

Gathering of Gardeners 2005

The Garden Specialists of Moonstone Hotel Properties

Shana McCormick

Director of Grounds and Gardens, Cambria Pines Lodge/Cambria Nursery & Florist

You might say that *Cryptomeria japonica* (variety: *elegans*) scored Shana McCormick her position as director of grounds and gardens at Cambria Pines Lodge. Indeed, the Lodge's owner, Dirk Winter, was impressed when McCormick knew the name of a rare plant he was seeking at the nursery where she worked at the time. "I was also impressed with the color Shana used in a landscape project in town," says Winter. Since then, Winter, McCormick and the rest of the company's talented garden crew have been literally breaking ground in their gardens by the sea.

Growing up in Ipswich, Massachusetts outside of Boston, McCormick says she was surrounded by English war brides who loved to garden. And although she began working in the family garden with her father at a young age, it never dawned on her that this was something to pursue as a profession. But her schooling in graphic design and printing has not gone to waste. If anything, her arts education, design sense and understanding of color show themselves in her creative approach to landscaping and planting.

McCormick sees the Gathering of Gardeners event as an exciting way to bring people together who share a passion. "Gardening has a positive impact on the environment and is also a great way to get our sedentary culture to spend time outdoors and to be more physical," she says. As her role at the event is to teach gardening workshops and demonstrations, McCormick says it is gratifying to see people learn and grow. "I want everyone to go home with a project that they feel good about," she says. "I really look for each person to have that moment where they step back, look at their work and smile. Then I know—I've got them."

Cindee Eichengreen

Director of Gardens, Village Green Resort

The moment Cindee Eichengreen was hired as director of gardens for the Village Green Resort, it was a great ending to what had been a very bad day. Exhausted from yet another day of commuting one-and-a-half hours to and from her landscaping job, this day was particularly tough as Eichengreen had fallen into a freezing river. Then, out of the blue, she received a phone call from Shana McCormick of Moonstone Hotel Properties and Cambria Pines Lodge.

"Shana was looking for someone to head up grounds at Village Green," says Eichengreen. "She called a nursery in our area and asked them, 'Who buys the coolest plants?'" The nursery referred McCormick to Eichengreen. "The job offer came on a day when I was *so* ready for a change," says Eichengreen.

To say Eichengreen has horticulture in her blood is no exaggeration. This Eugene, Oregon native grew up working on her family's nursery, which is still operated by her parents and one of her brothers. Another brother has a career in orchids while Eichengreen's sister is a garden designer in South Africa.

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With no formal education in horticulture, gardening is something that Eichengreen stumbled back into years later.

“It took me a while to realize that I had something—that not everyone knew what I knew,” she says of her gardening knowledge. This led her to floral jobs, nursery work and, eventually, her own business doing residential landscaping.

Now in her third year working for Village Green Resort, Eichengreen enjoys designing the property’s 14 acres of gardens, purchasing plants, teaching garden workshops, writing articles for magazines such as *Fine Gardening*, speaking to groups on and off site, and helping with events such as the town’s Earth Day Fair.

“My main goal is to educate people and to create new, innovative gardens,” says Eichengreen. “It’s exciting to see peoples’ response to what we do.”

Katie Bariel

Organic Kitchen Garden Manager and Menu Coordinator, Cambria Pines Lodge

Katie Bariel was so determined to pursue organic farming that she lived in a tree house for a time to obtain her dream. Indeed, in order to lease land for her first independent farming project, Bariel lived in a tree house on site—working the land by day and bartending at Cambria Pines Lodge by night. Lodge owner Dirk Winter soon hired her to grow vegetables and herbs at Cambria Pines Lodge for the property’s restaurant, and the rest is history.

As a university student majoring in English and Spanish, Bariel first fell in love with organic farming when she lived in Costa Rica for a time with a family that lived off the land. Her interest continued to grow during a stay in Missoula, Montana—an area that is big on the environment and organic farming. From there, Bariel sought out organic farms in California. She worked on a small farm in Creston where she learned the trade. “I fell in love with farming and the idea of feeding people,” she says. “When I later had the chance to begin an organic vegetable garden at Cambria Pines Lodge, I saw it as an opportunity to help people reconnect with where their food comes from.”

As the Lodge’s kitchen garden manager and menu coordinator, Bariel is doing just that. She leads group tours and workshops related to organic gardening, and even has groups pick herbs to be used in their Cambria Pines Lodge dining experience. Bariel has also transformed the restaurant menu—integrating more local products such as produce and seafood. “We buy from local vendors as much as possible,” says Bariel, who is a big advocate for eating as “local” as you can. “It’s important to support the local economy, to know where your food is coming from and to interact with the people who grow it. I started out knowing nothing and simply learned by doing. If I can do it, anyone can.”

Steve Super

Landscape Designer, Cambria Pines Lodge/Cambria Nursery & Florist

Steve Super is truly a born horticulturist. From the time he first learned to walk, he was fascinated with plants and would spend hours in his grandmother’s two-acre gardens. At age seven, he could identify every plant in her yard. And, as Steve grew up, so did his passion. In his 16 years as a professional horticulturist, Steve has nurtured a career in nursery and greenhouse operations; owned a landscape company; and developed an intensive interest in succulents and variegated plants. Originally from Kansas, Steve and his wife lived in several states before moving to California so that he could pursue his work year-round.

“My experience living in different places and climates gives me a vast amount of horticultural knowledge that I love to share with our traveling guests,” says Steve, who has amassed a major collection of rare and unusual plants. “My work at Moonstone is really enjoyable because I get to combine my daily job with my passion,” he says.

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Nancy Caldwell

Manager, Cambria Nursery & Florist

Cambria Nursery & Florist couldn't have found a more qualified person than Nancy Caldwell to manage its operations. Tasks such as overseeing personnel, plant orders, a budget and overall organization are second nature to this entrepreneur who previously ran her own successful nursery, herb and produce business in Pleasanton, California for six years.

"Coming to work for Cambria Nursery & Florist was appealing because they grow interesting things and are innovative with demonstrations and other services," says Nancy, who first learned gardening from an elderly friend and later studied horticulture. "The job is a lot of fun, and I like meeting our customers who enjoy gardening as much as I do."

Lynn Galloway

Director of Grounds, Apple Tree Inn, Fish Camp, California

Overseeing six acres of grounds at Moonstone's Apple Tree Inn near Yosemite, California, Lynn Galloway enjoys designing and developing themed gardens amid the quick change of seasons and the unpredictability of the mountain environment.

"Everything begins with a bang in the spring and then we have five quick months to bring it to fruition before it is time to put it all back to bed in the fall," she says of the flower beds and mature conifer forest that she manages. "We are so lucky that Dirk Winter is a tree lover, as we have a serious responsibility to protect the forest that we have inherited at the Inn."

Growing up amid fruit trees, vineyards, flowers and an organic vegetable garden in the Santa Cruz Mountains, Lynn developed a love for gardening at an early age. Working closely with her parents, she learned to plant seeds, identify plants and tend to the acreage around their home.

Lynn began maintaining private gardens and working in a retail nursery after graduating from college. "At first it was a way to make a living doing something that came naturally to me, but soon it became a passion," says Lynn.

Now in her fourth season at the Apple Tree Inn, Lynn enjoys applying her artistic sense to the garden design as a means of expression. She also plans to offer several gardening workshops at the Apple Tree Inn to inspire fellow gardeners.

"The best part of being a gardener for Moonstone is the importance that the company places upon the grounds," says Lynn. "The guests appreciate everything about their visit, but many return because of the gardens."

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