



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

May 10, 2021

***CHEEKWOOD ESTATE & GARDENS ACCEPTS COMMENDATION
FROM THE MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF JAPAN***



(NASHVILLE, TN) – At a ceremony today at Cheekwood Estate & Gardens, President and CEO Jane O. MacLeod accepted the Japanese Foreign Minister’s Certificate of Commendation in recognition of the promotion of mutual understanding between Japan and the U.S.A. The commendation comes after Cheekwood participated in a program by the Japanese Ministry of Land, Infrastructure, Transport and Tourism (MLIT) that supported the renovation and enhancement of its Blevins Japanese Garden. Cheekwood’s Japanese Garden was chosen for the program due, in part, to its well-established relationship with the Consul-General of Japan in Nashville, Kayoko Fukushima.

In 2019-20, thanks to a transformative gift from the Melba and Bill Blevins family, Cheekwood collaborated with landscape architect, Sadafumi (Sada) Uchiyama, Garden Curator at the Portland Japanese Garden in Oregon, to improve and enhance the garden. Uchiyama is a third-generation gardener and landscape architect from southern Japan, where his family has been involved in gardening for over a century. His methods are influenced by a unique blend of traditional Japanese gardening and Western landscape architecture. With the renovation, Uchiyama was respectful to the original concept designed by David Harris Engel, and included planning and executing a fuller enclosure and updating the space for today’s standards to be accessible to visitors in wheelchairs or with strollers.

“We are very honored to receive this commendation and grateful for our ongoing friendship with the Consulate-General of Japan,” said Jane O. MacLeod, President & CEO, Cheekwood. “The Consulate has played a major role in Cheekwood’s annual Japanese Moon Viewing, now it its 7th year, also providing assistance with recent enhancements to the Blevins Japanese Garden, one of Cheekwood’s most beautiful and beloved gardens.”

Established in 1990, *Shōmu-en, Blevins Japanese Garden* was originally designed by David Engel, one of the most important designers of Japanese gardens in the United States during the twentieth century. Engel specifically chose the site to ultimately lead the visitor to a landscape view representative of a canyon opening to the ocean and mountains. The garden is composed of linked segments that make up the entire experience including the Roji, the Bamboo Forest and the Viewing Pavilion. The origins of the garden at Cheekwood began in the 1960s, when a community with a shared vision for friendship between Tennessee and Japan began the effort to establish a Japanese garden on the property. The garden was constructed on the site of the former Cheek family tennis courts.

About Cheekwood

Cheekwood is considered one of the finest American Country Place Era estates in the nation. Formerly the family home of Mabel and Leslie Cheek, the extraordinary 1930s estate, with its 30,000 square foot Mansion and 55 acres of cultivated gardens and expansive vistas, today serves the public as a botanical garden, arboretum, and museum with period rooms and art galleries, showcasing works from its permanent collection as well as traveling exhibitions. The property includes 12 distinct gardens and a 1.5-mile woodland trail featuring modern and contemporary outdoor sculpture. Cheekwood is listed on the National Register of Historic Places, accredited by the American Alliance of Museums, and is a three-time *USA Today* Top 10 Botanical Garden. In 2020, the grounds were awarded a Level II National Arboretum Accreditation by The ArbNet Arboretum Accreditation Program and The Morton Arboretum. Cheekwood is located just 8 miles southwest of downtown Nashville at 1200 Forrest Park Drive. Daily hours of operation: Tuesday through Sunday 9 a.m. – 5 p.m. Admission to Cheekwood must be purchased in advance at cheekwood.org. For further information, call 615-356-8000 or visit cheekwood.org.

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