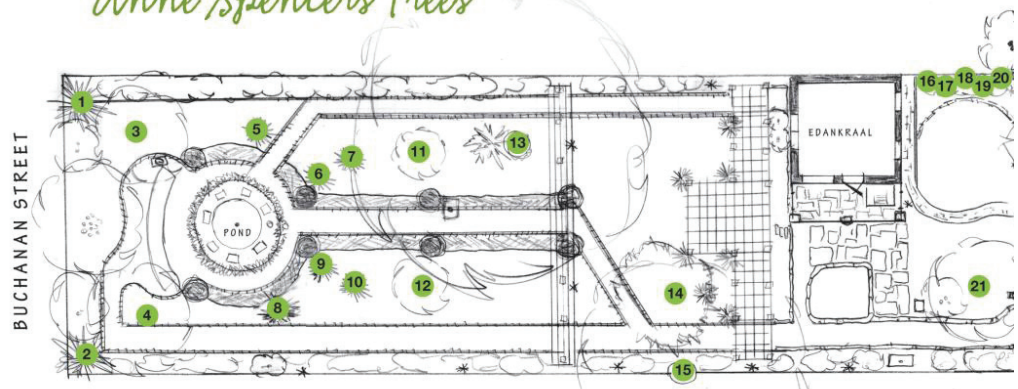
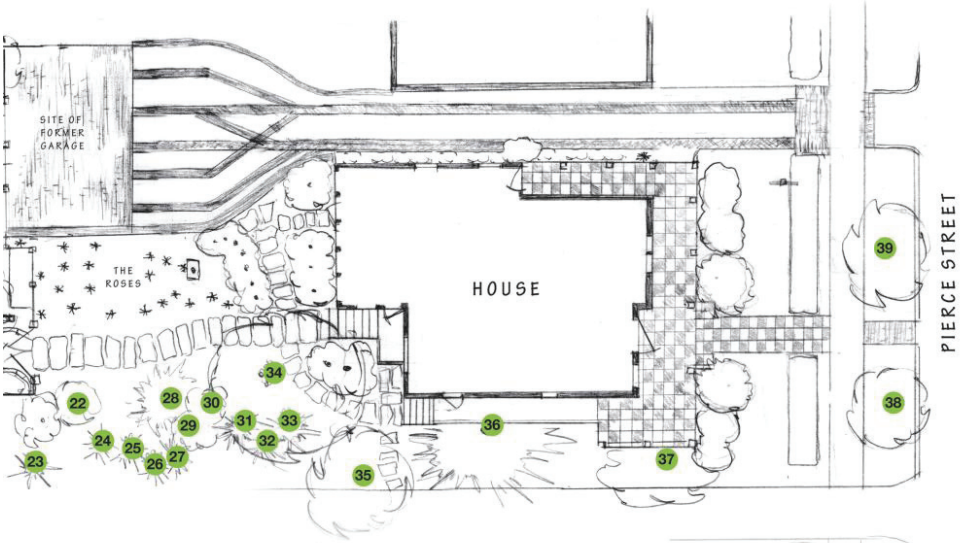
Anne Spencer's Trees



- *All trees original to the site before restoration have this symbol: "ASO" (Anne Spencer Original)*
- *Documentation accurate as of June 1, 2011*

NUMBER	COMMON NAME	BOTANICAL NAME	DATE PLANTED	NOTES
1	Spartan juniper	*Juniperus chinensis 'Spartan'*	2010	Replacement of tree planted 1984
2	Spartan juniper	*Juniperus chinensis 'Spartan'*	1984	Strong vertical accent
3, 4	Dogwood, white	*Cornus florida*	1930s	Replaced ASO nearby
5, 6, 7 8, 9, 10	Spartan juniper	*Juniperus chinensis 'Spartan'*	2009	Many vertical accents, probably Virginia redcedars, were in early photos
11	Dogwood, white	*Cornus florida 'White Cloud'*	2008	Gift of Laurie Jamerson
12	Dogwood, white	*Cornus florida 'White Cloud'*	2008	Gift of Laurie Jamerson, replacing ASO nearby

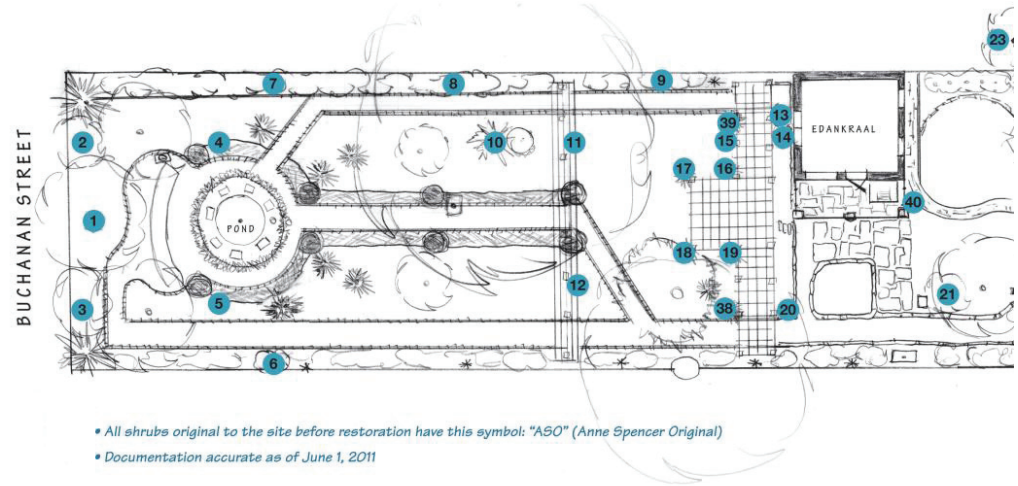
NUMBER	COMMON NAME	BOTANICAL NAME	DATE PLANTED	NOTES
13	Red oak	*Quercus rubrum*	ASO	
14	Virginia cedar	*Juniperus virginiana*	ASO	
15	Pecan	*Carya illinoinsis*	ASO	
16, 17, 18, 19, 20	Virginia cedar	*Juniperus virginiana*	2009	dug at White's farm, Spout Spring, Va.
21	Dogwood, pink	*Cornus florida rubrum*	1930s	replaced ASO at same location
22	Dogwood, white	*Cornus florida*	1986	gift of Margaretta Harper
23	Holly, Foster	*Ilex x attenuata 'Foster'*	1986	Common Wealth Award planting
24	Hemlock	*Tsuga canadensis*	1986	Common Wealth Award planting



NUMBER	COMMON NAME	BOTANICAL NAME	DATE PLANTED	NOTES
25	Holly, Foster	*Ilex x attenuata 'Foster'*	1986	Common Wealth Award planting
26, 27	Hemlock	*Tsuga canadensis*	1986	Common Wealth Award planting
28	Virginia cedar	*Juniperus virginiana*	ASO	
29, 30	Dogwood, white	*Cornus florida*	1986	gift of Margaretta Harper
31, 32, 33	Holly, Foster	*Ilex x attenuata 'Foster'*	1986	Common Wealth Award planting
34	Crape myrtle	*Lagerstroemia indica*	ASO	beautiful red specimen
35	Dogwood, white	*Cornus florida*	1986	gift of Margaretta Harper
36	Holly, American	*Ilex opaca*	ASO	gutter built around tree when very young

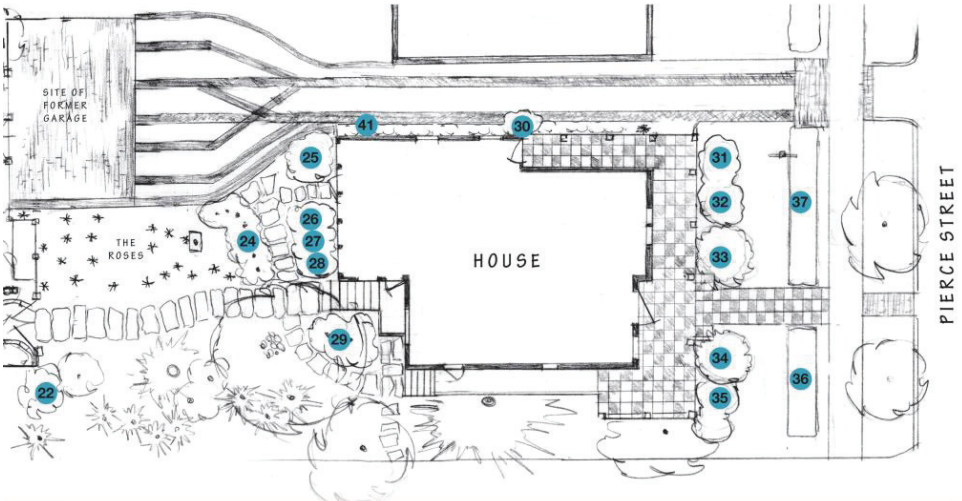
NUMBER	COMMON NAME	BOTANICAL NAME	DATE PLANTED	NOTES
37	Dogwood, white	*Cornus florida*	ASO	
38	Dogwood, white	*Cornus florida*	1980s	gift of Spencer family replacing traditional white dogwood for Edward Spencer at the site
39	Dogwood, pink	*Cornus florida rubrum*	1980s	gift of Spencer family replacing traditional pink dogwood for Anne Spencer at the site

Anne Spencer's Shrubs & Vines



- *All shrubs original to the site before restoration have this symbol: "ASO" (Anne Spencer Original)*
- *Documentation accurate as of June 1, 2011*

NUMBER	COMMON NAME	BOTANICAL NAME	PLANTED	NOTES
1	Double-flowered deutzia	Deutzia scabra plena	ASO	important focal point of axis
2, 3	Weigelia, pink	Weigelia florida	1986	gift of "Pete" Lupton from her yard
4, 5	English boxwood	Buxus sempervirens 'Suffruticosa'	1984	gift of Al and Bill Chambers, dug from their farm during hunting season. (dangerous day!)
6	Lilac	Syringa vulgaris	ASO	
7	Lilac hedge	Syringa vulgaris	1986	lilac shoots found in area during restoration. approx. 5-7 plants, white
8	Lilac hedge	Syringa vulgaris	1986	approx. 10-12 plants, purple
9	Lilac	Syringa vulgaris	1986	only two plants (purple) remaining from earlier planting in this area.
10	Leatherleaf mahonia	Mahonia bealei	ASO	birds love the blue berries
11	Niagara grape	Vitis labruscana 'Niagara'	1986	Anne Spencer wrote about the "green-white" of the Niagara. gift of Farmers Seed & Supply
12	Concord grape	Vitis labruscana 'Concord'	1986	Anne Spencer wrote about "purpling" flesh of the Concord. gift of Farmers Seed & Supply
13, 14	Flowering quince	Chaenomeles speciosa		salmon-red blooms
15	Wisteria, American	Wisteria frutescens	1986	gift of Amelia Scott from her garden. Anne Spencer grew wisteria and roses on pergola at different times.



16, 17, 18, 19	"Red yucca"	*Hesperaloe parviflora*	2011	Anne Spencer grew iris and other spiky plants in this area.
20	Sweet autumn clematis	*Clematis paniculata*	2010	
21	Aucuba, gold dust plant	*Aucuba japonica 'Variegata'*	ASO	
22, 23	Burford holly	*Ilex cornuta 'Burfordii'*	1986	keep pruned to tree form.
24	American boxwood hedge	*Buxus sempervirens*	1983	approx. 7 plants form hedge. Keep trimmed
25, 26, 27, 28	Glossy abelia	*Abelia grandiflora*	1984	four plants form soft hedge
29	English boxwood	*Buxus sempervirens 'Suffruticosa'*	ASO	two transplants grown together
30	Aucuba, gold dust plant	*Aucuba japonica 'Variegata'*	1984	leans into the driveway space
31	'Nikko Blue' hydrangea	*Hydrangea macrophylla 'Nikko Blue'*	ASO	
32	Blue lacecap hydrangea	*Hydrangea macrophylla 'Blue Lacecap'*	ASO	
33, 34	American boxwood	*Buxus sempervirens*	1984	gift of Bill Mayo, Sunnyside Boxwood Farm, replacing one very unhealthy plant
35	English boxwood	*Buxus sempervirens 'Suffruticosa'*	ASO	boxwood grown together
36, 37	Privet hedge	*Ligustrum vulgare*	ASO	must keep trimmed to 4' high
38, 39	Dwarf pampas grass	*Cortaderia selloana 'Pumila'*	2011	as seen in garden photo c. 1930–1940
40	Clematis	*Jackmanii clematis*	2010	
41	Fig		2010	unidentified variety from Monticello