

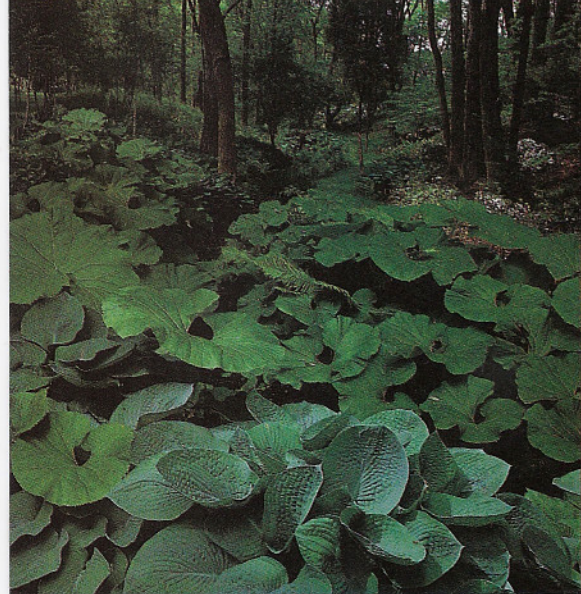


Designs on nature

New York floral designer Renny Reynolds has turned an 18th-century farm into a gentleman's country seat—complete with antiques-filled rooms, ponds and wood walks, and flocks of exotic animals

In the dining room, Renny Reynolds stripped the great pine beam that surmounts the fireplace. Above it hang framed letters written by gardener Gertrude Jekyll, one of his heroines. Windsor chairs circling the huge gateleg table were made in the Delaware Valley and, like the tin chandelier, are 18th century.





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The dedicated country gentleman whose farmhouse you see here has a brilliant city career, too. It is his mission to astonish the black-tie party guests who arrive at yet another grand ballroom transformed by cartloads of blossoming garlands and sumptuous floral centerpieces. When, after months of planning, the moment of perfection arrives—every rose and exotic tulip awake—Renny Reynolds, floral and party designer, has been known to permit himself a small smile of

pleasure. Within hours the flowers will be hauled away, and tomorrow it's another stylish wedding, another meeting with a charity chairperson.

Operating out of three New York florist shops that bear his name, Reynolds is a nationally known style-setter. But anyone who works with flowers knows about the fragility of things of the moment. Perhaps this is why one of his most prized possessions is the 1687 deed to his secluded farmland in rural Bucks County, Pennsylvania—a symbol of what lasts. Here, on 72 acres of fields and woodland, Reynolds's estate-size designs on nature have taken root with a passion. A place of meandering streams and peaceful ponds, the farm seems

RICHARD FELBER (5)

TOP LEFT: Casper the pooch in a tête-à-tête. TOP RIGHT: The sturdy fieldstone house, a Bucks County classic, was owned by the same family until this century. The small wing was the original house. BOTTOM LEFT: Hosta rims a woodland walk. BOTTOM CENTER: Reynolds anchored the pond with a pavilion. BOTTOM RIGHT: A froth of impatiens.





exuberantly alive, even in late winter. As one wends up the long drive, a horse looks over a fence, two black Australian swans dip their necks to the pond. Cats and more cats pad in and out of the barns, and from the birdhouse comes the chortling of Reynolds's exotic fowl—chukar partridges and guinea hens, silver and golden pheasants.

Reynolds's vision for his place is exuberant and informed. Not only does he hold a degree in landscape architecture from the University of Wisconsin, but for years his special study has been America's great 18th-century farm estates. "When I have a moment free, I sneak off to Washington's Mount Vernon or George Mason's Gunston Hall in Virginia," he

admits, bending to light a fire in one of the four downstairs fireplaces—two of them walk-in size. "I looked for two years before I found this place: I wanted land—and a classic Pennsylvania Colonial that hadn't been tampered with."

The house, it turns out, has a remarkably pure provenance. The earliest section was built by a Quaker elder in 1723; the meeting house he attended, still active, is nearby. His daughter's marriage to the boy next door brought the farm to 200 acres, and as the family grew and prospered, a three-story wing was added in the 1790s—later doubled. Descendants of that same family lived on the farm until the 20th century. But when Reynolds entered the picture in 1980, "everything," he

TOP LEFT: The fetching fountain was discovered in a local junk shop. **TOP RIGHT:** How pleasant to be a goose waddling about these lusciously landscaped acres! **BOTTOM LEFT:** Reynolds added a stone terrace behind the house, where the view includes a glimpse of the far pavilion. **BOTTOM RIGHT:** Among the barn's residents are ten cats and an angora sheep.