

Garden Tour showcases green thumbs across Aurora



Maureen Crosby didn't inherit her green thumb.

Growing up in a townhouse in downtown Toronto that was practically lawn-free, as a teen she would haul buckets of dirt up to her third-floor bedroom and place them on the roof outside her window.

Before long, she had a thriving makeshift garden to call her own.

While she can't explain its origin, a passion for gardening was born and now that she and her husband are settled into their 'forever home' on Dunning Avenue, local plant-lovers can see the fruits of her labour this weekend on the Garden Aurora's annual Aurora Garden Tour.

Set to take place across the community this Sunday, June 26, the tour runs from 12 noon to 4 p.m., featuring gardens of just about every variety - all chosen for their 'wow' factor.

For members of Garden Aurora (formally the Aurora Garden & Horticultural Society), a very personal 'wow' factor is the fact they are back after a long pandemic hiatus.

'In 2019, we identified eight gardens for the 2020 tour,' says Garden Aurora's Judy Ryan. 'We had to cancel 2020 and we asked those eight gardens if they could recommit for 2021 and they all said yes and were looking forward to it. 2021 came along and we had to cancel again. Six of the eight committed again for 2020, so we had to find two more gardens for 2022.'

Keeping to their commitment never to repeat a garden within the decade of a span, this year's tour will feature seven gardens completely new to the tour and one 'fan favourite' from the past.

Among the beautiful greenspaces is the Crosbys.

The couple has created beautiful gardens wherever they have lived in Aurora, but now on Dunning, which they have deemed their 'forever home,' Maureen has created a sanctuary that is deliberately cottage-like in feel.

'I was flattered to be asked,' she says, noting she was asked to participate once before but had to bow out. 'This year I'm ready!'

'We had a small townhouse in Toronto and there was really no garden and no backyard, just a parking spot. My room went out onto

the roof and I would put milk crates full of dirt out there and plant flowers by climbing out the window. After that, life kind of got in the way [but when we could] we went crazy with the gardens and the planning. We don't have a cottage, so we wanted to make this a place to enjoy over summer.?

The criteria for Garden Aurora in selecting each year's showcases is that they are owner-created, owner-maintained and offer a variety of different types of gardens.

?We want people to go out and feel that what they are looking for they can achieve, too,? says Ms. Ryan. ?We want each garden to be different from each other because it is not a competition. We're looking for achievable, owner-created, owner-maintained, and something that people are going to remember and hopefully learn from and maybe try to re-create some parts of it in their own landscape. We also look for different sizes. We are focused really hard on finding small gardens on the east side of Town but parking over there is prohibitive and really, really tough [but we] do have two gardens on that side of Town. You don't need to have a big landscape to garden. You just need to want to do it.?

People not only want to do it but they want to see it as well, and tickets have been going fast.

?A lot of people are dying just to bust out [of their homes] and there is such a level of enthusiasm,? says Ms. Ryan.

To book your ticket for the Aurora Garden Tour, visit New Roads Garden Centre (17235 Yonge Street, Newmarket), Wild Birds Unlimited (16655 Yonge Street, Newmarket), Black Forest Gardens (15445 Keele Street, King), Luda Flower Salon (130 Hollidge Boulevard, Aurora), and the Aurora Farmers' Market on June 25.

Tickets, which are \$15, will also be available at Garden #1 on the self-guided tour at 197 McClellan Way on the day of the tour itself.

For more information, visit www.gardenaurora.ca.

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