



THE FEARRINGTON HOUSE RECEIVES RELAIS & CHATEAUX'S 2012 GARDEN AWARD

ITS NATURALISTIC GARDENS AND BUCOLIC SOUTHERN SETTING SELECTED AS BEST AMONG 500 PROPERTIES

Pittsboro, NC, December 5, 2011 – At Relais & Chateaux's international congress in Lisbon, Portugal, The Ferrington House was selected from among its approximately 500 worldwide member properties to receive the 2012 award for best gardens. Proprietor R.B. Fitch and General Manager Theresa Chiettini accepted the honor.

The Garden Award “recognizes the most beautiful of the many Relais & Châteaux gardens” says Relais & Chateaux, adding that Ferrington House was selected because it “offers exquisite green spaces where you can relax, stroll, seek inspiration; 100% in the open air, near meadows where cattle graze and next to 60 beds of flowers and aromatic herbs and lawns.”

Ferrington House shares the honor, which is co-sponsored by Rozès port, with past winners that include: The [Cellars-Hohenort Hotel](#) located near Cape Town, South Africa, set over nine spectacular acres at the base of Table Mountain, and [Le Manoir aux Quat'Saisons](#) in Great Milton, Oxford, UK, whose gardens includes a magnificent two acre vegetable and herb garden that produces over 90 types of vegetables for use in their kitchens.

The 'Ferrington Look'

Ferrington House employs a dedicated, full-time staff of seven to maintain the gardens and grounds, which were recently featured in a May 2011 [article in Our State magazine](#). The team consists of three groundskeepers and four gardeners, the latter of whom maintain sections of plant beds in the Village Center. The gardeners have over the years developed a “Ferrington look” involving the integration of bulbs, annuals, perennials, shrubs and mature trees, creating an intensively cultivated look in most planting beds. Gardeners coordinate plant choices yet have broad autonomy within their areas. Designs are informal yet meticulous, work with micro-climates and offer color and interest throughout the year.

The result is “a densely planted, hand-crafted look that’s hard to find elsewhere. Our gardeners are artists in the way they weave colors and textures throughout the year,” says gardens manager Greg Fitch, son of proprietor R.B. Fitch and the late Jenny Fitch, who started Ferrington’s gardens in the 1980s.

Another unique aspect to the gardens is the visible and friendly presence of the gardeners, who are easy to spot in their colorful “Ferrington Gardens” shirts. They enjoy talking to visitors, whether it’s explaining what’s going on in the gardens, giving a cutting or weighing in on a visitor’s plant problem back home.

The gardeners also decorate Ferrington’s Village Center for festivities like Halloween, when roughly sixty pumpkins are hand carved, lit and displayed; and the holidays, when two dozen



Christmas trees are installed and festooned with white string lights, and buildings are draped with pine branch garlands. Several on-site greenhouses offer propagation and overwintering.

The Story of the Gardens

R.B. and Jenny purchased the Fearington farm in the mid-1970s, with the goal of creating a community complete with a 'gathering place' or village center. Their vision involved keeping and reusing farm buildings, and carefully tucking new buildings between them. The result has been a center that has a unique 'patina' and character, one honoring the agricultural heritage of the farm.

Jenny opened the Fearington House Restaurant in the former homestead in 1980. Soon thereafter, she felt that diners in the country might like to stroll in a garden before or after their meal. Over the next decade, the gravel driveway and parking area adjacent to the homestead was replaced with a more intimate setting of lawns and planting beds, from the formal Knot Garden to the herbaceous Dovecote Garden. The surrounding mature specimen trees (including one of the largest *Nyssa Sylvatica*, or black gum, trees in North Carolina), whether native or planted by the Fearington family, were integrated into the designs.

Until her death in 1995, Jenny collaborated with talented Southern landscape designers such as Dan Sears, Chip Calloway, Ryan Gainey and Edith Edelman on projects ranging from the Jenny's Garden to the Silo Road entrance.

By the 1980s, Fearington was becoming a gardens destination not only because of their beauty but also because famous garden luminaries were coming here. At Jenny's invitation, garden designers and authors like Rosemary Verey, Penelope Hobhouse and Lady Bird Johnson shared their wisdom to packed audiences in the Barn.

Over the past few years, new outdoor installations have been added, including:

- A public piazza complete with fountain, outdoor tables, chairs and umbrellas by The Belted Goat café
- An elegant, cobblestone courtyard entrance to the Barn, which is now a dramatic catering hall
- A new cottage courtyard entrance to Dovecote, the home and gift store
- An apothecary themed garden next to the Spa at Fearington, which opened in the fall of 2010
- An extension of walking paths in Camden Park, a 17 acre "mini Central Park" adjacent to the Village Center.

Fearington Gardener Donna Mears, who started here in 1991, worked with Jenny for four years. She said, "Jenny designed with a natural, light touch; she chose plants that gave color, texture and year-round interest. She imaged guests strolling lovely fragrant gardens on a soft warm May evening with a drink in hand. We strive for the same soft ease of beautiful gardening."

About The Fearington House

The Fearington House is a member of Relais & Chateaux, an association of the finest restaurants and hotels in the world. The 32-room Inn offers individually decorated rooms and stunning garden views. The Restaurant serves contemporary American cuisine and is the only AAA Five Diamond restaurant in the country that is also Green Certified™. The Spa at Fearington opened in October 2010, offering yet another reason to visit this elegant country destination. Fearington House is 8 miles south of Chapel Hill and 20 miles west of the Raleigh/Durham International Airport. For more information visit: www.fearington.com, and for more information about the gardens visit www.fearington.com/village/gardens.asp.



About Relais & Chateaux

There are currently about 500 Relais & Châteaux properties in 55 countries including 38 in the United States. Established in France in 1954, the mission of [Relais & Châteaux](#) is to spread its unique “art de vivre” across the globe by selecting outstanding properties with a truly unique character. The Association is a family of hoteliers from all over the world who share a passion for and a commitment to ensuring their guests are privy to moments of exceptional harmony, an unforgettable celebration of the senses.



Knot Garden by Fearington House Restaurant, decorated for the holidays



The garden staff proudly displaying Relais & Chateaux's Garden Award on November 30th



Adjacent to the Fearington House Inn, Jenny's Garden in early spring



A gardener with Inn guests in the summer, on walk to the Fearington House Restaurant

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