



NEWPORT  
MANSIONS

The Preservation Society  
of Newport County

**For Immediate Release**  
**June 27, 2025**

## **New Bio-Absorption Garden Unveiled at Marble House**

NEWPORT, R.I. – A ribbon-cutting ceremony was held in the southwest corner of the Marble House visitor parking lot Friday to unveil a new bio-absorption garden.

A project of Scenic Aquidneck (The Preservation Society of Newport County, Aquidneck Island Land Trust, Preserve Rhode Island and the van Beuren Charitable Foundation), it was constructed by O'Connor Design Build in Middletown.

Preservation Society CEO Trudy Coxe noted that this new rain garden is the latest in a series of important projects completed by Scenic Aquidneck. Others include rebuilding hundreds of feet of stone wall, a project to bury power lines along Second Beach in Middletown, documenting historic barns across Aquidneck Island and pushing for historic tax credits at the state level.

“Over the years, this (Scenic Aquidneck) partnership has achieved some remarkable things,” Coxe said. “We’ve learned that partnerships matter, progress takes time and that preservation and environmental protection go hand in hand.”

This 2,800-square-foot garden will capture and filter stormwater runoff, reducing pollution and mitigating flooding. It has a static holding capacity of 25,000 gallons, and during heavy rain events, it has the capacity for 38,000 gallons while it drains.

“Just look at it, isn’t it beautiful?” Aquidneck Island Land Trust Executive Director Terry Sullivan asked. “When we originally talked about this under the auspices of Scenic Aquidneck, we (also) thought of it as a demonstration site, where people could come, or we could bring groups and show them this rain garden as a way to inspire them to do something similar at their own homes or within their own properties.”

Jim Donahue, the Preservation Society’s Curator of Historic Landscapes and Horticulture, explained that while the garden is functional and environmentally friendly, it also beautifies the space with an array of new native plantings that will promote biodiversity while attracting birds and pollinators.

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“We've selected a variety of herbaceous plants that naturally grow together and form colonies,” Donahue said. “Our goal was to reduce maintenance, so we chose plant material that requires minimal care. We allow all flowering plants to go to seed, which benefits local bird populations. In addition, we’ve included several berry-producing plants—such as blueberries and viburnums—to support berry-eating wildlife.... We’ve included a walking path and granite benches to enhance the experience. Overall, it’s a naturalistic, wildlife-friendly garden that also serves a practical purpose in the landscape.”

*The Preservation Society of Newport County, Rhode Island, is a nonprofit organization accredited by the American Alliance of Museums. It is dedicated to preserving and interpreting the area's historic architecture, landscapes, decorative arts and social history. Its 11 historic properties – seven of them National Historic Landmarks – span more than 250 years of American architectural and social development.*

For more information, please visit [www.NewportMansions.org](http://www.NewportMansions.org).

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**EDITORS:** Dropbox link for press release, captions and images:

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