

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

ISABELLA
STEWART GARDNER
MUSEUM

Nasturtiums Blossom Once More in the Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum's
Annual Celebration of Spring

One-of-a-kind floral display in the interior courtyard and flower-infused menu at The Gardner Café feature beautiful – and edible – nasturtium blossoms, continuing and updating a 100 year-old Gardner tradition

Hanging Nasturtiums garden display and Edible Nasturtiums menu at The Gardner Café • Beginning March 31, 2009



The Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum's signature
Hanging Nasturtiums courtyard garden display.

BOSTON, FEBRUARY 24, 2009 – Steeped in tradition both old and new, the annual *Hanging Nasturtiums* display at the Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum, along with an *Edible Nasturtiums* menu at The Gardner Café, trumpets the arrival of spring with a feast for all the senses. The visual beauty of cascading vines awash in sunlight against the museum's pale pink walls and the sweet and savory flavors of the edible flower in new culinary creations continue and update a favorite Gardner tradition.

The *Hanging Nasturtiums* display is a century-old custom, begun by museum founder Isabella Gardner in 1903, that finds bright-orange nasturtium vines cascading in incredible lengths of 15 to 20 feet from the museum's interior courtyard balustrades in a floral installation seen exclusively at the Gardner Museum every April.

Visitors to the Gardner during the month of April – coinciding with the *Hanging Nasturtiums* display – will also have a chance to taste the edible blossoms as part of a more modern Gardner tradition: a special springtime *Edible Nasturtiums* menu at The Gardner Café featuring these edible flowers. This year, Gardner Café Chef/Owner **Peter Crowley** showcases the blossoms' bright flavor in an entrée of **Cold Poached Atlantic Salmon** with a salad of organic sprouts, green apple, and nasturtiums; and a delectable **Chamomile Panna Cotta** with lemon thyme poached pears and nasturtium blossoms for dessert.

“Each year, we look forward to the magical tumbling blossoms of the *Hanging Nasturtiums* display, a reminder that the Gardner Museum continues to herald the spring in Boston,” says **Anne Hawley, Norma Jean Calderwood** Director of the museum. “The *Hanging Nasturtiums* have welcomed spring to the museum since Isabella Gardner's time, and today the experience is further enhanced by an equally enchanting and surprising use of the blossoms in the Café's *Edible Nasturtiums* offerings.

The *Hanging Nasturtiums* courtyard display is on view from March 31 until mid-April 2009, and the *Edible Nasturtiums* menu at The Gardner Café is available from April 1-19, 2009.

HANGING NASTURTIUMS – ANNUAL GARDEN DISPLAY IN THE INTERIOR COURTYARD

Isabella Gardner was herself an avid horticulturalist, winning awards for her orchids and other floral displays from the Massachusetts Horticultural Society. She first introduced the dramatic orange nasturtium vines into the museum the week before Easter 1903, and during her lifetime the display became a well-known tradition, unveiled annually. According to museum history, Gardner permitted only the orange variety of flower in the display; she thought the yellow color wouldn't complement the museum's pink-walled courtyard.

“Isabella Stewart Gardner valued the drama that unusual and exotic horticultural displays add to each visitor's experience of the museum,” says the Gardner's *Curator of Landscape* **Patrick Chassé**. “The *Hanging Nasturtiums* tradition began as part of her own birthday celebration and I think it really gives some insight into her feelings about how art and beauty – whether on the walls or in a garden – should be an integral part of daily life.”

Thirty-four-year Gardner Museum veteran and *Chief Horticulturalist* **Stan Kozak** has been skillfully cultivating the spectacular vines for years, picking thousands of flowers from the vines in the museum's greenhouses as they grow to prevent the plants from going to seed.

“The nasturtium vines that we use in the court are between fifteen and twenty feet long each and take ten months to grow, but the end result is worth every minute,” Kozak says. “We still use the same varieties that Isabella Gardner used back at the beginning of the twentieth century as a nod to the historical nature of this Gardner Museum tradition.”

The nasturtium vines will be installed by Kozak and his horticultural team at the museum on Monday, March 30th when the museum is closed to the public, and will adorn the central courtyard for the public to view for up to a month, coinciding with Isabella Stewart Gardner's birthday on April 14th.

EDIBLE NASTURTIUMS – THEMATIC MENU AT THE GARDNER CAFÉ

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



An *Edible Nasturtiums* dessert at The Gardner Café.

with new ways of showcasing these unique flowers in dishes that celebrate both their vibrant color and flavor.”

Past *Edible Nasturtiums* menus have included spring pea and nasturtium soup; zucchini carpaccio with fried nasturtium blossoms and mint, lemon and nasturtiums; and citrus pound cake with nasturtium syrup and orange blossom sorbet. This year's menu features nasturtiums in a savory setting of poached Atlantic salmon, organic sprouts and green apple; as well as alongside springtime garden flavors in a dessert of chamomile panna cotta and lemon thyme poached pears.

“Beyond their obvious visual appeal, nasturtiums are a lot of fun to use in the kitchen because of their peppery flavor, similar to watercress,” says Chef Crowley. “Each year, we enjoy the challenge of coming up with new ways of showcasing these unique flowers in dishes that celebrate both their vibrant color and flavor.”

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 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.

The Café is open Tuesdays through Fridays, 11:30 a.m.-4:00 p.m., and Saturdays and Sundays, 11:00 a.m.-4:00 p.m. Reservations are accepted for members only at 11:30 am on weekdays and 11:00 am on weekends. For more information and/or reservations, call (617) 566-1088.

ISABELLA STEWART GARDNER MUSEUM

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.

• 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 children under 18 and all named “Isabella” •

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EDITORS NOTE: The *Hanging Nasturtiums* vines will be installed on Monday, March 30, 2009. Press, photographers, and film crews are invited to view and/or cover the installation, and to interview the museum's *Curator of Landscape* Patrick Chasse or *Head Gardener* Stan Kozak on the day-of or leading up to the installation. Menu items from The Gardner Café's *Edible Nasturtiums* menu will be available for advance tastings by special arrangement, and Chef Peter Crowley is available for interviews or appearances. Please contact us to arrange visits, interviews or tastings. The complete press kit, including images, recipes, the *Edible Nasturtiums* menu, and tips for growing nasturtiums, is available in the press area of our website, www.gardnermuseum.org/information/press.asp.