



## **Season 1 Episode 5 – Special Guest Molly Hendry**

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Narrator

From the Ground Up, a podcast of the Alabama Extension Home Grants to you, educating you about home landscapes, gardens and home Best.

Brian Brown

Today we have Molly Hendry. She is the associate director of Gardens Support for the Friends of the Birmingham 10:00. Welcome to the podcast, Molly.

Molly Hendry

Thank you for having me.

Brian Brown

I know you from being a former student of mine and I've kind of followed your career and kind of where you've been. So kind of take us where you come from all through Auburn, where you got your education and just kind of take us through your educational career.

Molly Hendry

Yeah. So I actually grew up in Birmingham, Alabama, and people always ask me like how I fell in love with gardens. And I really I think most people can I kind of can pin a moment in their childhood. And I grew up kind of outside of Birmingham on 40 acres. We had woods and creeks and lakes, and I just grew up playing outside out all day, every day.

Molly Hendry

And when it came time to choose what I wanted to study and my dad was like, you know, I really think even architects brain like you love art and you're really artistic, but you have, I guess, science, math, brain too. So he went down to Auburn to tour the architecture department, and I was kind of seeing what the students did and stuff, although it like intrigues me, but I don't know that like I'm passionate about buildings.

Molly Hendry

I just it wasn't like clicking with me and my dad was like, Oh, so think you think I can architect Have you thought about landscape architecture? So I think that's when we crossed paths. I was still in high school and came down to tour the horticulture department because at Auburn at the time they sent you through the horticulture program, then you got your masters in landscape architecture.

Molly Hendry

So it really was once I stepped foot into Funchess Hall at Auburn, I just thought, These are my people, you know, I want I want to be here. I think you took us to the Patterson Greenhouses and toured us around. So I was one of those rare students that applied to Auburn, got in, declared my major, and never changed.

Molly Hendry

I just fell in love with it.

Brian Brown

Yeah, that's that's a pretty rare thing. Somebody to not change their major. I've probably changed like ten times.

Molly Hendry

So all my friends, like, had their moment of turmoil, of like changing all around. I just always just like: Nope. Love it here. Love plants, love what I get to do every single day. And I almost had a moment where I didn't go into the Masters of Landscape Architecture program, but again, you were part of the study abroad trip after our sophomore year and I, we stayed in England for six weeks in the Midlands of England at a Horticultural College, and they all did a great job of getting us out of the classroom in that our professors and England did and took us to a lot of gardens.

Molly Hendry

I remember there was one specific garden where I was like, It just made you feel so many things that I thought, you know, this had to be designed like someone crafted this to make me feel this way. And that's when I was like, Ah, I really want to know how to design. I want to know how to make people feel the way that I do in this place.

Brian Brown

And so do you remember which garden that was?

Molly Hendry

Yes, it was Rousham, which is in Oxfordshire. It's right down the road from Blenheim Palace, which is the one that everyone's heard of. And Rousham really doesn't get the notoriety, but it was one of the first English

landscape movement gardens. And so there's really no flowers. It's not about flash and color, it's really about how you move through space.

Molly Hendry

And that was the first time I'd felt like a rope was attached to my chest and like I had to see what was at the end of this path and around this corner, and it pulled you in and popped you out. And it was just intoxicating, kind of how it drew you in. And so that was when I knew, okay, I want to be a designer, but in my heart of hearts I'm a plant person.

Molly Hendry

So I always kind of thought, Wow, go through landscape architecture and I'll go work for a firm and be the plant person.

Molly Hendry

And then so I was in grad school doing my thesis, and I applied for this fellowship through the Garden Club of America. That's a partnership with the Royal Horticultural Society in the UK. And I actually had the honor of being awarded that fellowship. And so I got to spend that the year after I finished grad school in England for ten months working in all these different gardens, I basically had to hand them a wish list of gardens that I wanted to work in.

Molly Hendry

And about every two months I was moving to a different placement. So after and through that I worked at a lot of public gardens. I had worked at a public garden in the States, in Delaware after I finished undergrad, but then even working on other country and public gardens, I just thought like, Oh, I just love like being getting to engage with one place.

Molly Hendry

As a designer, you're kind of engage with a place and you design something, then you kind of move on. But at public Garden, you got the chance to really get to know how the place ticks the community around it, the gardeners that all work there. And I just loved that. So I finished the ten months, came back to the States and ended up connecting with my now boss to the Birmingham Botanical Gardens.

Molly Hendry

And I kind of, you know, came back to Birmingham as this little garden orphan who was like, I had all these experiences, I don't exactly know what I'm supposed to do. I have these degrees, but like, what does that mean for me in Birmingham, Alabama? And I met him and he had all these needs at the gardens and so ended up coming on staff here with the Friends of the Birmingham Botanical Gardens, where I've been the last almost five and a half years, which is crazy.

Molly Hendry

Yeah, so definitely I've learned a lot and it's been great to kind of take all these experiences that I've had in other parts of the country, in the world and apply them to my hometown. So it's kind of a full circle experience.

Brian Brown

That's awesome. You know, like I said, I followed you around and through social media and just kind of being around town and seeing various things. But, you know, it's just a to watch you progress through all the things. It's just been really amazing and just your experience that you've had overseas especially and I know you're all into travel, you know, just that experience of having that international component and just the honor of getting the fellowship.

Brian Brown

That was a huge honor. I mean, how many people do they usually accept for that?

Molly Hendry

Well, each year they choose one American fellow and one British fellow, and you swap places so that British fellow comes to the states and so, yeah, it was I kind of went for it and was like, there's no way. So it was just a huge it was very humbling to be given that opportunity. And I think I'll always think of my life as like before that fellowship and after, because it kind of just really shaped me, not even just as a horticulturist but just as a person getting to live in another culture and, you know, I was there from 2016 to 2017 and there's just it was a crazy time in the world and there

Molly Hendry

was a lot going on in England too, so just getting to kind of go into the culture and be the visitor and see how they do things. But I mean, it's like the Mecca for gardening. So just even seeing how much the country itself cares about gardening and you're on a train, I will be going travel on a Saturday and you're looking out the window and everyone's in their back gardens, gardening.

Molly Hendry

And I just loved that it was kind of a national love.

Brian Brown

So what was your favorite garden of all the ones that you worked at?

Molly Hendry

Oh, it's such it's kind of like I feel like I took on like a different persona every time each place I moved. So I guess I'll just kind of walk through a couple of my placements. But I started at the RHS's flagship garden, Wisley. It's in Surrey outside of London, and so the RHS is just this incredible organization.

Molly Hendry

They really just advocate for a love of gardening among in the country. So they have five different gardens in different counties all around the country and they are also doing research and education. They put out

incredible publications, they host flower shows. They're really just engaging the public in every way possible around gardening. And so that was amazing to be there and rotate the different garden teams.

Molly Hendry

Then I went to Sheffield University and worked with two professors in landscape architecture department, so I got to sit in on their classes and then they also took me to projects they were doing. I went to the Eden Project in Cornwall and worked with the landscape architect on staff there. She was the first person I'd met that was a landscape architect working at a public garden.

Molly Hendry

So she just had this intimate knowledge of not only the Eden Project, it was also involved in a lot of international projects that the Eden Project had taken under their charity. So it's neat to see how she also was able to use what the Eden Project was doing in Cornwall, but also as outreach. But I think my favorite placement was at Great Dixter, which is in East Sussex, it's south of London, right outside of Hastings near the channel, and so is this little seven acre garden.

Molly Hendry

But and I had heard about it. It's kind of the place to be if you're entering the garden world. Fergus Garrett is the head gardener there, and he came after Christopher Lloyd. He was just an icon of British gardening and wrote a ton of books. He wrote every week for Country Life magazine was really good friends with Beth Chateau and all the big names in British gardening.

Molly Hendry

And Fergus. What I loved about him is he just had this huge heart for his students because he had been a student once and so he could run that garden with a much smaller staff. But while I was there, there was a student from Maryland, a student from Japan, Sweden, Portugal, Germany, Yorkshire. There's kind of like the whole world comes to Dixter to learn what they're doing there, and they just really experiment with pushing the boundaries on how you combine different plants in color in succession through the seasons and also huge passion for ecology.

Molly Hendry

And you know, how many insects there are different parts of the garden are drawing to it and propagating these really rare heirloom species that are falling out of, you know, our living memory just because of these big box stores there. You know, you kind of just have like the things that everyone puts in their garden. But Fergus has these plant fairs and invites nursery men from all over Europe and the UK that are propagating really interesting and are experimenting and just to help get the word out and keep these heirloom varieties kind of in perpetuation.

Molly Hendry

So I just the whole life around Dixter and I got to live on property and then work every day in the garden. And then there's this amazing community that surrounds it. And so we are going to the, you know, Garden Club meetings and Northern, which is the tiny town we were in. And then there's Charlotte Molesworth. She has this incredible topiary garden.

Molly Hendry

And this man, he lived out in the country and had five of the national collections for the UK. So we went out when it was Witch Hazel Time and he always Witch Hazel were in bloom and he has a national collection for Wisteria and I can't remember what national collections he had, but just he knew how to graft every witch.

Molly Hendry

Hazel every, every single way possible. There's just this depth to the knowledge that was there that I just hadn't been exposed to. And just being around people that were my age, that were just as passionate about plants and gardening, that was really fun.

Brian Brown

Yeah, I think you hit the nail on the head when you when you said that, you know, you see people out in their backyard. Yeah, everywhere. And having been over there myself several times, you know, they, they have a passion for gardening that, I mean, we can't even touch. I mean it's, you know, land is at a premium there.



Brian Brown

So they really value their space. And so, yeah, everywhere you go, every little house has some kind of little garden or just a, you know, a window box or something like that.

Molly Hendry

Yeah. And in our American minds, we, you know, we're not - space, it may be a premium here. It is in the cities, but you know, we are used to much larger yard's much larger houses having many more things and they just do so much with a lot less that it was really challenging to me. And at Dixter, they didn't have a huge budget.

Molly Hendry

And I remember it's still a charity, even though it's super well known and Fergus was just like, you know, I'd rather be in our situation than to have all the money in the world like some of the really famous gardens, because it actually forces you to be more creative.

Brian Brown

So tell me what you do here at the Garden (The Birmingham Botanical Gardens) How have you integrated that experience here at the Garden?

Molly Hendry

That's a great question because when I got back to Birmingham, I honestly was pretty like what in the world, you know, that was the dream. What do I do? And I honestly didn't think there was much happening in Birmingham and so I came on staff here and I just was so eager. I was like, you know, I will learn everything about every single of these gardens.

Molly Hendry

And my original position here I was the Garden assistant project leader, so I was brought on to we have 26 different gardens that make up the Birmingham Botanical Gardens. So it's my job to know and understand the

history of each one of those gardens, how they've changed through the years. And then and some of them we're kind of missing the mark on what the design intention is.

Molly Hendry

It's my job to perform an assessment and kind of know, okay, here areas where we need to really focus our resources and get this back on track, or maybe sometimes a design intent. You know what, it was crafted to be in the sixties isn't what it needs to be in 2023. And so we kind of have rethought some of the gardens and what their future should be.

Molly Hendry

So in that way I'm able to combine my plant knowledge, but also design knowledge and have the big picture. But this has really given me confidence in how to have an idea and execute it on the ground and garner support. So sometimes I'm working with our grants and we're going out for specific grants to fund certain projects. Sometimes I'm getting supportive volunteers and we're doing things ourselves, or sometimes, you know, me and my boss work very close with a lot of contractors.

Molly Hendry

And so we're helping kind of cast vision and we're on site managing those kind of projects that contractors are doing for us. But I think my experience in England helped me just see they're very good. Each profession is not in a silo. They're very good at a lot of the most well-known landscape architects in the country began as gardeners worked at some of the best botanical institutions throughout the UK.

Molly Hendry

And so that really gives them an understanding of plants that then informs their design decisions. And so here I was kind of walking into a position where they had never been a designer on staff before, so there was a lot of decisions that were being made that people just assumed were functional decisions and didn't know that there was actually design thinking that needed to inform that decision as well.

Molly Hendry

So a lot of it has also been just educating people like, Hey, I just would love to sit in on that meeting and I know we might be talking about stormwater, but how we mitigate stormwater actually has design implications and there's beautiful ways that we can do it and not just functional ways that we can do it. And it's been great to have my boss Jane.

Molly Hendry

She just is like the master. She gets things done and does it really, really well. So we work really well because I kind of am like the big picture person. She's really good at making sure we use our money in the most effective way possible and get it done really, really well.

Brian Brown

So the Garden, did it start in the sixties or when was it created?

Molly Hendry

Yes, the Gardens was established in 1962. So the road that you drove in on this morning is called Lane Park Road. So this property and the zoo across the street actually used to be one big public park called Lane Park. And then in the sixties it was divided to become the zoo and the Birmingham Botanical Gardens.

Brian Brown

So have you integrated some of the historical I know you said it wasn't the best designs or the best way to change something up. Have you tried to go back to the original design and try to incorporate some of that into the new things that you're doing?

Molly Hendry

Yeah, it's actually I mean, there are there's incredible designs here. I think what I kind of walked into was these there are these amazing frameworks and gardens that have been designed in each different garden, like the Rose Garden was designed by a certain landscape architect. They brought in another really notable landscape architect in for the Japanese garden, the call wildflower garden.

Molly Hendry

And so there is lots of different amazing minds that had helped craft Birmingham Botanical Gardens. But over the years things change. And if the designer isn't involved anymore, sometimes there's decisions made that actually draw you back from what the original intention was. So my job has been first. I've got to understand what the original intention was. Then make a call on Do we need to go back to that or not?

Molly Hendry

And so that's manifested in different ways. Like the Japanese garden. That's one where like it's just was masterfully crafted in the sixties when it was created and so but the designer, he was out there actually directing all the contractors, helping lay each stone. And so there weren't drawings for that. So it's I have to kind of go out there and observe and read back through like board board meeting minutes of things that they were discussing or read correspondence between the rock contractor and, you know, the person doing the drainage and kind of piece together what the intention of the designer was.

Molly Hendry

That's the garden where we want to take it back to what it was. But, you know, there's another garden we got a grant for and it was a species rhododendron garden. It we lost the whole collection, the our last big drought in 2016. And that was one where I started looking at it. I was like, how rhododendrons really are were a little too warm for rhododendrons here, but we aren't too warm.

Molly Hendry

Actually, our native azaleas thrive in our climate and they're still rhododendron and they're still in that same genus. So we're actually taking that garden away from the evergreen rhododendrons that you might see up in North Carolina and changing it to be a jewel box of all of our native azaleas. So that was one where I was like, okay, I understand the original intent, but here's where we need to kind of pivot that.

Brian Brown

And I know we went to - we took a team trip on the home grounds team to North Carolina, and we went to Biltmore and we got to visit with the the person who's in charge of all their horticulture and, you know, one of the things he was doing is he was going back to Olmsted's original designs for Biltmore and kind of changing things up, you know, like the on the if you're facing the house on the left side, that huge hedge, they were taking that out.

Brian Brown

And so what they did the original hedge is near the conservatory down down below there. So they had propagated that and they let a nursery down in South Georgia grow it. And so right after we left, that was 1st of October, they were going to replace that entire hedge. And that's kind of an icon but it wasn't the original design.

Brian Brown

By Olmsted - it was really neat to hear how his history of the original design is now coming back and kind of resurging. I guess, you know, in a lot of cities are doing that with their downtown areas too. So it just kind of all is working together. Everybody wants to kind of return to the classic.

Molly Hendry

Yeah, it's really easy when you're in these moments, like when we're in July and we have an irrigation main break and it's kind of all hands on deck and decisions are being made that you can end up kind of doing triage to kind of fix a problem and it's hard to keep that that big picture in mind of where you want to go.

Molly Hendry

So I get how things can kind of veer away from it, but it's kind of my job to like, keep us like our eyes on the prize. You know, sometimes that means you have to take out things that you know are good plants sometimes like we to take those beautiful Magnolia macrophylla in our Call Wildflower Garden, because it was as out of place as a beautiful tree in the wrong spot.

Molly Hendry

And so sometimes you make this hard edits.

Brian Brown

We preach that all the time, you know? Right, Plant Right place. Yeah. That's that is so important. And, you know, anytime we do design, we always have to look at that and we try to emphasize it, you know, a thousand times, you know, I see it all the done. But so what are some of the projects that you're most proud of that you've completed here at the Garden?

Molly Hendry

Oh, there's really two that come to mind. The first kind of drawing on the England thing. You know, I came back and I worked on all these, like, incredible perennial borders. And in the south, where we're really comfortable with our Woodies, with our trees and our shrubs. But unless you're like a really, you know, passionate gardener, most people don't dabble in the perennials.

Molly Hendry

And so I was just eager to start doing something with perennials. And I came across this plan in the Southern Living Garden, which the magazine so I'm living created a garden here at BBG, and they use it a lot for the magazines that was created in the late seventies, early eighties, and that garden, by the time I got here, I just become very overgrown.

Molly Hendry

There weren't as many gardeners as there used to be, so it just wasn't getting a ton of attention. And so I was in the archives looking and I found this plan and I started looking and it was a perennial border, and I was like, Well, where in tarnation is that? You know, I don't see a perennial border anywhere, anywhere around these parts.

Molly Hendry

And as I investigated, I realized that was for the Southern Living garden and what had been a perennial border now just turned into a giant annual bed. And so in the summer, it was all these different colors of coleus, just a monoculture of coleus in the winter, it was a monoculture of all these different colors of pansies. And I just thought, Wow, we're really missing a huge opportunity here to show people what's possible in a southern garden with perennials.

Molly Hendry

And I went out for a grant for it. We didn't get it. And then I had a just incredible man named Dr. John Floyd, and he was editor of Southern Living for a long time, was very passionate about that garden. And I had never done anything like this before, but he just said, like "Listen, Molly, you do it, we'll find the money."

Molly Hendry

I want to see what you can do. And so he kind of just gave me the confidence I needed to redesign the whole border. He actually came and helped me plant it out the day the truck arrived with all the plants. But it's really been a space where I'm able to experiment. So the first year there were things that people told me that for sure won't work.

Molly Hendry

That's cute that you're going to try that. And I was like, Well, I want to try astilbe. So we try astilbe is bloomed reliably for me in the right spot the past four years in that border. I also wanted to try Artemisia Powis Castle and everyone's like, That's cute. You want to try that? It's going to melt out.

Molly Hendry

And I was like, Well, I want to try it. And it melted out on me. So there's some things you have to kind of fail on yourself. But in COVID, you know, I planted out 2019 and then COVID hit and we had to cancel our plant sale. Our Perennials group had all these perennials in their lathe house that weren't going to be sold.

Molly Hendry

And they just said, "Molly take whatever you want." And so I had been observing the border all year. I knew things that need to move, things that needed to come out. And I had ideas of what I wanted to put in. I just was kind of was a kid in a candy shop in their lathe house and got to plant a ton of stuff.

Molly Hendry

So that's one where I've just really been proud that I was able to put pen to paper, design it, order the plants, plant them out, and that's really been, you know, an ongoing endeavor. It wasn't done the day that we planted it out.

Brian Brown

Yeah. I think one thing that a lot of people miss, especially if they're in design or if they just want to do their yard themselves. You know, a place like this is a great place to just come and get ideas. You know, there's nothing new under the sun. You know, go to a local botanical garden, see, we'll see what works together.

Brian Brown

I mean, these people, people like you have planted these things and they've they've designed it so go out there and see what they have working together and see what you like.

Molly Hendry

Exactly. That's what I hope. It's inspirational for people like my goal is to get as many layers of planting in there so each year I'm adding more and more tulips for the spring show. So, like, it was so exciting. In March, while the tulip started coming up, seeing people see the color they kind of like would beeline it up there.

Molly Hendry

But there's things that happen beyond your control. Like we lost a huge post oak in there in March and it did not hit the border, but it was very inches from it. But it took out about five other trees with it when it came down. And so now parts of my border that were deep shade are full sun.



Molly Hendry

And so, you know, it's a living, breathing thing. And you have to kind of respond and see things as an opportunity. And I did have my day roster hike. I'm just going to mourn this tree being down and I'll get over it. We'll move on. So things kind of that's the beauty of gardening too is there's just things beyond your control.

Brian Brown

So one of your passions is native plants. So, you know, we're doing this podcast for homeowners. So, you know, taking your story and your experience, what can a homeowner do to incorporate more natives into their plants, you know, without it being weedy, Right? What are some simple things they can add in their garden to add some diversity of natives or, you know, what was your favorite one?

Molly Hendry

Yeah, well, this actually touches on the second project to most proud of is the Call Wildflower Garden. And I, I think natives can sound intimidating, like it's this whole class of plants that you have to have like you to be a botanist to understand. A lot of them are probably plants you remember from your childhood or you've seen and not really know what it is.

Molly Hendry

And they're so easy to make substitutes for a lot of things that are in our trade. And one thing that I've noticed with the frost that we had in December, the natives weren't touched by it. Wow. All the things that are really struggling are the things from Asia, like camellias and azaleas. The native azaleas had one of their best blooming seasons I've seen in a few years.

Molly Hendry

There's actually a lot of benefits to planting plants that actually are native to here because they can withstand kind of weather shocks that we get the kind of genetically programmed for that. Whereas things from, you know, Japan are like, what is going on here but easy ways to incorporate it. It's just, you know, I think why people feel pressure to either you have to go all the way or ask you all native or there's no point.

Molly Hendry

And that's just not true. Like just incorporating in some flowering things or even in your hedging using a native plant like ink berry or alysium And those are easy shrubs that accomplish the same thing, but they're native and provide more habitat and stuff for our native pollinators and insects. And that one way to get away from it being weedy because that is a common, you know, I'm kind of so deep into like the horticultural thing that sometimes I forget and I sometimes have to take a step back and be like, how is someone who doesn't know anything about plants seeing this?

Molly Hendry

And all the times these my friends like, what do you see when you look at that? And what you need to do is just have indications of intention. So whether you have kind of a meadowy area in your yard and you just mow a nice clean edge to it or line it with rocks or something like that, even just having an edge to something can indicate this is cared for, this is intentional or and putting plants in the right place.

Molly Hendry

Like a lot of times, if you put things that really need to be in full sun and too much shade, they're going to get leggy and flop over on you. There's also incredible native plant cultivars that kind of address some of the garden needs for native plants and a great resource to look at is Mount Cuba Center. They do trials, so they'll do a whole trial on all these different kinds of echinacea or phlox.

Molly Hendry

And they just had one that came out with Sedges Sedges are an incredible groundcover to use in the shade, and there's so many different kinds and you can almost treat them like grass and they're native and provide habitat and flower. So I think just maybe not giving up if it's not in a lot of nursery sometimes don't carry native So but places like our spring plant sale in our fall plant sale we have a native group in there growing a lot of natives from seed and from cuttings, and they're growing things that you can't just find anywhere else.

Molly Hendry

But there's a lot of those kind of more homegrown nurseries around than you might think. You sound kind of to start looking, so you can't really go to a Home Depot and get a cardinal flower. But you can come here and I got a little pot and actually have like six in one pot. So I paid \$8 for one, but I I'm going to get six plants out of it.

Molly Hendry

That's very exciting. And seeds are huge resource too. You don't just have to go to the garden center and you know, buy a fully grown plant. You can actually kind of grow some things at home yourself, which is really fun.

Brian Brown

Yeah. And then, you know, and then you'll have a seed bank here.

Molly Hendry

We do.

Brian Brown

The garden and I know there's a lot of people around the state that are wanting to start a seed library. And so that's kind of growing in popularity and a lot of people don't know how to do that. So, you know, extension can provide some resources for that. And you know, the Internet's a great place for that. It's also bad information.

Brian Brown

Unfortunately, having some native plants that you can have is important in your garden to attract pollinators. And I like what you said about you don't have to go all in. You know, just try to incorporate a few at a time and, you know, maybe it just it grows over time.

Molly Hendry

And maybe you just focus on like, I want to have some natives at seeing and each season. So maybe in spring you really focus on, you know, getting a patch of woodland phlox somewhere and then for summer you really focus on I mean, Rudbeckia is like the easiest thing in the whole entire world to grow. And they could just really light up your garden and cone flowers are native and then fall.

Molly Hendry

You've got all different kinds of lobelia and asters in winter. Winter is a tougher one, but there's all kinds of even just leaving like some ornamental grasses up during winter that provides a great habitat for insects and pollinators. So once you kind of get into it, you're kind of start getting more and more and you kind of realize there is a whole I could think I took this in my whole life trying to learn about this, but it's also given me an appreciation for where plants that we do use in our landscape actually come from in their native habitat.

Molly Hendry

And that's one thing that I really took away from my time in England, is I'll be like, I can remember kneeling next to one of my friends and he was from Germany and he had gone to, I think he had gone to Turkey and explored and had seen these tulips that we were planting in the wild on the steps of this of Turkey.

Molly Hendry

And he knew that they grow in on these limestone outcroppings on this kind of soil at this elevation. So when he's planting that plant in England, which is very far from Turkey, his decision in the garden was informed from what he knew about that plant into the wild. So I'm definitely not a native plant purist where I think every situation always there you should always choose a native.

Molly Hendry

I see so many benefits in them and there is just a you can look at a native landscape and it just feels like it belongs in the place. But it is. But there's also places for your camellias and for your Japanese magnolias and Asian azaleas. You know, they all they're part of our heritage as well. And Alabama and Alabama.

Molly Hendry

So I also think that has a place in the conversation. But um, yeah, I think just start small and kind of see what piques your curiosity. And some people really get excited about pollinators. They want their whole garden. We are pollinators. Some people get really excited about birds. They want to design a native plant garden that attracts birds.

Molly Hendry

And so your gardeners have to be everything to everyone, but just kind of if you start dabbling, you can kind of find like what interests you. And I think whatever captures your curiosity, that's there's power in that. So I don't know if I touched on this yet, but the Friends of Birmingham Botanical Gardens, we're a nonprofit that supports the work of the Birmingham Botanical Gardens, but BBG is actually owned and operated by the city of Birmingham.

Molly Hendry

And so we come alongside and do a lot of education, the communication, the fundraising, and then the job with Gardens Support team within the Friends is to help us leverage our resources very strategically in coming alongside the city. But if you are local, we love for you to become a member of the Friends. That's what helps us keep the gardens free and open to the public 365 days a year.

Molly Hendry

And there's a lot of benefits to that too. You get discounts on different classes that we do, but you also, when you're a member here, we have a reciprocal program with over 300 gardens across the country. So you can go to the Atlanta Botanical Garden and get in there free if you're a member here or Huntsville Botanic. I honestly have a paid in or garden in a very long time since being on staff here, but we would love your support. If you are local, we'd also love you to volunteer so much of what we're able to do here is through volunteer.

Molly Hendry

So we love for you to visit as well. And please, I'm normally always here. I would love to say hi to anyone who comes to visit.

Brian Brown

All right. Well, Molly, thank you for joining us today. I hope everybody has learned something today. I know I have. I've really enjoyed talking with you and learning about your experience and hopefully you will take some of these principles and apply them to your landscape. And as always, if you have any questions, feel free to contact your local county extension office.

Brian Brown

From the ground up is a production of the Alabama Cooperative Extension System.