

BETTRIX FARRAND
LANDSCAPE GARDENER
BAR HARBOR, MAINE

July 7, 1922.

Mrs. Roberts Woods Bliss,
1785 Massachusetts Avenue,
Washington, D.C.

Dear Mildred:

You are the pearl of hostesses and clients. Not only am I overcome by your nice letters, but your efficiency (loathsome word) as a housekeeper. Imfrankly was too indignant at my exploits as a loser to tell you that I had forgotten fountain pen and foot rule as well as all my other impedimenta. I do not really usually behave as badly as this and do not display my pin-headedness so obviously. You are very nice to take it so good-temperedly and to restore my lost property.

One of the reasons I have delayed sailing for a week is because I wanted a few days to look over your survey carefully and to work out certain studies of the garden for you. I am a little disappointed that it has not yet turned up, but it may. Now I am expecting to leave in the Kroonland of the 15th, but the few days respite means that when your plans come I shall be able to mull over them peacefully for a day or two.

The more I think of the place the more essential it seems to me first to adjust the levels on the east side of the Orangery. Even the poor photographs I took at the Oaks show how unconvincing the grades are in that direction. It may sound ungracious to say I am glad to delay beginning work on the Oaks for a couple of months, but what it actually means is that I want to make the work on it as good as I am capable of doing. You have no idea of the feeling I have always had for your people on account of my first work having come to me from your family and because the combination of a place like the Oaks, a climate like Washington and the sympathetic and quick understanding of a critical friend make a stimulus to ones imagination and a wish to do ones very best work. There is not much fun in working with people who do not know what they want and whose feeling for line and design is formless. So that what I shall try to do with the Oaks is to simply be your gardening pair of hands, carrying out your ideas. As our minds run along the same lines it is going to be quite exciting to see when we think simultaneously the same ideas and I shall look for sharp criticism from you and shall equally tell you if your ideas do not seem to me likely to work well.

The report you will receive with this letter is in a sense a talking out of various ideas and suggestions about the place. Many of them are hardly more, but one wants to

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LANDSCAPE ARCHITECT
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exhaust and throw out possibilities before hand, rather than regret one has not considered them after the work is started. It will, of course, be almost impossible to make a garden plan before I leave. In the first place, the time is very short, and, in the second place, I honestly have no idea how the terraces are going to work out until the grades have been fussed over. If you think well of it, I can attack the problem of the big retaining wall this summer and have a young architect with whom I work try out a few schemes for stairs, landings etc., so that we shall have them to discuss when I get back in the autumn. In this way it will not burden Mr. Brooke with more drawing than his office can cope with. My employing the young architect involves you in no obligation, as he distinctly works for me as architect and draftsman and his accounts go through my office.

As for the colors of the rose garden I should quite frankly cut out almost all of the pinks and grow them in the cutting garden or among the borders of the vegetable garden. But, like you, I see a medley of soft yellows, oranges and orange-salmon colors, blacks and creamy whites, and none of that horrid shade known as "cerise" by the milliners. I should also mix in some boxbushes and yew as there is nothing that makes a better background for rose coloring. Jasmine and honeysuckle with lilies and a general attractive floppy tangle of plants that will make the garden look used and lived in as quickly as possible.

In the herbaceous garden on the level below, the idea seemed to be of rather small groups of flowers of soft colors, no very large mass of any one color predominating in order to keep the suggestion of flowers as continuous as possible. This is hardly possible if one has big splashes of a single variety.

July 8, 1922.

To my great joy the survey has just come and I have been distracted from my mornings work by the interest of looking it over.

The fall of the land between the end of the Orangery and the water level of the pool is incredible. There is a drop of over forty feet which makes our terraces quite an amusing

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study. One thing I notice with some perturbation, and that is that the survey has shown a side street laid out through the north part of your property. He gaily calls it T Street North. Do you suppose there is any danger of this being cut through in our time?

The survey seems to be very good with the exception of the omission of the big Magnolia south of the Orangery. *the Apple N. of the Terraces.* This is important but can be added later.

A hasty glance at the grades makes me almost feel that some of the terracing will have to be split up into two levels and the present rose garden shows a slope of ten feet from east to west in a distance of about eighty feet. No wonder it looked sloping and restless.

The herbaceous garden does not slope quite as much but is still rather uneasy with its seven or eight feet of drop.

I am hoping to be able to get off another note to you before I leave, but in case I do not you may be quite sure that I shall take my survey with me and fuss over it happily on my journeys. With ever so many thanks for all, not only your retriivings, but your hospitality and the nice messages from both you and your husband, which are gratefully returned, I am

Yours ever affectionately,

Betrix Farrand

P.S. The tree with large leaves and bright green bark comes from southern China and is called Sterculia platanifolia. Mr. Sargent writes that he did not know that it was hardy in Washington, but that it is often naturalized in Florida. The name "Sterculia" came to my mind when I saw the tree, but it seemed impossible that it should be this plant so far north.

*Please forgive the vagaries of an anxious
Stenographer!*