

Gardeners prepare to flex their green thumbs Sunday for annual Garden Tour



By Brock Weir

Whether you're a lifetime gardener or a new Aurora homeowner looking for some tips on how to make your garden grow, there will be something for everyone as Garden Aurora hosts its annual Aurora Garden Tour.

Garden Aurora ? formally the Aurora Garden and Horticultural Society, which is now in the first year of its second century ? will showcase ten gardens in and around Town this Sunday, June 23, each selected to show off a dazzling array of colours and creativity.

Running from 12 noon to 4.30 p.m., the self-guided tour will not only feature local gardens but, new this year, the ?Game of Roses & Art in the Gardens? which will showcase locally produced outdoor art in each of the selected showplaces.

?We always look for gardens that are done by local gardeners, gardens for Aurorans by Aurorans,? says event co-chair Judy Ryan. ??We don't choose gardens that are created and maintained by professional landscape companies because those ?gardens aren't attainable for most of our visitors. We want to inspire our visitors to create their own beautiful landscapes and, in order to do that, inspire them when they walk into one of these gardens and say, ?I can do this.' It is not like walking into the gardens that are on some of the large estates in Toronto where there are thousands and thousands of dollars spent. There are gardens that you can do.?

In short, if you've heard about the Aurora Garden Tour and thought, ?been there, done that.? You haven't really been there already, and you certainly haven't done that yet.

?There are so many

fine gardens in Aurora that we have that we don't repeat a garden for 10 years," Ms. Ryan continues. "We revisit some gardens that have been on the tour because after 10 years the garden has changed and it will not be the same, but this year none of these gardens have been on the tour previously."

As these are all gardens by Aurorans, the tour will underscore the wide variety of plant materials that can grow and thrive in this community.

Garden Aurora member Donna Lewis says that there are still unique microclimates in Aurora and these pockets support unique plants.

"We have lots of new subdivisions coming in, so "

there are a lot of new gardens and people not [necessarily knowing] what can grow here," says Donna. "If you go on the tour of Aurora gardens, you will know what grows and you will see how they survive."

New this year, is a fresh commercial venture with Newmarket's New Roots Garden Centre.

Garden Aurora first formed this partnership last summer when the Aurora Garden & Horticultural Society marked its 100th anniversary with a special AGM at Salvation Army's Northridge Community Church. The Garden Centre provided entrance landscaping, but have since faced business challenges as Yonge Street is reconstructed to make way for the Viva Rapidway.

"We reached out to them this year because of the construction on Yonge Street in a way to say thank you to do something to benefit our club, visitors, and maybe provide New Roots some exposure given the construction," says Ms. Ryan. "We have partnered with them and they have stepped up mightily in terms of discounts and a prize basket for our Game of Roses, which is wire art that comes from Kingcrafts."

Tickets for Sunday's Garden Tour are available now for \$15 from New Roots Garden Centre, Aurora Home Hardware, Blackforest Garden Centre, Caruso & Co, and this Saturday only at the Aurora Farmers' Market from 8 - 1 p.m.

For more information, contact Garden Aurora at 905-713-6660 or visit gardenaurora.ca.