



Greenwood Gardens' Cascade fountain circa 2024
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Water Works

Greenwood Gardens recently unveiled its restored century-old Cascade fountain.

BY STAFF WRITER

LAST MONTH, GREENWOOD

Gardens debuted its fully restored Cascade fountain, a seven-tiered Italianate Baroque feature that hasn't flowed since the early 20th century. Set into the hillside below the East Terrace, the structure is one of the few examples of its kind in the United States—grand in scale but designed to feel integrated into the surrounding landscape.

The fountain was originally created

for Joseph P. Day by William Whetten Renwick, an architect and artist with ties to one of America's most prominent design families. Drawing inspiration from a 17th-century Italian fountain by Carlo Maderno, Renwick translated European drama into a distinctly American garden setting—symmetrical, architectural, and meant to be experienced from multiple vantage points. Over time, however, the fountain fell quiet.

A GRAND RESTORATION

After a three-year, \$2.7 million restoration led by Robinson Anderson Summers Landscape Architects and Hobbs Incorporated, the Cascade fountain has been brought back to life. The team prioritized preservation wherever possible, retaining much of the original structure while updating systems to support modern use. The refreshed fountain sharpens what was already there. New plantings frame the stonework, accessible twin staircases improve access, and restored Rookwood ceramics—featuring shell, leaf, and masque motifs—add decorative detail.

Positioned to overlook the 1,200-acre South Mountain Reservation, the fountain anchors a view that feels expansive without losing intimacy. It's easy to imagine it becoming a natural pause point for visitors moving through the garden's terraces and winding paths, bringing a defining feature of the landscape back into focus.

The reopening of the fountain last month marks the completion of Greenwood Gardens' major water feature restorations, a milestone for the 28-acre public space, which transitioned from a private estate to a nonprofit destination in 2003. Today, the garden balances historic preservation with public programming, from horticulture to art and music.



Alex McDonald, Millburn-Short Hills Township business administrator; Alan Summers, principal of Robinson Anderson Summers Landscape Architects; Sofia A. Blanchard, emeritus trustee and co-founder of Greenwood Gardens; Louise Moos, chairman of Greenwood Gardens Board of Trustees; Abby O'Neill, executive director of Greenwood Gardens; Frank Saccomandi, mayor of Millburn-Short Hills Township; Hon. Dr. Eileen Poiani, commissioner of the New Jersey Italian Heritage Commission; and Rich Murphy, deputy director of Greenwood Gardens

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