

Meet the Stan Hywet Staff

Shelley Funai

Grounds Manager

Staff member since 2003



What is your job at Stan Hywet? I am the Grounds Manager at Stan Hywet. I oversee the gardens and horticulture, where I am often doing hands-on tasks to help with the upkeep of our historical gardens.

What do you enjoy most about working at Stan? I love being outside, but to be a part of the care and upkeep of an important historical landscape and landmark is something really special and rewarding!



Tell us about one unusual or interesting day at work? We deal with what Mother Nature throws at us, and I can remember one particular ice storm in 2008 that glazed all of the trees with a thick layer of ice. The ice was so heavy that the birch trees in the Birch Tree Allée were bent in half, and touching the ground! They did make a full recovery once it melted but, you can imagine how worried it all of us on the hort. team!

What would you tell someone who's never been to Stan to entice them to visit? We have picturesque and famous historical gardens that have been fully restored to their original design intent. And, Birch Tree Allée is one of the gardens currently featured (the only one in Ohio) on a USPS *Forever Stamp*.

Where is your favorite place on the estate? That's a hard question. Each area has its own beauty and charm and it changes throughout the season. The Dell is full of ephemeral wildflowers in April, the Great Garden is awesome at the end of May because it is so chock full of blooms and color, and the annual display beds look great mid-summer. Everyone knows that I love pumpkins and gourds in fall, and winter brings out the true architecture of the estate.

If you could go back in time and meet with one of the Seiberling family members, one of the paid household or grounds staff, or one of the architects or landscape designers, who would it be and what would you talk with them about? I would love to meet the grounds crew. How did they do something as simple as just getting all the grass mowed?

What do you like to do in your free time, away from Stan? I have all kinds of hobbies, most of them revolve around being outside: birding, boating, kayaking, and hiking, for example. I also love to travel and visit other gardens with my husband, who is another plant nerd; and create and make things. I have a kinetic sculpture in the *Winds of Change* exhibit at Stan Hywet. It's just off the Carriage House Courtyard, so check it out the next time you visit.