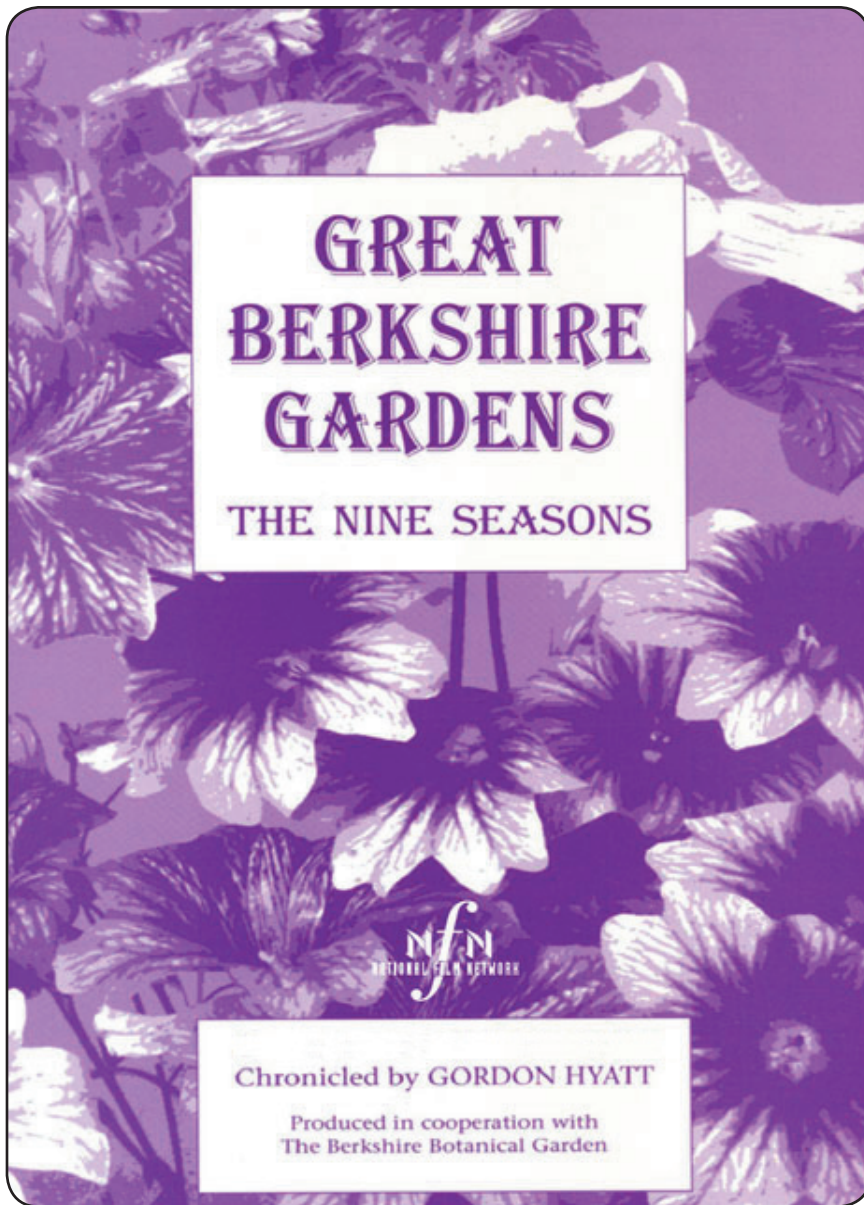


# Discussion Guide



In 1929 renowned sculptor Daniel Chester French designed a garden for a friend, Dr. William Terhune, who lived in Chesterwood a few miles from the sculptor's Berkshire Hills studio. In the years since, the garden has overgrown.

Letters between French and Terhune were discovered at Chesterwood and delivered to the present owners, Gordon & Carole Hyatt. They decided to restore the garden and continue work that was never completed. Working with the landscape led Hyatt to document a year in the life of several Berkshire gardens--following the nine gardening seasons outlined by the eminent 18th century naturalist Linnaeus.

Nearby grow gardens by other important landscape designers including Frederick Law Olmsted, Beatrix Jones Farrand, French's nephew Prentice, Fletcher Steele and novelist Edith Wharton. *Great Berkshire Gardens* presents both a history of American landscape design from its beginnings by Olmsted and Farrand, as well as concepts using traditional design principles today.

This one-hour program visits Chesterwood, The Mount, Naumkeag, The Mission House, Hill House, Wheatleigh, and The Berkshire Botanical Garden. Practical issues are covered by experts including Bud Race, head gardener at Chesterwood; Gertrude Burdsall, who discusses herbs and their folklore at the Berkshire Botanical Garden; and Scott Marshall, Deputy Curator of The Mount, who explores how Wharton's creative work was informed by her passion for gardening. Wharton's original gardens, since restored to their turn-of-the-century prime, are seen in vintage photographs.

Garden writer Michael Pollan, author of *Second Nature*, describes how any homeowner who is willing to exchange traditional lawnscapes for landscape can practice garden design. Conservationist Peter Berle speculates on the future of the natural landscape in Berkshire County in the face of contemporary development.

*Great Berkshire Gardens* is narrated and written by Gordon Hyatt and is a production of Hyatt Associates. This documentary is underwritten by grants from the Massachusetts Foundation for the Humanities, The High Meadow Foundation, The Berkshire Visitors Bureau and The Mortimer Levitt Foundation.

Produced in cooperation with the Berkshire Botanical Garden, a not-for-profit institution, Stockbridge, MA, established in 1931

*Great Berkshire Gardens* was inspired by the Historic Garden designed by Daniel Chester French.



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**Audience**

The general public

**Courses**

- History
- Social Studies
- Garden Design
- Landscape Architecture

**Notes**

**Age/Grade** High School and above

**Instructions/Advice**

This film can be viewed in separate segments, following the dates on each segment as a year long experience, or played in one setting.

**IMPORTANT FEATURES**

**Preliminary Remarks**

This documentary provides several levels of interest: first, the film follows the calendar to experience the flow of a garden's seasons; second, social history is reflected in gardens designed to compliment country estates--reflected to this day in the wide popularity of gardening as a hobby; third, there are lessons of ecology and land management as well as insights into what makes a successful garden.

**Understanding**

Personalities referenced in this film are interesting and have importance in American political, social and artistic history. For instance, on the Internet look up Daniel Chester French (sculptor), Edith Wharton (author), Beatrix Jones Ferrand and Frederick Law Olmsted (landscape architects) and the place of Linnaeus, the Swedish naturalist who devised scientific names for plants.

- 1) Does this film give new insights into what comprise "seasons"?
- 2) How can gardens improve communities and add value to homes?
- 3) Does the cycle of a garden's life have parallels with real life?
- 4) If so, how can this be seen or explained?

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