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Celebrating 10 years of Holiday LIGHTS at Cheekwood

Anniversary Event Features Enchanting New Décor and Surprise Light Installation

NASHVILLE, Tenn. – Nashville’s classic holiday tradition returns to Cheekwood Estate & Gardens with exciting new additions courtesy of a world-famous florist and a surprise marquee light installation.

To celebrate the 10th annual Holiday LIGHTS at Cheekwood, former Chief Floral Designer for the White House, Laura Dowling, will create elaborate custom decorations inside the Historic Mansion that will delight guests and spread holiday cheer. Dowling will also debut her new book on Christmas decorating, *Designing Christmas*. Preview copies of the book will be sold exclusively at Cheekwood gift shops and at Dowling’s lectures and workshops while supplies last.

A special surprise will also greet visitors at this year’s show. A dazzling three-dimensional display in the center of the Bradford Robertson Color Garden will reach 28 feet into the sky. This feature is the pinnacle of RGB technology and was made possible with a generous gift from the Andrea Waitt Carlton Family Foundation. The installation represents a full circle moment for the AWC Family Foundation, which provided a lead gift in 2013 to help make the first Holiday LIGHTS at Cheekwood possible and is now funding a display featuring technology not available 10 years ago.

The festive scenery begins at the front gates with elegant and creative light displays guests are accustomed to seeing at Holiday LIGHTS. A one-mile walking path will be aglow with over one million twinkling lights and 120 decorated trees. Visitors can also enjoy s’mores stations, seasonal libations, and a holiday marketplace.

“The 10th annual Holiday LIGHTS will be brighter than ever before,” said Cheekwood President and CEO Jane MacLeod, “In addition to a new brilliant installation in the garden amid more than one million lights, Laura Dowling’s beautiful creations will add an extra special element to this 10-year celebration and beloved tradition. We are excited to welcome guests to Cheekwood for this quintessential holiday experience.”

Holiday LIGHTS opens to the public November 22 and runs until January 5. A media preview featuring a tour of the Historic Mansion decor with Laura Dowling and

Cheekwood's President and CEO Jane MacLeod is scheduled for November 19 at 5 p.m. The new light installation will also be revealed for the first time at 6 p.m.

About Laura Dowling

From 2009-2015, Laura Dowling served as Chief Floral Designer at the White House. She managed the floral design for thousands of private and official White House parties, receptions, and state dinners as well as large-scale installations for the Fourth of July, Halloween, and the iconic White House Christmas. Dowling is known for her contemporary and romantic style of flower arranging that is rooted in classic French design.

Dowling is the author of *Floral Diplomacy at the White House*, *A White House Christmas*, *Wreaths*, *Bouquets*, and her new book *Designing Christmas*. She currently tours the country sharing her experiences at the White House and is a regular speaker at national, regional, and local horticulture associations, garden clubs and museums.

Holiday Décor in the Mansion

With the theme of "Gifts of the Garden," Dowling's holiday décor will celebrate the rich history and natural beauty of Cheekwood using elegant ornaments and ribbons, as well as special hand-crafted projects to create a warm and welcoming ambiance. The festive color palettes are inspired by the gardens at Cheekwood and are designed to complement the Mansion's architectural details and interior décor.

From handmade magnolia garlands to the iconic poinsettia tree in the Loggia, nine spaces inside the Mansion will feature inspiring and vibrant designs with a different theme – ranging from opulent plum, gold, and cranberry Italian-inspired décor in the entrance foyer, to a citrusy *l'orangerie* theme in the Loggia, and a classic "hunt country" display in the library. As visitors stroll through each thoughtfully curated room, they will be surrounded by scenes of the season set against the backdrop of the Historic Mansion and gardens. Guests are welcome to tour the Mansion during the day or in the evening during Holiday LIGHTS.

"I am excited and honored to be part of Cheekwood's iconic holiday installation this year. It's been such a pleasure to collaborate with the garden's talented team on this project to envision special room by room themes that complement the mansion's period colors and décor and honor Cheekwood's holiday traditions," said Dowling. "In addition, I also look forward to designing alongside the volunteers who will be joining me from across the country, including my friend, legendary White House designer and Nashville's own Jim Marvin, who has designed beautiful ornaments that will adorn the trees. The goal is to treat visitors to an unforgettable and magical holiday experience celebrating 'Gifts of the Garden' at Cheekwood."

Laura Dowling Book Signing, Lectures and Workshops

Lecture and Book Signing: *Designing Christmas*

November 20 | 10 a.m. | Massey Auditorium

Tickets: \$55 for Members | \$75 for Non-Members

In addition to previewing the décor at the Mansion, and a behind-the-scenes peek at her creative process for planning the Cheekwood holiday displays, Dowling will debut her new book on Christmas decorating, *Designing Christmas*. The book contains practical tips and step-by-step instructions to inspire readers to incorporate holiday décor in their homes using Dowling's 10 favorite design elements and 10 different design schemes ranging from classic and sophisticated to whimsical and charming. A limited number of preview copies of *Designing Christmas* will be available exclusively for purchase at Cheekwood's gift shops and at Dowling's lectures and workshops.

Lecture: *Designing Christmas in the White House Style*

December 6 | 1 p.m. | Massey Auditorium

Tickets: \$55 for Members | \$75 for Non-Members

As Chief Floral Designer at the White House, Dowling created stunning displays that made the season memorable and delighted visitors from around the country. In this special lecture, Dowling will give an overview of iconic White House Christmas moments over the years and share behind-the-scenes stories, amusing anecdotes and special tips for creating beautiful holiday displays at home.

Hands-On Workshop and Book Signing: An Elegant "Hunt Country" Wreath

December 7 | 9:30 a.m. – 12 p.m. | Massey Auditorium

Tickets: \$140 for Members | \$160 for Non-Members

Discover the secrets of an enchanting "hunt country" Christmas, as featured in this year's Cheekwood Library display, in this special, hands-on class. Under Dowling's guidance, participants will create a beautiful holiday wreath to take home that captures the essence of the winter landscape and "hunt country" aesthetic. Learn the art of combining natural elements with elegant accents, including gilded pinecones, berries and leaves, and how to make hand-crafted ribbon and moss embellishments.

Hands-On Workshop and Book Signing: An Enchanted Garden Topiary Tree

December 7 | 1:30 p.m. – 4 p.m. | Massey Auditorium

Tickets: \$140 for Members | \$160 for Non-Members

Add a touch of whimsy and enchantment to your holiday decor with a garden-themed topiary tree adorned with ribbons and butterflies in vibrant hues, similar to the striking

trees displayed in the Cheekwood Drawing Room this year. In this hands-on workshop, Dowling will guide you through her design process for creating a table-top topiary tree featuring colorful ornaments, delicate flowers and playful butterflies – all tied together with her signature ribbon designs. You'll learn expert techniques for creating a light, airy and whimsical tree that captures the essence of an enchanted garden.

All supplies and materials for each workshop will be provided, along with light refreshments. Space is limited and reservations are required. A ticket pre-sale for Cheekwood members started October 1, and tickets go on sale to not-yet members on October 15. For more information visit, <https://cheekwood.org/calendar-events/gifts-of-the-garden/>

First Ladies Exhibition

Cheekwood will host a temporary exhibition in the Mansion galleries highlighting former First Ladies and their holiday decorating themes. *Holidays at the White House with the First Ladies: Jacqueline Kennedy to Michelle Obama* will feature photographs that bring to life joyful times and intimate moments of the first families and their pets during the holiday season. The exhibition follows the First Ladies' holiday design motifs from Jacqueline Kennedy, who began the tradition in 1961, through the Obama administration when Laura Dowling served as White House Chief Floral Designer. The exhibition will be on view on the second floor of the Mansion for the duration of Holiday LIGHTS.

Holiday Marketplace

Cheekwood has three shopping destinations for the holiday season, each featuring different specialty merchandise. The Holiday Marketplace returns to the Frist Learning Center Great Hall with a 9-foot nature-themed ornament wall and a wide range of gifts, traditional holiday décor, and a children's section that includes an extensive selection of Jellycat plush items, toys, and puzzles. There is also an assortment of scarves, gloves, and hats. Two collectable custom metal ornaments are available for 2024: one ornament features a poinsettia design and another features a rendering of the Cheekwood Mansion. The Holiday Marketplace is open daily from 9 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. and again from 4:30 p.m. to 10 p.m.

Garden Shop

The Garden Shop located at Botanic Hall near the Cheekwood entrance has the widest variety of thoughtfully curated gifts that speak to personal style. With new merchandise arriving daily, including home décor, stationery, gardening gifts, Cheekwood merchandise, and much more, visit this shop on your way in or out of Cheekwood. The Garden Shop is open daily from 10 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. and again from 4:30 p.m. to 10 p.m.

Museum Shop

Located on the ground floor of the Historic Mansion and Museum, the Museum Shop offers nature-themed jewelry, books, and a collection of pieces created by local artisans. This year, the Mansion Shop will also be selling limited edition “Jim Marvin x Cheekwood” ornaments. These Winward ornaments are designed by Jim Marvin, a legendary White House designer who is helping Dowling lead the design team at Cheekwood this year. His signature glass ornaments are characterized by exquisite quality, color and luminosity and will be featured throughout the Mansion. Only 150 of the “Jim Marvin x Cheekwood” ornaments are available for purchase. The Museum Shop is open daily from 10 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. and again from 4:30 p.m. to 10 p.m.

Truist Holiday Gift Drive November 22 – December 16

During Holiday LIGHTS, Cheekwood is hosting a Holiday Gift Drive for military families in collaboration with Truist Bank. Guests can purchase items from Cheekwood’s three shops to donate. At the conclusion of the event, Truist volunteers come to Cheekwood to wrap all the presents for families, children and adults, and deliver the gifts to local military families.

S'mores Stations and Seasonal Libations

While out exploring the luminous landscape, guests can stop by one of the kiosks throughout the grounds for hot cocoa or festive holiday spirits. S’mores kits will be available to purchase at the Holiday Marketplace to roast at the stations behind the Frist Learning Center. S’mores and bar kiosks are only open in the evenings during Holiday LIGHTS. Food is also available at Café 29, and you can bring your own food and snacks from home.

Daytime Visits with Santa Saturdays & Sundays | 10 a.m. – 3 p.m. November 30, December 1, 7, 8, 14, 15, 21, 22

Families can visit with Santa in the Historic Stable and Tack Room located in the Frist Learning Center and bring letters to put in Santa’s mailbox.

Dog Visits with Santa December 8 & 15 | 10 a.m. – 3 p.m.

Bring your four-legged family member to join the merriment and pose for photos with

Santa in the Frist Learning Center courtyard.

Holiday Afternoon Tea

A festive holiday inspired afternoon tea will be served in Cheekwood's Café 29 from 2 p.m. to 3:30 p.m. on Tuesdays, Thursdays and Fridays from December 5 until January 3. Enjoy tableside service with seasonal holiday teas and delicious sweet and savory bites. Reservations can be made for parties of 2 or 4. Tea service is \$50 per person for Cheekwood members and \$50 plus the cost of a Gardens and Mansion admission ticket for non-members. Reserve tickets at cheekwood.org

Mansion Tour & Afternoon Tea Packages

New this year, treat yourself to a one-of-a-kind experience with a docent-led tour of the Historic Mansion's period rooms, followed by a holiday-inspired Afternoon Tea service at Café 29. This package ticket offer is available from December 5 to January 3 on Tuesdays, Thursdays and Fridays. The tour begins at 12:45 p.m., and is followed by tableside tea service from 2 p.m. to 3:30 p.m.

Holiday LIGHTS Tickets

The seasonal festival is open from 4:30 p.m. – 10 p.m., seven nights a week, except for Thanksgiving Day and Christmas Day. Timed-entry tickets must be purchased online in advance. A ticket pre-sale for Cheekwood members is already underway. Tickets go on sale to not-yet members on October 15.

Late Night Lights offers a discounted ticket price for those who wish to experience the displays later in the evening. These discounted tickets are available on select Monday – Thursday nights for 8:30 p.m. Gardens Only entry. Price is \$20 per person (adult or youth).

The '**Merry & Bright**' package returns this year with two adult Gardens and Mansion admission passes, two drink vouchers, two s'mores kits and a 10% discount at the Holiday Marketplace, all in one convenient purchase. The package costs \$125 for members and \$150 for not-yet members.

Cheekwood is pleased to offer **Military Mondays** throughout the festival except for December 16 and 23. Active duty and retired military personnel along with up to five people receive 50% off Gardens Only tickets on Monday nights. Advance reservations are required.

To learn more about Holiday LIGHTS and to purchase tickets, visit <https://cheekwood.org/calendar-events/holiday-lights/>

Holiday LIGHTS is presented by Truist Bank, sponsored by Amazon, and supported by the AWC Family Foundation. The hospitality sponsor is Hyatt Place Nashville - Green Hills. Also, a special thanks to Outdoor Lighting Perspectives.

About Cheekwood Estate & Gardens

With its intact and picturesque vistas, Cheekwood is distinguished as one of the leading Country Place Era estates in the nation. Formerly the family home of Mabel and Leslie Cheek, the 1930s estate, with its 30,000-square-foot Mansion and 55-acres of gardens, today serves the public as a botanical garden, arboretum, and art museum with furnished period rooms and galleries devoted to American art from the 18th to mid-20th centuries. The property includes 13 distinct gardens including the Blevins Japanese Garden and the Bracken Foundation Children's Garden, as well as a 1.5-mile woodland trail featuring outdoor monumental sculpture. Each year, Cheekwood hosts seasonal festivals including Cheekwood in Bloom, Summertime at Cheekwood, Cheekwood Harvest and Holiday LIGHTS. Cheekwood is listed on the National Register of Historic Places and is accredited by the American Alliance of Museums and nationally as a Level II Arboretum. It is a three-time voted USA Today Top 10 Botanical Garden, in 2024 received a Tripadvisor Travelers' Choice Award, and in 2021 was named by Fodors as one of the 12 Most Beautiful Gardens in the American South. Cheekwood is located eight miles southwest of downtown Nashville at 1200 Forrest Park Drive. It is open Tuesday through Sunday 9 a.m. – 5 p.m., with extended days and hours of operation depending on the season. Visit cheekwood.org for current hours and to purchase advance tickets required for admission

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Images for Media

<https://show.pics.io/press-images/collection/6078af9635b79d001153e848>

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