



ABOVE: Guests enjoy the cozy, homelike setting of the Inn's cottages. TOP: The croquet lawn makes a great place to gather with family and friends.

Richmond Hill Inn: 87 Richmond Hill Drive, Asheville, NC 28806; toll free 1-888-742-4555. **Web site:** www.richmondhillinn.com. **Rates:** \$145-\$450. Prices include breakfast, afternoon tea, and other amenities. **Directions:** Richmond Hill Inn is located 3 miles northwest of downtown Asheville. From U.S. 19/23, take the State 251/UNC Asheville exit, and follow the signs. **What if I'm not a guest?** You're welcome to stroll through the gardens. Appointments are not necessary. ◊

GLORIOUS GARDENS

Here are other inns with gardens we recommend.

■ **The Fearrington House Country Inn**, Pittsboro, North Carolina; (919) 542-2121. **Web site:** www.fearringtonhouse.com. Green pastures and striped Galloway cows surround this idyllic garden and plush country inn. Rates range \$175-\$350.

■ **Barnsley Inn & Golf**, Adairsville, Georgia; (770) 773-7480. This resort offers upscale accommodations and golf alongside a restored and enhanced garden dating back to the early to mid-1800s. Rates are \$255 for a suite to \$850 for an entire cottage.

■ **Monmouth Plantation**, Natchez, Mississippi; (601) 442-5852. Patterned gardens and a fine restaurant await you at this romantic antebellum mansion. Rates range \$145-\$205 for guestrooms, \$175-\$375 for suites.

clipped bentgrass croquet court spread out in front of them. Flowers peek out from nooks and crannies between each cottage; morning glories, hyacinth bean vines, and moon vines snake up cords of twine.

Rooms in the cottages are actually small duplexes—spacious with fireplaces and cozy sitting areas. Floral prints and other decor enhance the feeling of being lost in a garden, regardless of the season. Accommodations in the main mansion are a treat too. The Colonel Pearson Room, for example, is done in a sumptuous deep green that sets off the wood floors, tile-fronted fireplace, and romantic canopy bed.

The Garden Pavilion's quarters are just as inviting, echoing the rich colors and gardenesque themes found in the cottages and mansion. Although each room has its own personality, they're all rooted in a common theme—the garden.

"People really do come to see the gardens and enjoy Gabrielle's, the restaurant," Hunter says. "They're amazed at all the plants. This isn't a drive-by garden—you've got to get out of your car and walk through it. And that's when people are blown away."

Hunter even has a "happy wall" in his office, plastered with letters from guests and visitors praising the garden. "But, really, the best compliment is from people—especially my horticulturist friends—who walk through the garden and can't think of anything to say but 'Wow,'" he says with a laugh. Okay, Hunter. Here goes: Wow.