2020 OSGF Residency Handbook

This handbook includes information for anyone (artists, scholars, and fellows) considering applying for or accepting a residency at Oak Spring. Here you will learn more about the amenities, resources, and inspiration that residents will have access to during their stay, as well as information about the neighboring towns of Oak Spring, and the greater community of northwestern Virginia.

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Introduction

At Oak Spring, the story of rock begins nearly a billion years ago. The story of mountains reaches 30,000 feet. For oak, the story connects to Asia. Everywhere embodies a story of change in a complex, ever-moving landscape. Axe, stone, fence, path, mill: humans weave additional layers of story onto the landscape. Layers increase; the stories become more interconnected. On the landscape, intersecting lines create complexity as one story is laid on top of another. We are thrilled to be able to continue this story by hosting and supporting individuals’ creative practice, artistic contemplation, and scholarly research in this setting.

The residency program is a relatively new component of Oak Spring Garden Foundation’s (OSGF) emerging programming. Our aspiration for the Oak Spring Garden Foundation is to support and inspire fresh thinking and bold action on the history and future of plants, including the art and culture of plants, gardens and landscapes. Our four programmatic areas – the history and future of plants; horticultural practice; botanical, garden and landscape art, including the culture of gardens and landscapes; and the importance of plants to human well-being – leverage our founder Rachel (“Bunny”) Lambert Mellon’s legacy, including her gardens, Library, home, and 700-acres of land.

As part of our mission, we look forward to hosting artists, scholars, and researchers, of all kinds who are influenced by a sense of place, including the natural world and humankind’s place in it. Our hope is for our residents to be inspired by each other, the estate with its gardens, rich and abundant wildlife, and the rare books on plants, landscape and gardens housed in our Library.

In 2020, we will host the following residency programs, which may strategically overlap in our hope to engage individuals across disciplines of art and science:

- Botanical Artists in Residence (BAiR) – Spring 2020
- Artists in Residence (AiR) – Summer and Fall 2020
- Scholars in Residence (SiR) – Summer and Fall 2020
- Oak Spring Fellows (plant conservation and plant organismal biology writers) – January – June 2020
Our Site and Property

The 700-acre OSGF property has a variety of significant sites for anyone interested in human history and nature, as well as wide-open vistas of the Broken Hills, Bull Run Mountains, and Blue Ridge Mountains.

The property extends on both sides of Rokeby Road (State Rte. 623), forming what can feel like two distinct areas: the Main Residence/Library tract and the Rokeby tract. On the eastern side of the road sits the 260-acre Main Residence/Library tract, which includes the Oak Spring Gallery, Broodmare Barn, and temporary intern housing. On the western side is the 440-acre Rokeby tract that includes your residences, your studio spaces (for artists/writers), and the site of what will become our Bio-Cultural Conservation Farm. In order to not accidentally intrude on any of the neighboring properties, we ask that you adhere to the roads and paths outlined in maps that will be provided in advance of your arrival.

We hope that residents enjoy exploring the entire property and especially the spectacular view-sheds that the Mellons helped conserve through conservation easements that apply to over 4,000 acres into perpetuity. The landscape is so special it is fun to explore in all weathers – with the possible exception of thunderstorms – and it is especially beautiful in the light of the early morning and early evening.

We are trying to preserve the unique character of the Mellon buildings and estate for the long term, so we ask that residents treat the facilities here with care.
Resident Resources and Inspiration at Oak Spring

We are continually working to align and share the many resources at Oak Spring with residents. We do our best to host residents—artists, writers, and scholars—to create a diverse group with diverse interests, so we are not surprised that residents have diverse interests in Oak Spring’s various resources. The following outlines some of Oak Spring’s unique resources that you are invited to take advantage of during your stay.

The Oak Spring Garden Library

Residents will be provided a tour of the Library, generally during the first day of their residency. Thereafter, residents are invited to visit the Oak Spring Garden Library and access the collection during normal business hours (Monday-Friday, 8am-4pm). While scholars/researchers will be expected to spend the majority (if not all) of their time in the Library (based on their proposed research activities), artists in residence must make an appointment to use the Library’s resources. Librarians Kim Fisher, Tony Willis, and Nancy Collins will be able to assist you with navigating the collection and handling rare materials. Artists in residence who are interested in the collection will need to take the initiative to visit and access the collection, but their doing so is encouraged and welcomed by Library staff.

The Oak Spring Garden Library comprises a collection of over 16,000 objects, including rare books, manuscripts, and works of art dating back to the 14th century. OSGF’s founder, Bunny Mellon, once said, “These books about the outdoors live not in dusty darkness, but behind simple pale oak doors, easily opened to the world they tell about.”

Bunny Mellon’s collecting led to the acquisition of some of the most significant works in the history of botany, botanical illustration, and garden and landscape design—not only the most beautiful but also those of the greatest historical and cultural importance—at a time when the field was still only of tangential interest to botanists, historians, and art historians. The collection mainly encompasses works relating to horticulture, landscape design, botany, natural history and voyages of exploration. There are also components relating to architecture, decorative arts, and classical literature.
There are a number of ways that anyone can familiarize themselves with the Library collection prior to visiting on-site. We have created this “Guide to Exploring the Library Collection” so that anyone can search and better understand some of the Library’s holding’s. The guide provides detailed information on how to access the following Library-related resources:

1. Catalogues: The Oak Spring Garden Library has also published four discursive catalogs highlighting some of the most influential and unique pieces in Bunny Mellon’s collection pertaining to trees, fruit, flowers, and herbs. Residents may view the four volumes as searchable e-books here (www.issuu.com/osgf.org), and the physical books are also freely available in the common areas of each resident’s home. Learn more about the Library at osgf.org/library.

2. The Google Arts and Culture Page – a selection of digitized works, including label copy and online exhibits

3. Videos – The OSGF YouTube page includes videos from visiting experts who have discussed pieces within the Library collection

4. Exhibitions and Exhibition Catalogs – materials published on the physical exhibits that have traveled to various museums.

5. OSGL searchable database -- is available at oakspringgarden.org/ then by going to “Search Database.”

The Oak Spring Garden and Landscapes

Our founder, Bunny Mellon, has been called an artist who worked in plants and landscapes the way other artists work in paint, fabric, and gems. As such, the half-acre Oak Spring Garden and the larger 700-acre Oak Spring landscape are available to artist residents for inspiration and perspective. Residents staying over one week will be provided a tour of the Garden and landscape during the first week of the residency. Thereafter, residents are encouraged to access the Garden and landscape as desired. During the course of the residency, various other programs will take place at Oak Spring, especially utilizing the
facilities on the Main Residence/Library tract. The schedule of guests will be communicated with residents, including if there is a rare occasion that the Garden or landscape are not accessible.

OSGF actively maintains the formal garden that Bunny Mellon managed during her lifetime. More information about the Oak Spring Garden is available at [www.osgf.org/gardens](http://www.osgf.org/gardens) and in the recent book *The Gardens of Bunny Mellon* by Linda Jane Holden.

Bunny Mellon wrote in her garden journal, “Landscape must put together things of nature that correspond to the person as well as that place and environment.” As OSGF continues to steward and maintain the sense of place that Mrs. Mellon created at Oak Spring, we completed a comprehensive site survey for the 263-acres that make up the Main Residence/Library tract of OSGF’s property. The survey resulted not just in a clearer picture of how to sustainably manage the land, but also a holistic sense of place, with threads connecting Oak Spring's future to its natural and human history. The full plan (“An Oak Spring Landscape: Human, Ecology, and Management at the Oak Spring Garden Foundation”) is available as a searchable e-books [here](issuu.com/osgf.org), and the physical book is also freely available in the common areas of each resident’s home.

**Bio-Cultural Conservation Farm**

In 2019 and 2020, OSGF is in the process of launching a Bio-Cultural Conservation Farm that will be located adjacent to the artist’s homes on the Rokeby side of the property. While we are still actively working on the details, we wanted to share the premise of this exciting new program, which will be further developed at the time of your arrival.

A “bio-cultural conservation farm” is a farm that stewards the cultivation of heirloom and heritage vegetables and fruits, and conserves them as living plants or as seed, in order to illustrate, save, and share the biological diversity of the edible plants that underpin our food system. Virginia is positioned in the piedmont region of Virginia, specifically in the foothills of Upper/Central Appalachia, which has been recognized as having the highest documented levels of agro-biodiversity in the U.S., Canada, and northern Mexico. We envisage that the farm will grow varieties of produce from many sources, not all of it from Appalachia. However, there will be a special focus on Appalachian heirloom and heritage varieties, as well as on crops with specific cultural and historic significance to northwestern Virginia.
Living at Oak Spring

Each resident cohort will be assigned a Resident Facilitator or OSGF staff person who will reside on the Rokeby property and is available to serve as the main liaison between residents, Oak Spring, and the local area. The Resident Facilitator happy to field your questions and if she doesn’t know the answer she will know who to get in touch with that does.

Security is at the gate at start of driveway to Main Residence. Peter Crane, the President of OSGF, and his wife Elinor Crane live in the house adjacent to the Broodmare Barn. Other staff members live off property in the surrounding community. There are a total of over 60 staff members at Oak Spring. Working hours in the Main Residence and Library are from 8am – 4pm Monday through Friday.

OSGF strives to maintain a creative atmosphere and supportive environment for artistic exploration. It is up to all residents to maintain appropriate and acceptable standards of behavior, including respect diversity and privacy, and the importance of protecting OSGF’s facilities and the land. We especially value our relationship with our neighbors and we feel privileged to be part of the community.

If points of contention or conflicts arise among the residents at Oak Spring, we expect that attempts to reach a solution among parties themselves will be successful. If resolution is not possible, residents are asked to bring any such issues to a Resident Facilitator.

Specific policies are as follows:

- Removal or destruction of OSGF property is prohibited. This includes furniture, appliances, tools, etc.
- Please respect the land by staying on roads and trails. Do not remove plants that are in the ground or alter them in any way (cutting branches, carving, pruning, etc.). Collecting materials that have blown down or fallen is allowed, but please either return these items to nature or take them with you at the end of your residency.
- The use of illegal drugs and the abuse of alcohol are prohibited on OSGF property.
- Firearms are only permitted for the Security team on OSGF property.
- Smoking is permitted only in designated outdoor areas. Smoking indoors is strictly prohibited.
- We have a firm no pets policy.
- Residents are not allowed to visit each other’s studios or living quarters without an invitation.
- Harassment of other residents, OSGF staff or neighbors will not be tolerated.
- We reserve the right to terminate the residency of any individual who we believe threatens the experience for themselves or others or causes destruction of OSGF property.
- Please respect our neighbors’ privacy and do not wander onto their property.
Privacy and Guests

OSGF strives to create a harmonious, creative community during each residency. To limit outside distractions, overnight guests are not allowed during residencies. Daytime guests are to be kept to a minimum. Day visitors must be registered at least 48-hours before arrival.

OSGF is not open to the public, but we do host conferences and symposia of no more than 20 people. Activities for these programs take place on the Oak Spring side of the property. Every effort will be made to inform you of activities and people on site and to not disturb you while you are in residence. If you do not wish to have visitors to your studio, please put your “do not disturb” sign on the studio door.

Getting Around

Although Oak Spring is located only 1.5 hours west of Washington D.C., the estate is nestled in a remote part of northwestern Virginia. Some residents may enjoy having the accessibility of a vehicle to travel off the estate, while others may prefer the bucolic escape that Oak Spring can provide without a vehicle. Ultimately, there is no requirement to have a vehicle during your residency and a rental vehicle is not an expense that we will reimburse. Bicycles will be provided for travel on the estate and a weekly trip to the grocery store will be scheduled and communicated to residents at least one week in advance. If you do wish to rent a vehicle, it is easiest done at Dulles airport or other rental agencies in or around Washington, D.C.

Accommodations

You should think of your home as your own and treat it appropriately. It is expected that all guests maintain the cleanliness of their spaces. If any furniture is moved around your room or the house please return it to its original location before departing your residency. A shared washer and dryer are located in the basement of the Clare Cottage. OSGF provides indoor and outdoor trash bags and basic cleaning supplies for your use. Housekeeping also has a supply of paper towels and toilet paper that you are encouraged to request once your initial
provision starts to run low. Please ask Housekeeping in-person if you need to be replenished, otherwise you’re welcome to supply your own.

Your accommodations are pre-assigned by lottery. Switching spaces is not possible.

Each resident will be issued an individual set of keys for the home they are staying in. There will be a lock/key for each individual bedroom as well as each house. If you are ever locked out of your residence or studio, please contact security and they will let you in.

You are also responsible for ensuring that all furnishings, plumbing, and appliances in the guest houses are maintained throughout your stay. If you notice something is broken, leaking, badly soiled or stained, or missing please report it to Skip Glascock, the Head of Facilities and Maintenance.

**Shared Meals**

Residents may be invited to optional prepared meals with their cohort (if others are also in residence while on-site) and either OSGF staff or visiting guests, usually not exceeding one meal/week. The date, time, location, and invited guests will be communicated with residents about one week in advance, and advanced RSVP will be requested. Aside from these meals, residents are responsible for their own meals in their home’s shared kitchen space, which has all major kitchen needs (including dishware, blenders, food processors, and full knife sets), as well as a pantry stocked with a limited amount of non-perishable goods (herbs/spices, etc.) for resident use. If we are providing ground transportation from Dulles or Union Station, our drivers are happy to stop at the grocery store on the way.

**Studios for Artists in Residence**

Residents using studios have 24-hour access to their studio. At this stage of OSGF’s Artists in Residence program, the studios that we offer do not have any equipment or supplies, so artists will need to bring all materials required for his/her artistic practice. All studios have a sink, bathroom access, and work surfaces. Residents are responsible for their studio’s up-
keep and general maintenance. If you do not want to be disturbed, please put the provided “do not disturb” sign on the door of your studio.

If you have specific needs or requests for your studio space, you are encouraged to submit that information you’re your application to the program. As with accommodations, studios are pre-assigned by lottery. Switching spaces is not possible. You are responsible for cleaning your studios as well as a final clean at the end of your residency.

**Wireless Internet**

Internet is provided in all homes. There is a limited amount of bandwidth for each building, so we ask that all residents be mindful of excessive downloads. Please be sure that any automatic cloud updating is paused while at Oak Spring. We have a number of open networks, however, being in a remote location, our Internet is sometimes not reliable. There are no passwords on the internet. At this time, the studios do not have internet or a landline phone, otherwise all other studios have internet. You may report internet outages to Skip Glascock (sg@oakspring.org).

**Before you leave**

At the end of your residency, we ask that you follow a cleaning checklist which we will provide in the last week of your residency. All linens (sheets, towels, pillowcases, bath mats) should be placed in the plastic bag we will provide for you. Leave pillows and duvets on the beds.

You will also be required to complete a brief Final Report and Exit Survey within 30-days of the completion of the residency. The Final Report will ask that you submit thumbnail images of all artistic works (if any, either completed or unfinished) created on-site, which will be saved as an internal archive held at OSGF and will not be shared with the public unless you authorize as such.