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## Gibbs Gardens creator honored by National Garden Clubs

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Jim Gibbs

The creator of one of Cherokee County's premier tourist attractions was honored by National Garden Clubs Inc. on Monday.

Jim Gibbs, creator of Gibbs Gardens in Ball Ground, one of the nation's largest residential estate gardens open to the public, was honored with a national Award of Excellence from National Garden Clubs Inc., at the organization's 90th annual convention in Biloxi, Mississippi. NGC is one of the nation's most-recognized nonprofits and largest volunteer gardening organization in the world.

Nominated by The Garden Club of Georgia Inc., Gibbs spent 30 years transforming pastures, hillsides and woodlands into his award-winning Gibbs Gardens. Situated on 326 acres, Gibbs Gardens includes four feature gardens – the Japanese Gardens, Water Lily Gardens, Manor House Gardens and Daffodil Gardens, where more

than 20 million daffodils bloom on more than 50 acres between March 1 to April 15. In addition, Gibbs Gardens features 12 seasonal gardens.

Two spring-fed streams flow under 32 bridge crossings and feed 24 ponds and 19 waterfalls, as they meander through the Valley Gardens along miles of Fern Dell – one of the largest natural ferneries in the United States – and converge near a 334-acre lake. Majestic allées of red sunset maples, river birch and crepe myrtles – a signature element – sweep across the Valley Gardens from the entry drive to the expansive Rose Garden and hillsides featuring ribbons of day lilies. The Manor House Gardens, situated on one of the highest points in Cherokee County, feature a European-inspired three level home, summerhouse, gazebo, cabana and pool. Colorful perennial and annual gardens blend with older-growth plantings and woodland gardens to frame dramatic views of the North Georgia Mountains.

Gibbs served as president and founder for more than 40 years at the award-winning Gibbs Landscaping Co., a leading landscape firm in Atlanta. He earned a bachelor's degree in science, majoring in horticulture and minoring in landscape architecture, at the University of Georgia in Athens. He is the recipient of two national landscape awards presented at the White House in Washington D.C. He also is the author of "Gibbs Gardens: Reflections on a Gardening Life," which follows his 30-year-old journey to bring his vision to fruition.

In addition, Gibbs is a founding member of the Atlanta Botanical Garden and serves as a lifetime trustee. Throughout his professional career, he has been a member of numerous trade organizations, serving in a variety of principal roles.

Gibbs is one of two Award of Excellence recipients recognized this year by National Garden Clubs Inc. "Each year, NGC's Award of Excellence recognizes exceptional individuals, organizations or institutions that advance our organization's goals and purposes," said Gay Austin, president, National Garden Clubs Inc. "The Award of Excellence is our organization's highest honor for non-members and by recognizing these deserving recipients from different parts of the nation, NGC hopes to educate and inspire others in communities coast-to-coast."

