

LIFESTYLE



Garden walk. Nine lush Nyack gardens are the setting for a tour to benefit the Hopper House Art Center. **1E**



Hesperis in Miriam Wexler's Upper Nyack garden.

Lush landscapes

Bill Cary
The Journal News

Jon Feldman is like a proud parent when he shows a visitor around the Upper Nyack garden known as Atlas Acre.

Feldman, a landscape designer, and a crew of nine from his company, G. biloba Garden Environments of Nyack, spent six months in 1999 and 2000 transforming an overgrown riverfront lot with an unuseable steep slope into a showcase garden with

Wet weather brings plants to life, just in time for a tour of nine Nyack gardens

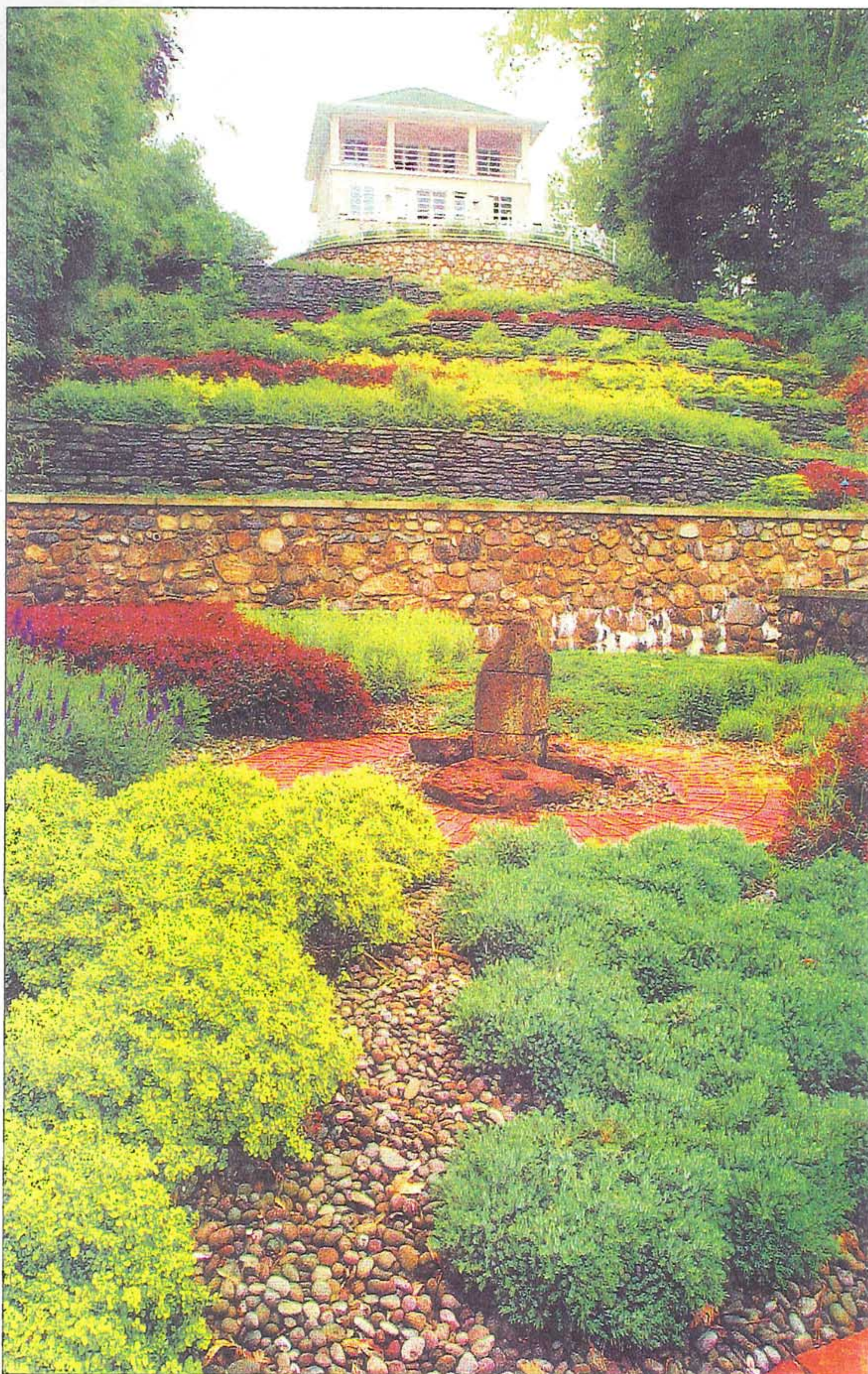
12 terraces that flow from the house to the edge of the Hudson. The riverfront view from the house and the top terrace, which is lined with peonies in full bloom, is spectacular.

On Saturday, Atlas Acre and eight other private gardens in Nyack will be open to the public for the day for the biennial Hopper House Garden Walk. The self-guided tour costs \$15 per person, and all proceeds benefit the Hopper House Art Center in Nyack. In years past, between 600 and 800 people from both sides of the Hudson have participated.

Because of all the rain this spring, some of the gardens may look a bit weathered, Feldman says, but "the weather and the rain is really popping plants and they're really growing. The rain certainly has put a lot of green on."

There's a good mix of properties on the tour — riverfront properties like Atlas Acre and the garden of Florence and Walter Katzenstein on North Broadway, an old-fashioned cottage garden at the boyhood home of painter Edward Hopper at 82 N. Broadway and a small, in-town garden that Feldman built at his former home on Lydecker Street in the heart of downtown Nyack.

"People love to see the great estates," Feldman says, "but they can relate to this garden (on Lydecker), something that's

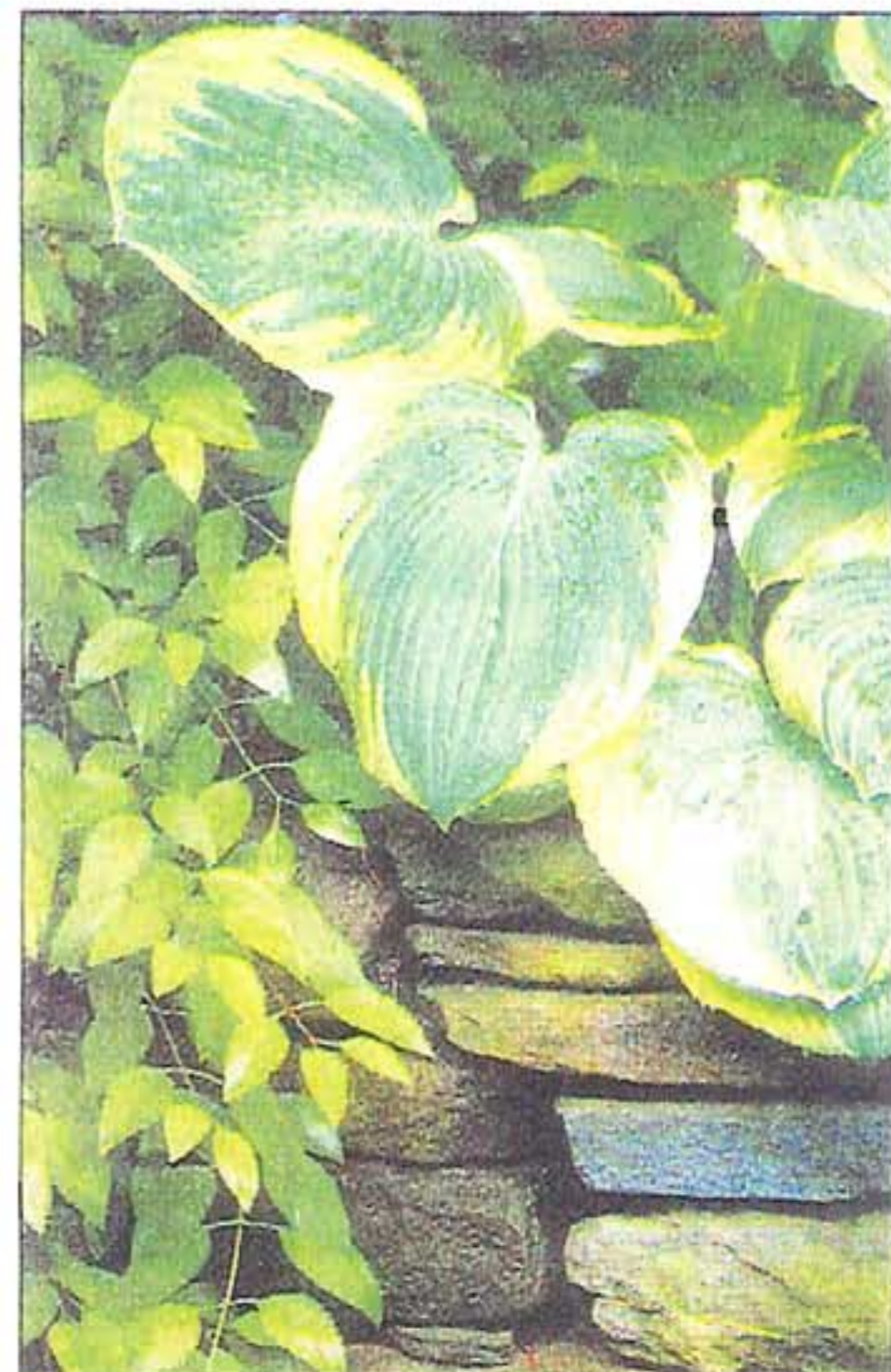


A stone terraced walkway leads down a hill to a riverside garden at Atlas Acre in Upper Nyack. The garden will be part of a tour of nine Nyack gardens Saturday to benefit the Hopper House Art Center.

Photos by Peter Carr/The Journal News



Miriam Wexler's old-fashioned day lilies. Right, hostas on a stone wall at Brian and Vicky Markiet's backyard garden in Nyack.



within their reach."

The tiny yard — 15 by 30 feet — features a reflecting pond with fish, bluestone walls, live bamboo plants and a cut bamboo fence for privacy, and a host of shade-tolerant perennials, including hostas, ferns, bleeding hearts, forget-me-nots and coral bells. There's just room for a small table and two chairs.

Rick and Susan Stockton's garden in Upper Nyack is much

Please see TOUR, 2E



Lush vistas

TOUR, from 1E

larger but with the same intimate, intensely private feel to it. To make their 1/3-acre yard seem more expansive, the Stocktons have created a series of garden rooms that flow easily around their patio and pool. "Plus, we hate to mow," Susan says.

At Atlas Acre, Feldman seems to know every plant, every brick and every stone on the 100-by-500-foot parcel, and he's happy to explain which ones he added and which ones he uncovered and restored.

The thousands of bricks that line the floors of the terraces came from the floor of the original pink granite house, which was a carriage house for the estate next door on North Broadway. The bricks, which were imported from Italy a century ago, were relaid by Feldman and his crew in the same herringbone pattern as the flooring in the carriage house.



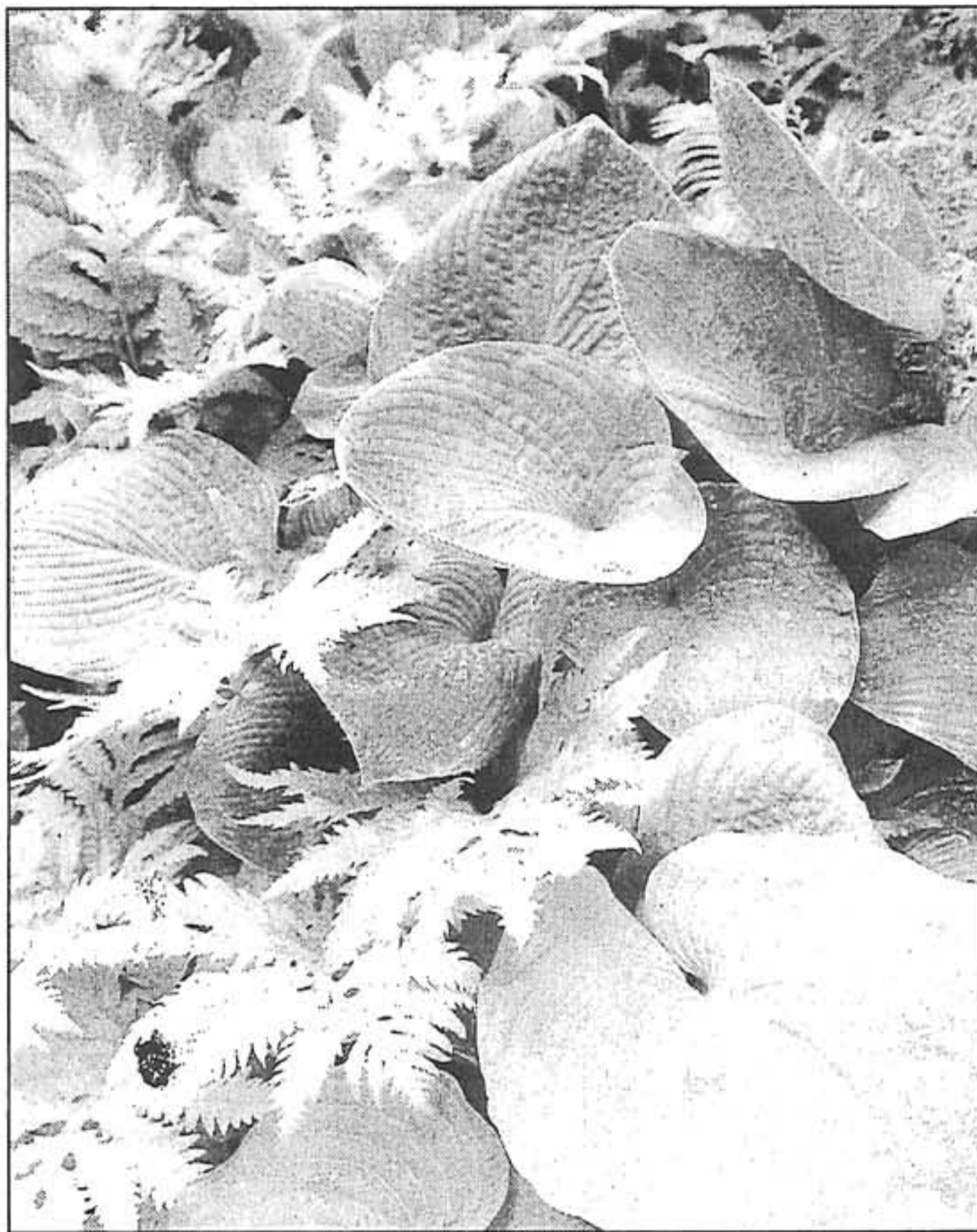
Jon Feldman

Hand-cut stones from the original house, which was expanded and renovated by the current owner, have also been recycled in the garden — they now line the walkways between the terraces.

To make the terraces, Feldman brought in more than 300 tons of bluestone. Each terrace provides a wave of color and is planted with only one or two species of low-maintenance shrubs and perennials, such as red and yellow barberry, purple buddleia, spirea, juniper and blue-flowering caryopteris. The bloom times vary over several months, so something is nearly always flowering.

The property was once owned by Mary Fleming, a renowned American horticulturist from the mid-20th century. The front yard contains some of her original plantings, including a yellow-flowering rhododendron that has been named in her honor.

The estate is named for the giant blue atlas cedar tree in the front yard, which provides a huge shade canopy. "It's really a spectacular tree," Feldman says.



Peter Carr/The Journal News

Ferns and hostas mingle in Miriam Wexler's garden.

The century-old stand of bamboo, which stretches up at least 50 feet into the sky and seems to catch every breeze from the river, is equally spectacular.

Except for a few day lilies and hostas near the house, most plantings here are deer-resistant — dianthus, salvia, epimedium, Scotch broom and ornamental grasses. If you share your yard with deer, this is a great garden to visit to get ideas on what to plant.

On the other side of North Broadway, Miriam Wexler's lush garden on a half-acre corner lot in Upper Nyack has long been a mainstay on garden tours of Nyack. This is a well-established garden with stately trees — blue spruce, hollies, white pines and hemlocks — and mixed borders with bulbs, shrubs and native perennials. She calls her garden Cornuscopia, after the 22 dogwoods in her yard (*Cornus* is the botanical name for dogwood).

"Every dogwood was planted by the birds, then transplanted by me," Wexler says. An unusual variety that's in bloom now is a yellow-flowering Korean dogwood.

Along with dogwoods, visitors will find large rhododendrons, hydrangeas and azaleas for structure, old-fashioned day lilies, poppies, clematis and hostas, and a wild mix of native wildflowers and ferns. If you look hard, you can

even find blueberries and strawberries in the mix.

"I really have a wild garden," says Wexler, who at 85 still does all of her own weeding, transplanting and pruning, "and I cultivate the idea of wildness."

Feldman says, "This is such an old garden that it's held up well in this weather — and every year it's different."

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On the tour

Florence and Walter Katzenstein's Riverfront Garden: A crescent of perennials, a wildflower section and a Japanese garden.

Dori and Walter LeCroy's Nature Garden: An informal riverfront garden of perennials, herbs and grasses.

Randi and George Shebitz's Serenity Garden: Constantly evolving gardens around a majestic home, from shade-loving perennial gardens to sun-drenched rose beds; eclectic use of garden ornaments and sculpture.

Windsong: Grand vistas and intimate courtyards; natural stone walkways, a formal herb garden and a sense of experimentation; sweeping plantings in multileveled gardens. (First time on garden tour.)

Rick and Susan Stockton's Le Jardin: Classic gardens with well-appointed rooms surrounding a pool and a centuries-old house; lush wisteria and a towering ginkgo tree. (First time on tour.)

Hopper House Art Center: Old-fashioned cottage garden on the north side of the restored boyhood home of painter Edward Hopper.

Miriam Wexler's Cornuscopia: Established trees and mixed borders of bulbs, perennials and shrubs.

Brian and Vicki Markiet's in-town garden: City-lot-sized garden with cozy, lush plantings. (First time on tour.)

Atlas Acre: 12 terraces down to the Hudson; original garden structures, dating back over 100 years. (First time on tour.)

If you go ...

Hours: 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. Saturday.

Tickets: \$15 per person. Tickets for the garden tour (rain or shine) will be available Saturday at the Hopper House (82 N. Broadway, Nyack) and at the English Tudor home of Florence and Walter Katzenstein (507 N. Broadway, Upper Nyack).

Benefit: Proceeds go to the nonprofit Edward Hopper Art Center, which is in the boyhood home of the famed American painter.

Information: Hopper House Art Center, 845-358-0774; www.edwardhopperhouseart-center.org. Volunteers will be on hand at each garden to answer questions.