



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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All Aboard for Summertime at Cheekwood 2026

A Season of Trains, Tunes, Traditions and Patriotic Celebration Arrives in the Gardens

NASHVILLE, Tenn. – A spectacular traveling model train exhibition and a four-day patriotic community celebration headline a vibrant summer season at Cheekwood Estate & Gardens, where art, music, and history come together to commemorate America’s 250th anniversary.

From May through August, the gardens come alive with a special Nashville Opera performance, mahjong in the Historic Mansion, and returning favorites like Thursday Night Out concerts, classic cars and motorcycles, and a beloved multicultural festival.

“Whether it’s a visual journey across the country through an incredible train exhibition or a celebration of our community and country, every day at Cheekwood promises a unique experience that becomes a cherished memory,” said Cheekwood President and CEO Jane MacLeod. “This summer is filled with fantastic programming for guests of all ages, and we invite everyone to be part of an exceptional season at Cheekwood.”

America the Beautiful: National Parks & Landmarks by Rail May 2 – September 6

The celebration of America’s 250th birthday continues with an immersive journey through some of the nation’s most treasured sites. Featuring 10 running trains, more than 850 feet of track, and 25 iconic landmarks, this is the largest and most elaborate model train exhibition ever presented at Cheekwood.

The exhibition travels from the Statue of Liberty to the Great Smoky Mountains, Ryman Auditorium, Graceland, and the Golden Gate Bridge, with each structure crafted entirely from natural plant materials.

Created by Applied Imagination, the display is located in the Bradford Robertson Color Garden for a limited time. Guests can also explore Cheekwood’s permanent TRAINS! exhibition, which is open year-round.

A special thanks to the Presenting Underwriter, the Crossman Family, and the Major Underwriter, Mary and Larry Wieck for their support of America the Beautiful: National Parks & Landmarks By Rail.

Cheekwood Community Celebration

June 4 – 7

In honor of America's 250th anniversary, Cheekwood invites the community to gather for a four-day festival celebrating art and music in America. Daytime visitors Friday through Sunday can enjoy the American paintings exhibitions in the Historic Mansion, the expanded outdoor train display, and Cheekwood's blooming gardens and walking trails. Evening concerts highlight musical traditions connected to Tennessee landmarks featured in **America the Beautiful: National Parks & Landmarks by Rail**. With free daytime admission for members and half-price daytime tickets for general guests, Cheekwood welcomes everyone to celebrate creativity, shared experiences, and the American spirit.

Thursday, June 4 | 6 – 8 p.m.

Timbo and Lonesome Country delivers a soul country sound blending traditional country, bluegrass, and rhythm & blues.

Friday, June 5 | 6 – 8 p.m.

The Rische Family Band performs bluegrass and traditional country.

Saturday, June 6 | 6 – 8 p.m.

Nathan Belt brings classic country and rockabilly blues stylings to Cheekwood.

Sunday, June 7 | 12 – 2 p.m.

Ping Rose closes the celebration with Memphis-inspired blues.

Thursday Night Out

June 4 – August 27 | 5 – 9 p.m.

Cheekwood's weekly summer concert series returns to the Arboretum Lawn with live music, food trucks, and seasonal beverages. Enjoy an eclectic mix of musical performances while relaxing in Cheekwood's beautiful gardens. On Thursday nights in August, guests are invited to bring their best four-legged friends for **Dog Nights of Summer**. Human and canine participants can browse dog-themed vendors and enjoy music, libations, and dog-friendly fun.

June 4: Timbo and Lonesome Country

June 11: The Cowpokes

June 18: The Fundamental Sound

June 25: The WannaBeatles

July 2: Charles “Wigg” Walker
July 9: Paul Childers
July 16: The Shirt Tuckers
July 23: Big Shoes
July 30: Cliff Richmond & the CliffNotes
Aug 6: Justyna Kelley
Aug 13: Eliza Thorn
Aug 20: Kyshona
Aug 27: The Satin Dollz

Dog Nights of Summer is sponsored by Veterinary Emergency Group.

Nashville Opera at Cheekwood
May 28 | 6 – 8 p.m.

The Nashville Opera brings powerful voices and unforgettable stories to a special performance in the gardens. Talented artists will perform a mix of opera favorites and familiar classics, creating a night that is both approachable and deeply moving. Bring a chair or spread out a blanket, gather with friends, and experience a memorable evening filled with music, story and community in a stunning setting. VIP ticket packages are available, offering exclusive perks for an elevated concert experience.

Mahjong in the Mansion
May 15 | 9 - 11 a.m. and 5 - 7 p.m.
May 16 | 9 - 11 a.m. and 2 - 4 p.m.

Nashville’s mahjong players can show off their skills and test their luck with four opportunities to play in Cheekwood’s Historic Mansion. Players of all skill levels can enjoy light bites, drinks, camaraderie and competition while raising critical funds to help Cheekwood recover from the January 2026 ice storm.

Each 2-hour session includes options for tournament-style play or beginner lessons with an instructor. Tournament-style play will be limited to 10 tables of four players for each session. The player from each table who wins the greatest number of rounds will be entered into a drawing for a chance to walk away with a Grand Prize and Cheekwood mahjong bragging rights.

Exposition of Elegance: Classic Cars & Motorcycles at Cheekwood
June 20 – 21 | 9 a.m. – 5 p.m.

Cruise into Cheekwood for a dazzling two-day celebration of automotive history. Stroll among beautifully preserved classic cars and vintage motorcycles representing decades of 20th-century design. Enjoy era-specific tunes, grab a drink from bar stations, and

tasty bites from the city's favorite food trucks. In addition to informational car talks and lectures, and hands-on activities for kids, the weekend culminates with a Tour d'Elegance through the city streets of Belle Meade. Bring the whole family and make it a Father's Day weekend to remember.

Exposition of Elegance: Classic Cars & Motorcycles at Cheekwood is presented by Pinnacle Financial Partners. The media partner is Your Williamson.

Black Arts Bash

August 15 | 9 a.m. – 9 p.m.

From morning to night, Cheekwood celebrates Black artists and expression in all forms. This festival highlights the richness of Black traditions and creativity through musical performances, dance, visual art, spoken word from local authors, and culinary delights crafted by local Black chefs. Join us for a powerful day of music, culture, and community. Stay tuned to cheekwood.org for performer announcements.

Black Arts Bash is supported by HCA and Nissan Foundation.

Songwriters Under the Stars

August 21 - 22 | 7 p.m.

Experience the region's finest players, writers, and singers in a one-of-a-kind setting. Nestled on gorgeous Swan Lawn, the concert features **Chris DeStefano** and **The Warren Brothers** sharing chart-topper songs and stories, accompanied by the renowned Music City Symphony. The show will also feature a special tribute to late singer-songwriter and music producer, Brett James, who was a fixture of Songwriters Under the Stars at Cheekwood for many years. Bring a blanket or lawn chair and enjoy seasonal beers, wine by the bottle, craft cocktails, and bites from local food trucks. Premium ticket packages are available, offering exclusive perks for an elevated concert experience.

Songwriters Under the Stars is presented by GSRM Law.

Perenn at Cheekwood

Opens May 1

An exciting new culinary partnership brings a beloved local all-day café and bakery to Cheekwood. **Perenn at Cheekwood** will be located in the Frist Learning Center courtyard, in the space previously occupied by Café 29. The menu will feature Perenn's signature bakery offerings, including pastries, cookies, and handmade breads and croissants, alongside breakfast and lunch options. A full espresso and tea menu will also be available.

Mother's Day Summer Annuals Plant Sale
May 9 – 10 | 9 a.m. until plants are sold out

A day at Cheekwood is the perfect gift for mom. Stroll the Bradford Robertson Color Garden and then take home your favorite annuals, perennials, flowering shrubs, and ready-to-go planters, including lantana, coneflower, salvia, and hydrangea. Cheekwood's horticulturalists will be on-site to share tips. Whether you're discovering new plants or recreating a beloved combination, you'll leave with everything you need to keep your garden growing all season long.

Summer Camp
June 1 – July 24

Nashville's favorite summer camp is back! Kids ages 5-14 can come explore the gardens, make masterpieces, and more. Half day and full day camps are offered and allow campers to express their creativity through painting, textiles, and hands-on gardening and ecological science activities. Cheekwood's Summer Camp was voted Best Summer Camp by the Nashville Scene in 2024 and 2025. For camp descriptions, to register or join the waitlist visit: <https://cheekwood.org/learn/childrens-programs/summer-camp/>

Material Support by BLICK Art Materials.

Martin Shallenberger Artist-in-Residence: Maura Wright
Artist Onsite: July 6-30
August 1 – October 4

Cheekwood is pleased to present Maura Wright as the 2026 Martin Shallenberger Artist-in-Residence. Based in Kansas City, Missouri, Wright is a ceramic artist whose practice centers on intricately crafted clay vessels and sculptural forms. Working primarily in porcelain and stoneware, she draws inspiration from decorative arts history, domestic objects, and folk traditions, creating richly decorated vessels with ornate designs, floral motifs, and layered surface treatments.

During her residency, Wright will explore Cheekwood's decorative arts—including the museum's porcelain collection—alongside the estate's gardens and architecture. Her work brings together sculptural ceramics and painted environments that evoke frescoed interiors and ornamental wall treatments.

The Artist-in-Residence program is made possible through the generous support of the Shallenberger family.

Nashville Bonsai Society Statewide Show
July 18 & 19 | 9 a.m. – 5 p.m.

The Nashville Bonsai Society, an active proponent for enjoyment, education, and appreciation of the art of bonsai in Nashville for over half a century, invites you to Cheekwood for their Statewide Bonsai Show. The event will feature over 50 judged displays from bonsai clubs across Tennessee, along with an expert-led demonstration, tree critiques, and vendors selling a variety of bonsai trees, plants, pots, and more. The show will be judged by Adair Martin from Plant City Bonsai out of Clermont, Georgia.

Seasonal Art Workshops

Hands-On Workshops at Cheekwood offer classes inspired by our gardens and seasonal exhibitions. From traditional crafts to modern techniques, each workshop invites you to learn from expert instructors, make something new, and take home the skills to keep creating. See the full list of classes and register at <https://cheekwood.org/seasonal-workshops>

May 2 – Tracks to Trellis: Upcycled Garden Sculpture

May 2 – The Art of the Travel Journal

May 9 – Mother’s Day Bouquets

June 6 – Americana Sun Prints

June 6 – Stars and Stripes Printmaking

July 18-19 – Beginner Bonsai

August 1 – Gilded Garden

August 1 – Summer Botanical Cocktails

August 8 – Floral Paper Marbling

August 8 – Blooms of the Gilded Age

The Cheekwood Gardening School

The Cheekwood Gardening School is the ultimate resource for the Nashville home gardener, where you can learn from instructors hailing from local Master Gardener Associations, regional plant societies, and Cheekwood’s horticulturists. Take advantage of the opportunity to develop a new skill, meet like-minded horticulturists and expand your gardening abilities. See the full list of classes and register at <https://cheekwood.org/gardening-school>.

May 2 – Tennessee the Beautiful

May 2 – Cut Flower Gardening: Sowing Tender Annuals

May 9 – Kid-Friendly Gardening

June 27 – Pollinator Plantings

July 25 – Bulb Planting for Spring

August 1 – Cut Flower Gardening: Sowing for Spring

August 29 – Happy, Healthy Houseplants

For a complete schedule of summer events and to reserve tickets, visit cheekwood.org.

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 a 501c3 nonprofit charitable organization. It 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 four-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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Media Images

<https://show.pics.io/press-images/collection/6705914632e0bdc58e8ff765>

Media Contact

Emily Luxen

Cheekwood Director of External Relations

eluxen@cheekwood.org

(629) 666-9986