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ISABELLA
STEWART GARDNER
MUSEUM

Floral Traditions Old and New Flourish in the Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum's
Annual Celebration of Spring

Beautiful (and edible) bright orange nasturtium blossoms hold court in the museum's one-of-a-kind April floral display and a flower-infused menu at The Gardner Café – continuing and updating a 100 year-old Gardner tradition

***Hanging Nasturtiums* courtyard display ▪ *Edible Nasturtiums* menu at The Gardner Café
On view and available April 3 through mid-April 2010**



The Gardner Museum's signature *Hanging Nasturtiums* courtyard display features bright orange *Clivia* and purple *Cineraria* in addition to the dramatic 15 to 20-foot nasturtium vines. Image: Clements + Howcroft Photography, for ISGM

BOSTON, FEBRUARY 26, 2010 – Steeped in tradition both old and new, the annual *Hanging Nasturtiums* courtyard installation at the Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum and an *Edible Nasturtiums* menu at The Gardner Café trumpet the arrival of spring each year with a feast for all the senses. The singular vision of cascading vines awash in sunlight against the museum's pale pink walls, combined with the bright flavors of the edible blossoms in new culinary creations, continues and updates a beloved Gardner tradition, providing inspiration to Bostonians and visitors alike.

This year, the *Hanging Nasturtiums* courtyard display will be on view and the *Edible Nasturtiums* menu at The Gardner Café will be available from April 3 through mid-April 2010.

The *Hanging Nasturtiums* installation is a century-plus-old custom begun by museum founder Isabella Gardner in the early years of the twentieth century. Continuing the tradition, the balconies of the museum's interior courtyard are adorned each April with bright orange nasturtium vines, grown to incredible lengths of 15 to 20 feet by the museum's horticulture team, led by *Chief Horticulturalist Stanley Kozak*, who has tended the Gardner's courtyard for almost forty years. The cascading blossoms combine with unique foliage and brightly colored flora in the courtyard to create a breathtaking installation seen exclusively at the Gardner

In addition to enjoying the visual delight of the *Hanging Nasturtiums* display, visitors to the Gardner during the month of April can taste the edible blossoms as part of a more modern Gardner tradition: a special springtime *Edible Nasturtiums* menu at The Gardner Café. This year, nasturtiums lend their peppery bite to a savory offering of *Caramelized Sea Scallops* as well as a tempting dessert of *Mt. Olympus Panna Cotta*. Past *Edible Nasturtiums* menus have included spring pea and nasturtium soup; zucchini carpaccio with fried nasturtium blossoms, mint, and lemon; and citrus pound cake with nasturtium syrup and orange blossom sorbet.

“The magical tumbling flowers of the *Hanging Nasturtiums* fill the courtyard with vibrant orange every April, reminding us of the new life that spring brings,” says **Anne Hawley**, *Norma Jean Calderwood Director* of the museum. “Harkening back to Isabella Gardner's time, the *Hanging Nasturtiums* display is complemented today by the Café's inventive *Edible Nasturtiums* culinary offerings, an equally enchanting and surprising use of the blossoms.”

HANGING NASTURTIUMS – SIGNATURE FLORAL DISPLAY IN THE INTERIOR COURTYARD

A lifelong plant enthusiast who was widely recognized for the inventive installations she created for the museum's courtyard, Isabella Stewart Gardner appreciated the drama that unusual and exotic horticultural displays bring to each visitor's experience of the museum. The *Hanging Nasturtiums* display is a visual expression of Gardner's conviction that art and beauty – whether on the walls or in a garden – should be an integral part of daily life. She first introduced the dramatic orange nasturtium vines into the museum in the early 1900s, and during her lifetime the display became a well-known tradition. According to museum history, Gardner permitted only the orange variety of flower in the display because she felt that the yellow color wouldn't complement the museum's pink-walled courtyard.

Chief Horticulturalist Stanley Kozak, who will celebrate forty years in the Gardner Museum greenhouses in March 2010, skillfully cultivates the spectacular nasturtium vines for approximately ten months before the display begins, picking thousands of flowers from the plants to encourage continued growth and prevent them from going to seed.

“The nasturtium vines that we use in the courtyard – including many of the same varieties that Isabella Gardner used – take ten months to grow to their full lengths,” says Kozak. “But many smaller varieties of nasturtiums are extremely well suited to the home gardener. In fact, over the years many visitors to the museum have been inspired by the display to plant nasturtium seeds in their gardens, bringing a bit of the Gardner Museum's magic home with them.”

The nasturtium vines will be installed by Kozak and his horticultural team on the morning of April 3, before the museum opens to the public, and will adorn the central courtyard for two to three weeks, coinciding with Isabella Stewart Gardner's birthday on April 14. The museum will celebrate the nasturtiums with several events, including a spring-themed *Gardner After Hours* evening event on April 15, and an elegant fête exclusively for *Friends of Fenway Court* patrons on April 7.

EDIBLE NASTURTIUMS – THEMATIC MENU AT THE GARDNER CAFÉ

The *Edible Nasturtiums* menu at The Gardner Café is a modern tradition, now in its sixth year. Featuring seasonal ingredients artistically prepared by Chef/Owner **Peter Crowley**, the flower-themed menu is offered up alongside the



An *Edible Nasturtiums* dessert at The Gardner Café.

annual *Hanging Nasturtiums* display each April. This year's menu features *Caramelized Sea Scallops with cantaloupe, radish, tarragon and nasturtium vinaigrette* and *Mt. Olympus Panna Cotta with kumquat jam, blood orange and nasturtium petals*. In past years, nasturtiums have been showcased in both savory and sweet settings, adding their peppery flavor to such dishes as poached Atlantic salmon, citrus poundcake, and zucchini carpaccio.

“Nasturtiums add a vibrant punch of color and flavor to dishes, and it's always fun to come up with new, unexpected ways to use them,” says Chef Crowley. “The Gardner Museum is full of surprises – art hidden in

nooks throughout the building and cascading flowers in the courtyard – and we hope that the nasturtiums menu will surprise and delight diners in a similar way.”

Tucked away behind the flowering courtyard in an intimate indoor and (seasonal) outdoor garden setting, The Gardner Café offers an inspired lunch menu and award-winning desserts – including a seasonal bread pudding named “Boston's Best Indulgence” by the *Improper Bostonian*. The Gardner Café often features thematic menus inspired by special exhibitions or installations, including the annual *Edible Nasturtiums* menu offered each April in conjunction with the Gardner Museum's annual display of *Hanging Nasturtiums*; a holiday menu based on Isabella Gardner's own dinner parties and favorite recipes; and specialty menus and cocktails tied to the museum's special exhibitions and collection – including *The Madame Gautreau* and *The Medusa*, cocktails named for two of Gardner's art objects.

The Gardner Café Chef/Owner Peter Crowley has been serving up the culinary arts at the museum since March 2002. A graduate of The Culinary Institute of America, Crowley has earned accolades from the media and patrons alike for his innovative and elegant culinary delights, including a recent nod by *The Boston Globe* to the Café's “exceptional” menu.

The Café is open Tuesdays through Fridays, 11:30am-4:00pm, and Saturdays and Sundays, 11:00am-4:00pm. Reservations are accepted for the 11:30am seating on weekdays and the 11:00am seating on weekends. For more information and/or reservations, call 617 566 1088.

ISABELLA STEWART GARDNER MUSEUM

280 The Fenway Boston MA 02115 • 617 566 1401 • www.gardnermuseum.org • Green Line E train or #39 bus to Museum • Hours: Tue.-Sun., 11 am-5 pm • Tickets: \$12 adults; \$10 seniors; \$5 students; FREE members, children under 18, all named "Isabella," and everyone on their birthday

The Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum is a work of art itself. Housed in a Venetian-inspired palace, turned inside-out and surrounding an ever-changing interior courtyard garden, the museum's collection spans more than 30 centuries and features artworks by master artists including Rembrandt, Michelangelo, Raphael, Botticelli, Degas, and Sargent. Continuing the legacy of its founder, changing contemporary and historic scholarly exhibitions, the oldest museum music program in the country, an ever-changing interior courtyard garden display, innovative Artist-in-Residence and *School* and *Community Partnerships* programs, and yearly special events and free days continue to enrich the permanent collection and provide ongoing inspiration for visitors old and new.

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EDITORS NOTE: Press, photographers, and film crews are invited to view and/or cover the nasturtium display, and to interview *Chief Horticulturalist* Stanley Kozak and/or Chef Peter Crowley. Menu items from The Gardner Café's *Edible Nasturtiums* menu will be available for advance tastings by special arrangement. Please contact the Press Office to arrange visits, interviews, or tastings. Additional materials, including images, recipes, and tips for growing nasturtiums, are available through the Gardner Museum's online press page at <http://gardnermuseum.org/information/press.asp>