



## *House Calls*

### **Refreshments, Music To Be Part Of Event**

### **Bridgewater Highlighted In Virginia Historic Garden Week Tour**

Making

**By ALEDA JOHNSON**

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Every spring, the 53 active members of Spotswood Garden Club show off their skills as they welcome the public into spaces that accentuate historic homes and gardens in the Valley.

They are joined by nearly 250 houses across the state as they prepare for thousands to tour their homes and gardens for Virginia's Historic Garden Week hosted by the Garden Club of Virginia.

The Harrisonburg stop of the tour, which is April 26 from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m., highlights the town of Bridgewater and features personal residences as well as two venues — an unusual occurrence for the annual event.

Guests begin the tour at The Cracked Pillar, known as the Barbee House at 403 N. Main St., before moving on to five properties: 220 Holly Hill Drive, 111 S. Main St., 4702 Spring Creek Road, 417 E. College St. (the home of Bridgewater College's president) and Bluestone Vineyard's Meeting House.

Garden Week tour co-chairs Kimberly Miller and Cereta Newkirk decided to expand the tour to include venues such as Bluestone and The Cracked Pillar to highlight Bridgewater's focus on history and hospitality.

“We know a lot of the folks who attend these tours are very much interested in history, so The Cracked Pillar has a lot of history,” Miller said. “We have the Bluestone vineyard because we've only had one other vineyard. The Hartmans are no stranger to garden club as they had their home on the tour many years ago.” Guests will have a chance to witness



Jay and Kathryn Litten's home will be featured in the Historic Garden Week tour on April 26. The Bridgewater home was built in 1992 and modeled after the George Wythe House in Williamsburg.

Bridgewater's history as they see **Bridgewater College** memorabilia at the president's home, historic buildings and foliage that has been in the family for years.

For the first time, an exhibit of artwork and interpreted floral designs created by garden club members will be on show at the 111 S. Main St. stop.

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\_ Kathryn Litten, homeowner



## House FROM PAGE E1

“We’ve done this in the club for a flower show, but now we’re opening it up to the public, and what’s really special is the artwork is from the club members themselves,” Miller said. “On the state level, the president of the Garden Club of Virginia has been highlighting members’ artwork on the website, so this is keeping with that theme.”

Even though homes will only show for a day, homeowners take months to prepare.

Kathryn Litten, who lives at 220 Holly Hill Drive, started minor home renovations in December, although she admits to the house needing touch-ups for some time.

“These [renovations] are all things we had on the back burner and needed to do,” Litten said of her home, which is based on the George Wythe House in Williamsburg. “This just lit the fire to do them.”

As part of the renovations, her front steps and walking path were updated, windows were replaced and many of the rooms were repainted — including covering a Red Sox mural in her son’s old bedroom.

The pantry area between her kitchen and dining room was updated to a formal butler’s pantry, and wainscoting was added to the bottom of her chair rails to keep with the colonial style of the home.

Not every room in the tour is open, but Spotswood Garden Club members will be on hand to direct guests and inform them about importance pieces to see in each room.

For the Littens, the familial history inside the home becomes the focal points for visitors.

“It’s a very lived in and loved home,” Litten said. “There’s not a part of that house we don’t enjoy, and nothing is off limits. We raised two kids in the house, and it’s always been our home and it always will be.”

Adding to the lived-in feel are artwork and pieces throughout the house the family have collected through their travels or from other family members.

I remember even as a little kid, living a block away and loving those bushes,” Litten said. “Our daughter got married last May, and we used some of the flowers in her bouquet.”

The first Historic Garden Week was held in 1927 to raise money for the preservation of trees planted by Thomas Jefferson on the lawn at Monticello.

Echoing the tradition, money raised during garden week pays for the restoration and conservation of historical sites in Virginia, as well as funding research fellowships for building and maintaining the state’s historical garden records, according to Miller.

Money raised during Garden Week will also help supply a \$500,000 gift over five years by Garden Club of Virginia to Virginia State Parks for the renovation of their educational facilities.

On the day of the tour, guests can stop by Bluestone Vineyard’s Meeting House for light refreshments and musical entertainment from 1-4 p.m.

Wine tastings will also be available throughout the afternoon.

Parking is available at or near every stop, and attendants will direct cars.

**Bridgewater College** is also offering a shuttle service from Bridgewater Presbyterian Church to the president’s home.

For more information on the tour, visit [spotswoodgardenclub.wordpress.com](http://spotswoodgardenclub.wordpress.com).

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Two chandeliers from Italy hang in the kitchen and family room, and the couple has an old 1930s school desk from the College of William & Mary, where Kathryn and Jay went to school.

Kathryn's uncle's antique partner desk sits in the study, and their basement is covered in sports paraphernalia, including two seats from Fenway Park in Boston.

Even the grounds hold historical familial significance.

The trees planted 25 years ago in the back pastures that overlook the North River mark the height the river rose to when hurricane Fran came ashore in 1996.

Two peony bushes are growing from branches taken from the bushes of Litten's grandmother's home in Clifton Forge.

"She lived to be 102 and gardened probably into her 90s, but



**TOP, ABOVE: Jay and Kathryn Litten's home will be featured in the Historic Garden Week tour on April 26.**

Photos by Holly Marcus / Special to the DN-R