

For thousands of years, people, animals, and plants have intersected in the space we now know as Longue Vue House and Gardens. Part of a region known to indigenous populations as Bulbancha, or “Land of Many Tongues,” it would have been traversed during trading and transportation. We continue to research the full legacy of this land and water, while sharing one chapter of its history: as the 20th century home of Edith and Edgar Stern.

Family Years: 1921-1935

In 1920, Edith Rosenwald of Chicago and Edgar Stern of New Orleans met in New York and fell in love. Edith was the daughter of Julius Rosenwald and an heiress to the Sears, Roebuck fortune; Edgar was a second-generation cotton broker in downtown New Orleans. They were married in 1921, acquired land at the edge of New Orleans, and built a colonial revival house surrounded by rambling grounds and trees, naming it “Longue Vue” after the restaurant where they were engaged. Three children soon followed: Edgar, Jr. in 1922, Audrey in 1924, and Philip in 1926. The Sterns soon became known for their philanthropic generosity and civic engagement, and Longue Vue became a hub of activism, art, and social progress.

Ellen Shipman at Longue Vue: 1935-1950

In 1935, famed landscape architect Ellen Biddle Shipman visited New Orleans. Shipman was a self-taught designer at the top of her game. She ran a successful, all-female firm in New York, serving as mentor to a generation of woman designers in a field dominated by men. Edith met Ellen at a garden club meeting and engaged her to design a reading garden for Edgar. She could not have foreseen that this small but important commission would lead to an eight-acre, holistic house and gardens design and one of the most important garden estates of the twentieth century.



Beyond the aesthetic beauty of her gardens at Longue Vue, Shipman also became a close and important friend to Edith and Edgar Stern. She visited regularly, exchanged affectionate letters, and cared deeply for both the family and the gardens themselves. Between 1935 and her death in 1950, Shipman worked continuously and passionately on the Longue Vue project, designing one garden after another and directing the replacement of the family home with a new classically inspired and technologically innovative house. The mix of architectural styles complemented the family’s decorative collections and allowed each room to match a garden beyond the walls.

During World War II, intricate and maintenance-dependent gardens such as Shipman’s fell out of fashion in favor of simpler, more pragmatic gardens and yards, leaving Longue Vue as the most extensive example of her mature oeuvre. A plaque commemorating her importance to the family is installed in the Pan Garden.

Preparing for the Public: 1950-1978

Following Edgar’s death in 1959, Edith decided the time had come to begin sharing Longue Vue beyond family and friends. She worked with William and Geoffrey Platt (Shipman’s pick of architects for the second Longue Vue house) to address some areas that struggled in the southern climate, and to prepare the property to receive large numbers of visitors. The current Spanish Court was installed during this time, as well as the parking lot. The Platt brothers kept Shipman’s overall site plan and most of her gardens intact, even incorporating some signature Shipman details where they did make changes (straightening the Canal Garden to focus a new axial vista is one example).



Edith Stern opened the gardens to the public in 1968. In 1978, she moved out of the Longue Vue house in order to convert it into a museum. Longue Vue as we know it today opened in 1980, nine months before Edith’s death, allowing her to see her vision fulfilled.

The Shipman Touch: Experiencing Design at Longue Vue Today

The remarkable design history of Longue Vue means that Shipman’s style permeates every aspect of a visit to Longue Vue today. As you tour the campus, look for three techniques in particular:

- **axial vistas**, where framed openings suggest visual as well as gestural direction;
- **garden rooms**, or exterior spaces curated to create a coherent sense of place and definition; and
- **integrated connections** of color, texture, and form between each interior space of the house and the garden immediately outside



These formal stylistic themes mark nearly every Shipman garden, small, large, rambling, and formal. Around the United States, interest in preserving Shipman’s gardens is on the rise, and Longue Vue is dedicated to sharing the remarkable talent and influence of this pioneering female entrepreneur. Learn more at longuevue.com/shipman.



Your visit and support helps preserve our historic site, steward our environment, continue historic research, and offer public programs serving our mission: **to preserve and share a legacy of design, community, and lifelong learning.** Thank you for spending time at Longue Vue!



GARDEN TOUR
SELF-GUIDED



LONGUE VUE
YOUR HOUSE, YOUR GARDENS

GARDENS

- 1 **PINE DRIVE (1942)** — The gravel drive onto the property mimics a rural lane, curving among trees to create a zone of decompression and a transitional space between the city and the Longue Vue estate.
- 2 **ENTRY COURT (1942)** — The geometric formal entrance court is based on European estates. It is paved with granite cobblestones and shaded by *Quercus virginiana* (southern live oak).
- 3 **OAK ALLÉE (1942)** — An allée of southern live oaks serves as the formal estate entrance. The Sterns planted these oaks in 1940, when they were approximately 20 years old. Steel cables train the normally earthward limbs into a cathedral arch, framing the front door to the house.
- 4 **FORECOURT (1942)** — The Forecourt is edged with carved limestone and contains a fountain that Edgar purchased at a Royal Street antique shop. Two large *Magnolia grandiflora* "D.D. Blanchard" punctuate the main entrance to the house.
- 5 **TENNIS COURT GARDEN (2020)** — Edith and Edgar were avid tennis players, and on this court almost daily; the tenting structure was added later to accommodate fundraisers and meetings for the museum. More recently this has become a space for visits beneath the shade of our largest oak tree, "Edith," Tall, scalloped *Taxus cuspidata* (Japanese yew) recall netting that once intercepted errant lobes.
- 6 **AZALEA WALK (1942)** — The Azalea Walk connects the north colonnade to the East Lawn. It is planted with Japanese yew hedges and airy white *Rhododendron japonicum* 'G.G. Gerbing' (Japanese azaleas). The original brick design was restored in 2020 and is unique to Longue Vue.
- 7 **PAN GARDEN (1942)** — This outdoor dining room is centered on a Gertrude Knoblock sculpture of Pan, the Greek god of nature. It is planted with azaleas 'G.G. Gerbing,' *Magnolia x soulangiana* (Japanese magnolia), *Osmanthus fragrans* (sweet olive), *Brunfelsia grandiflora* (yesterday, today, and tomorrow), and *Amaryllis belladonna* 'Desert Dawn.' Notice a friendship plaque to Shipman, from the Sterns.
- 8 **EAST LAWN (1942)** — Shipman intentionally left the East Lawn open and rambling. Originally, this effect was heightened by an unobstructed view of the adjacent New Orleans Country Club golf course, where the Sterns were members. The addition of a native plant pollinator garden on the East Terrace was added in the 2010s.
- 9 **PORTICO GARDEN (1936)** — Shipman's formal boxwood parterres are softened by airy romantic borders, containing perennial delights including *Phlox paniculata* (garden phlox), *Euphorbia hypericifolia* (diamond frost), and *Gomphrena decumbens* (little grapes). Here Shipman indulged in a rich multiplicity of colors, providing materials for Edith's beloved art of flower arranging.

- 10 **YELLOW GARDEN (1967)** — Conceptualized by Edith, this chromatically themed space was inspired by English “golden gardens” and serves as a scaled courtyard to the Whim House, where out-of-town guests would stay. Plants include the *Mascagnia macroptera* (butterfly vine) and *Brugmansia* hybrid ‘Charles Grimaldi’ (angel’s trumpet). The bronze fountain in the center of the patio, sculpted by Robert Engman, was designed to be quiet so sleeping guests would not be disturbed.
- 11 **SPANISH COURT (1967)** — Shipman defined this space with pierced brick walls in the 1930s and filled it with camellias, lending the name “camellia allée.” Tired of protecting the camellias from the summer heat each year, in 1967 Edith collaborated with William Platt on the current revision. Fountains and intricate mosaic sidewalks contribute to the Moorish design, inspired by the 14th-century Generalife Garden at the Alhambra in Granada, Spain. The kinetic aquamobile *Arabesque* was New Orleans artist Lin Emery’s first public sculpture.
- 12 **OVERLOOK POND (1935)** — This intimate space was Shipman’s first garden on the grounds, designed as a reading retreat for Edgar. The seat at the top of a lush pond garden features two axial views: an open view across the vast expanse of the East Lawn, and a narrowly defined one through the Canal Garden, Walled Garden, and Wild Garden. Featured plants are *Farfugium japonicum*, *Lycoris aurea* (yellow hurricane lily), and *Indigofera décora* (Chinese indigo).
- 13 **CANAL GARDEN (1967)** — The scaled canal was inspired by a garden in the Quinto do Cabo near Lisbon, Portugal that Edith visited with William Platt in 1964. From the bench at the center, you will glimpse the iconic southern approach to the Longue Vue house.
- 14 **WALLED GARDEN (1936)** — Originally designed by Shipman as a kitchen garden, this garden served as a “victory garden” during WWII and is still planted with edibles that change seasonally. A sugar kettle in the center — used as an ornamental fountain — bears witness to the tragedies of enslavement, forced labor, and torture at the sugar plantations that once lined the southern Mississippi River.
- 15 **WILD GARDEN (1939)** — The Wild Garden is the collaborative result of three women’s passions: Edith Stern, Ellen Biddle Shipman, and Louisiana naturalist Caroline Dormon. It features the Wildflower Walk, with species indigenous to Louisiana; the Iris Walk, showcasing over 3,500 Louisiana irises; and the Camellia Walk, with over 120 winter-blooming camellia shrubs.
- 16 **DISCOVERY GARDEN (1998)** — This hands-on, interactive children’s garden is inspired by the Stern family’s commitment to education and the natural environment. Pollinator plants, seasonal edibles, and insects are key areas of focus.

