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Holiday LIGHTS at Cheekwood Returns November 21

Annual Event Features New Mansion Décor and a Dazzling Display of Lights

NASHVILLE, Tenn. – Nashville’s classic holiday tradition returns to Cheekwood Estate & Gardens with stunning new decorations courtesy of a world-famous florist, an additional creative light display on the Mansion lawn, and the familiar twinkling lights guests have enjoyed for more than a decade.

Former Chief Floral Designer for the White House, Laura Dowling, returns to Cheekwood for the second year in a row to create elaborate custom decorations inside the Historic Mansion that will delight guests and spread holiday cheer. This year’s theme is “Sweet Dreams,” and is inspired by visions of sugarplums, candy-colored hues and chestnuts roasting over an open fire.

The festive scenery begins at the front gates with elegant and creative light displays guests are accustomed to seeing at Holiday LIGHTS. A 28-foot **Pixel Pine Tree**, which features eye-catching three-dimensional custom light designs, returns to the center of the Bradford Robertson Color Garden to welcome visitors on their journey through a winter wonderland.

A one-mile walking path throughout the gardens will be aglow with over one million lights. Each turn reveals a surprise, from the classic Peppermint Path with candy-cane trees, to the stunning Bejeweled Bridge and Enchanted Esplanade. The new **Sparkling Serpentine** display will dance across the Mansion lawn with 600 linear feet of mesmerizing color. Cheekwood’s TRAINS! exhibit also sparkles with holiday magic that will delight the young and young at heart.

Guests can also warm up with hot cocoa and seasonal libations, roast s’mores by a fire, and shop for the perfect gift at the Holiday Marketplace.

"For over a decade, Cheekwood's Holiday LIGHTS has been a cherished tradition, offering Nashville residents and visitors an elegant and timeless holiday experience," said Jane MacLeod, President and CEO of Cheekwood. "We are delighted to welcome guests once again to enjoy the beauty and magic of over one million twinkling lights and festive decorations that define this beloved community event."

Holiday LIGHTS opens to the public November 21 and runs until January 4. A media preview is scheduled for November 20 at 4:30 p.m.

Holiday Décor in the Mansion

The holiday cheer continues indoors at the Cheekwood Mansion. With the theme of “Sweet Dreams,” Laura Dowling will re-imagine the holidays at Cheekwood with new color schemes, special vignettes and charming features including a woodlands-inspired allée and harlequin trellis niche, cozy fireside table settings, and a breathtaking winter wonderland display, complete with glittery handmade snowflakes. All the décor is designed to complement the architecture and interiors at Cheekwood and create a warm and welcoming ambiance for guests.

Dowling’s décor is inspired by the sweet dreams and simple gifts of the holiday season: spending time with friends and family, gathering around a festive table, walking through a magical winter wonderland, and nostalgic memories inspired by classic songs and stories – ranging from “The Night Before Christmas and the “Nutcracker” to Elvis Presley’s “Blue Christmas” and Dolly Parton’s “Hard Candy Christmas.” Each room will come alive with vintage-style ornaments, festive bouquets, colorful ribbons, and striking topiaries, wreaths, trees, and garlands – all created with Dowling’s signature style and touch, infused with her love of Paris and the French garden-style.

Guests are welcome to tour the Mansion during the day from 9 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. or in the evening from 4:30 p.m. to 10 p.m. during Holiday LIGHTS.

“I’m thrilled to return to Cheekwood this holiday season and to once again collaborate with their talented team on such a beloved tradition,” said Dowling. “This year’s theme, ‘Sweet Dreams,’ re-interprets the mansion’s holiday décor as a series of enchanting vignettes inspired by classic stories, songs, and traditions. Just as Nashville has long been the city of musical dreams, our goal is to create a holiday experience that captures the joy, nostalgia, and hopefulness of the season. Together with Cheekwood’s staff and volunteers, my team and I are excited to bring this vision to life and to invite visitors into a world where dreams, both sweet and timeless, do come true.”

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 *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 Afternoon Tea

Festive holiday-inspired afternoon tea will be served in Cheekwood's Café 29 from 1:30 p.m. to 3 p.m. on Tuesdays, Thursdays and Fridays from December 2 until January 2 except for Christmas Day and New Year's Day. 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 <https://cheekwood.org/calendar-events/holiday-teas/>

S'mores Stations and Seasonal Libations

While out exploring the luminous landscape, guests can stop by one of the kiosks to warm up with hot cocoa or festive holiday cocktails. 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 guests can bring your own food and snacks from home.

Daytime Visits with Santa

Saturdays & Sundays | 10 a.m. – 3 p.m.

December 6, 7, 13, 14, 20, 21

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 7 & 21 | 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 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 one-of-a-kind keepsakes, décor, ornaments, and enchanting gifts.

In addition, thoughtfully curated items at the **Garden Shop** and **Museum Shop** will help you find the perfect gift for everyone on your list.

Truist Holiday Gift Drive

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.

Seasonal Workshops

Holiday-themed hands-on art workshops for adults offer an additional way to get inspired for the season and learn something new. Designed for the beginner, these workshops will give guests a taste of a variety of art forms and crafting techniques and encourage them to keep creating long after the class has ended. Topics include stained glass and live greenery wreaths. These classes and workshops are for participants 18 years and older. Advance reservations are required. For a full list of offerings and to register visit <https://cheekwood.org/learn/adult-education-programs/seasonal-workshops/>

Winter TOTS!

November 25 and December 2, 9, 16, 30
10 a.m. – 12 p.m.

Cheekwood's popular program for toddlers and their guardians gets a new seasonal spin. Throughout Holiday LIGHTS, drop-in style hands-on activities will be featured indoors at the Crumbo Family Studios. Storytime will also be held at 10 a.m., 10:45 a.m. and 11:30 a.m. Each week's theme will be inspired by the changing seasons and will ensure guests of all ages get into the holiday spirit.

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 14.

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 for non-members (adult or

youth) and \$17 for member adults and \$13 for member youth.

The **Merry & Bright** package returns this year with two adult Gardens and Mansion admission passes valid on any night at any time, parking for one vehicle, two drink vouchers, two s'mores kits and a 10% discount at the Holiday Marketplace. The package costs \$130 for members and \$155 for not-yet members.

Cheekwood is pleased to offer **Military Mondays** on select Monday evenings throughout the festival. 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 Lipman. 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, named the Most Beautiful Garden in Tennessee in 2025 by HGTV, in 2024 and 2025 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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