



## Case Study

### Tregaron Conservancy

#### At a Glance

**Client:**

Tregaron Conservancy

**Location:**

Washington, D.C.

**Tree Care Needs:**

After 40 years without maintenance, the 13 acres of open space in the historic Tregaron Estate required considerable work to make it safe and usable for the public.

**The Care of Trees Advantage:**

The Tregaron Conservancy and the project manager, Ellen Shillinglaw, engaged The Care of Trees for early phases of the project to provide consulting, restoration services, and to maintain the property's trees on an ongoing basis. The team's knowledgeable, conscientious approach assisted in making the area once-again accessible and enjoyable for all.

### The Care of Trees Helps Restore Washington, D.C.'s Historic Tregaron Estate

**The Client**

Once enjoyed by U.S. presidents and dignitaries, a historic woodland in northwest Washington, D.C. was all but forgotten. Now, a coalition of caring neighbors and supporters has formed to restore the acreage to its former glory.

Now called Tregaron, the 13-acre property was part of a prestigious early 20th-century estate. It was originally owned by Gardiner Greene Hubbard, founder of the National Geographic Society, and then passed to his daughter Mabel, who married Alexander Graham Bell. Renowned architect Charles Adams Platt and noted landscape architect Ellen Biddle Shipman collaborated on the property's structures and landscape design – creating a beautiful space that was enrolled on the National Register of Historic Places.

After 25 years of legal battles to keep the property as open space, The Friends of Tregaron neighborhood group succeeded in winning the land. They created the Tregaron Conservancy, a nonprofit led by caring citizens, with the ambitious goal of restoring the property to the original maps and plans of Charles Platt and Ellen Biddle Shipman. After 40 years without maintenance, the landscape deteriorated significantly. Thick growth made it nearly impossible to enjoy the trails, gardens, streams and ponds within the acreage.

**A Common Goal: Taking Care of the Trees**

The Tregaron Conservancy brought in Ellen Shillinglaw, owner of the landscape design firm Living Gardens, to manage the multi-phase project. Recognizing the need for an experienced preservation and restoration firm, she engaged the experts at The Care of Trees.

“It was clear from the get-go that The Care of Trees cared about the property and would help us take care of it,” Shillinglaw said. “They are an organization

dedicated to the same goals we are and are excited about working with types of trees not commonly seen, like Osage orange and American linden.”

The Care of Trees began by identifying and removing dead, fallen and invasive trees, and any likely to fall, in order to create a safer environment for work crews and those using the park. Next, they pruned branches to address overgrown canopies and treated the trees in need.

The team then addressed the overgrown understory, the shrubs and plants beneath the trees – a critical step toward making the area usable again. A number of exotic and invasive species had crept into the area and altered the aesthetic intent of the original design.

### Uncovering Miles of Paths

During its work, The Care of Trees uncovered a network of bridle paths and pedestrian trails, as well as the original stone walls. They widened and mulched the paths, removed debris and treated poison ivy to make the area significantly more attractive and accessible for use.

“The improved order and openness are evident in even a short walk through the Tregaron landscape,” said Bonnie LePard, founder of the Tregaron Conservancy.

The team’s work on the lily pond – the centerpiece of Tregaron’s Woodland Garden section – best demonstrated the dedication of The Care of Trees. Large tangles of ivy covered the pond’s verberna. The only way to remove it: by hand. The team carefully pulled away the ivy to reveal the plants underneath.

“This spring, we had the most beautiful display of verberna, and old rhododendron blossomed for the first time in 25 years,” Shillinglaw said.

### A Peaceful, Accessible Park for All

On an ongoing basis, The Care of Trees walks the property looking for trees in need of maintenance or care. With such mature trees and recent heavy rainfall, workers have needed to cut branches and address infected trees. For the Tregaron Conservancy and its visitors, their presence brings peace of mind.

“We don’t have a full-time gardener or maintenance staff,” Shillinglaw said. “The Care of Trees is it. They are really an extension of my own work. I can call and say, ‘Check out tree number 38.’”

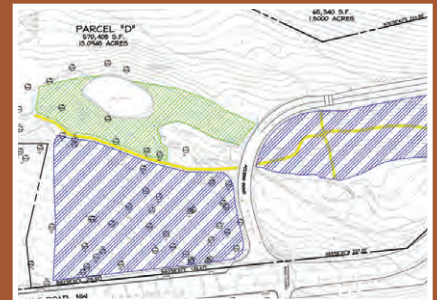
The conservancy notes a significant increase in usage of the park since its restoration. Every day, area residents take advantage of the opportunity to walk in the peaceful woodland. Residents have also come together for events in the park, such as bird-watching and community tree-planting. With space freed for saplings, the Tregaron Conservancy also plans to invite school children to plant trees.

“When neighbors see The Care of Trees’ team, they thank and compliment them,” LePard said. “The board is thrilled with their work as well.”

“The project is successful because they care,” she added. “It’s a unique opportunity to work on a project where everyone cares so much about the work they do.”

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**Ellen Shillinglaw**  
Owner, Living Gardens



**(top to bottom)** Multiple paths and trails were uncovered as a result of The Care of Trees’ work at Tregaron; restoration plans for the lily pond; The Care of Trees’ crew walks the property.