

## HORTICULTURE



Winterthur

A Winterthur greenhouse of old. A \$1 million gift from Alice Cary Brown and W.L. Lyons Brown is making the greenhouse project possible.

# Classroom taking root

## Winterthur to use greenhouse as teaching space

By BETSY PRICE  
The News Journal

Winterthur's horticultural classes have been so successful that the museum plans to use a \$1 million donation to renovate a greenhouse for teaching space.

Alice Cary Brown's and W.L. Lyons Brown's gift will create a 3,000-square-foot classroom, to be named the Brown Horticulture Learning Center.

Winterthur, which began its horticulture classes about five years ago, offers about 100 a year. Thousands have attended them. The classes, often held outdoors, were subject to the weather, says Chris Strand, Winterthur's director of garden and estate.

The renovation will add to the area's rich horticultural educational opportunities, many of them inspired by former du Pont family homes and gardens, including Longwood and Mt. Cuba.

Rather than focus on broader, more general topics, as other institutions do, Winterthur focuses largely on its garden, designed by H.F. du Pont to show off the seasons. Winterthur's classes are also usually free to members or included with admission.

"It's like the difference in paying for a trainer or going for a walk," Strand says. "Ours are much more casual. I think that's why people have found them."

Even so, the classes have an immediate payoff, says estate historian Maggie Lidz.

"This garden is a Brandywine Valley



The News Journal/ROBERT CRAIG

Chris Strand (foreground), Winterthur's director of garden and estate, and John Castle, director of facility services, in front of the greenhouse that will be rebuilt.

garden, and people have the ability to take the ideas home," she says.

The Greenville home of H.F. du Pont, whose sense of decor aesthetics and use of American antiques made him an icon in interior design and gardening circles, Winterthur once had 12 buildings with 21 temperature zones. Ferns, figs, mushrooms, dahlias, orchids, roses, palms, poinsettias, chrysanthemums and various vegetables all grew there. The new center will use the tropical house, which is sunk into the bank behind it so it could be completely darkened to help force plants.

Visitors who walk from the parking lot/visitor center area to the gift shop/galleries area have passed the greenhouse that will be renovated.

"This gift will transform Winterthur, as the Brown Horticulture Learning Center will be at the core of the estate, joining the museum complex with the visitor center," David Roselle, director of Winterthur, said in a press release.

Lee and Alice Cary Brown are longtime supporters of Winterthur. He joined the Winterthur Board of Trustees in 1993 and served as chairman from

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Winterthur

Artist's rendering of Winterthur's horticultural learning center.

# Greenhouse: Project fits with du Pont vision

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1997 to 2001, when he resigned to become U.S. Ambassador to Austria.

"As I learned about Henry Francis du Pont's vision for his garden at Winterthur, I realized there is a need for a dedicated space where all ages can come and learn about his legacy and explore horticultural topics in depth with Winterthur experts," said Alice Cary. "And there is no better place than in a historic greenhouse right in the middle of the estate."

Greenhouses once were integral to the operation of estates, providing food in addition to plants for the house and gardens. They are expensive to run, though, both in terms of human labor and energy consumption. Many estates across the coun-

try have let theirs fall into disrepair.

Lidz believes Winterthur's greenhouses are one of the last large lots left in a private estate, but several other area estates still have greenhouses intact. Longwood still uses some of theirs for its garden displays, and Nemours, the home of A.I. du Pont, is about to redo one its original greenhouses as part of its ongoing renovations.

Lidz believes du Pont would be happy to know that the center was being created.

"He was completely for this estate being used for educational purposes, and this fits right into his ideas about how to keep Winterthur alive," Lidz says.

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