



# Smithsonian *Gardens*

## Mary Riley Smith Records

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## Collection Overview

<b>Repository:</b>	Archives of American Gardens
<b>Title:</b>	Mary Riley Smith Records
<b>Date:</b>	1986-2013 (bulk 1995-2005)
<b>Identifier:</b>	AAG.MRS
<b>Creator:</b>	Smith, Mary Riley (Garden_designer)
<b>Extent:</b>	6.75 Cubic feet (design records; plans and drawings)
<b>Language:</b>	English .
<b>Summary:</b>	The Mary Riley Smith Records document the decades-long career of Manhattan-based garden designer, writer, and lecturer Mary Riley Smith. It includes drawings, plans, planting lists, notes, correspondence, invoices, estimates, 35 mm slides, negatives, photographs, digital files on CDs, and other materials relating to many of Smith's garden design projects, dating from 1986-2013.

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## Administrative Information

### Immediate Source of Acquisition Note

Mary Riley Smith donated her collection of garden design records to the Archives of American Gardens in 2014.

### Custodial History Note

Collection of garden design records generated and compiled by Mary Riley Smith during the course of her professional career donated by Smith to the Archives of American Gardens in 2014.

### Other Finding Aids Note

A listing of projects in the Mary Riley Smith Records was generated by Mary Riley Smith prior to her donating them to the Archives of American Gardens.

### Preferred Citation Note

Smithsonian Institution, Archives of American Gardens, Mary Riley Smith Records

### Conditions Governing Access Note

Access to original archival materials by appointment only. Researcher must submit request for appointment in writing. Certain items may be restricted and not available to researchers. Please direct reference inquiries to the Archives of American Gardens: [aag@si.edu](mailto:aag@si.edu).

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## Biographical Note

Garden designer Mary Riley Smith grew up in a family of gardeners and developed an affinity for gardens at an early age. After studying horticulture and garden design at the New York Botanical Garden she began her own landscape design firm, Mary Riley Smith Garden Design Inc., in the early 1990s. During her professional career Smith designed and implemented several types of gardens, though the majority were private and residential. Her projects are located in Manhattan, the greater New York area, Long Island, and Connecticut. The private gardens are found in a variety of settings including urban, suburban, and rural. In addition to private gardens, Smith designed and coordinated the installation of sidewalk, terrace, and courtyard gardens for a number of co-op buildings in Manhattan. Smith designed a number of public gardens and spaces including planting beds at the Cooper-Hewitt National Design Museum in Manhattan where she undertook design work and supervised installation for twenty years. She also worked in Manhattan on other public, corporate, college, religious institution, and social club gardens. Smith collaborated with landscape architects Donna Gutkin and Alessandra Galletti on some of her garden designs. She worked with numerous contractors and other individuals to complete her projects. Throughout her decades-long career, she designed and completed more than 80 projects.

In addition to her work as a landscape designer, Smith has also written and lectured on the subject. Her book, *The Front Garden: New Approaches to Landscape Design*, was published in 1991. She has written articles for various periodicals including *Garden Design*, *Countryside*, *BBG Garden Record*, and *Long Island Monthly*. Smith has taught and lectured on the subject of garden design to various gardening and horticultural groups at the Cooper-Hewitt National Design Museum and New York Botanical Garden. Smith's garden designs, including her own, have been featured in *Traditional Home*, *Better Homes and Gardens*, *House Beautiful*, *The New Yorker*, and *Garden Design*.

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## Scope and Contents Note

The Mary Riley Smith Records document the decades-long career of Manhattan-based garden designer, writer, and lecturer Mary Riley Smith. It includes drawings, plans, planting lists, notes, correspondence, invoices, estimates, 35 mm slides, negatives, photographs, digital files on CDs, and other materials relating to many of Smith's garden design projects, dating from 1986-2013. The bulk of Smith's projects were private, residential gardens of all sizes in urban, suburban, and rural areas in Manhattan, Long Island, and Connecticut. One such project included in the collection is Smith's own garden that she designed for her home on Long Island, New York. Other projects Smith worked on include gardens for apartment buildings, libraries, colleges, religious institutions, and social clubs. Her public commissions include the Battery Park entrance gardens, Lincoln Square Business Improvement District, Rockefeller Center, and Cooper-Hewitt National Design Museum, all in Manhattan. A significant portion of the materials are textual in nature; the remainder are drawings and plans, many of which are oversized.

The client files document design decisions made between Smith and her clients. The collection records the collaborative work between Smith, landscape architects, contractors, and other individuals who helped build the gardens. These materials detail the process of planning the garden, outlining the work to be done, establishing a budget, providing estimates, and setting a schedule to complete the work. While the bulk of the materials relate to Smith's design projects, the collection also contains materials from her professional practice. These include clipping files, 35mm slides, photographs, drawings, plans, and notes from lectures and presentations given by Smith. Also included are two copies of Smith's book that was published in 1991, *The Front Garden: New Approaches to Landscape Design*.

## **Arrangement Note**

The collection is organized in series according to the type of garden as designated by Mary Riley Smith: Series 1: Urban Residential Series 2: Suburban/Rural Residential Series 3: Apartment Buildings Series 4: Clubs and Non-Profits Series 5: Business Improvement Districts Series 6: Corporations Within each garden type, the files are arranged geographically by state and city.