

## Local gardeners gear up for Sunday's Aurora Garden Tour



### By Brock Weir

Anita Eveleigh takes a very pragmatic approach to her garden – if a plant doesn't work, or serve its intended purpose, it's out of there to make way for something better.

Thankfully for garden enthusiasts in Aurora, and across York Region, there's not a lot that doesn't work in the Moffat Crescent garden she shares with her husband, Roy.

This Sunday, you have a chance to see for yourself as they open up their gates as part of the annual Aurora Tour of Gardens, hosted by the Aurora Garden and Horticultural Society.

The self-guided tour get underway at 12 noon through 4.30 p.m., rain or shine.

When tour-goers get to Moffat Crescent, they will encounter a garden that is not just for show, but also for service. Through the gates, visitors will be able to walk down a gentle slope (fully accessible upon request) to a vivid splash of colour. Beyond this first impression is a wooden arch leading to the working garden.

This is a sea of fruits, vegetables, and herbs which not only feed the family but also a host of critters that feast on the bounty.

"I don't mind sharing it, but I would really like the critters to leave me something!" jokes Anita, leading *The Auroran* through raised beds of lettuce, spinach, beans, peas, beets, plum and beefsteak tomatoes, zucchinis and squash, strawberries, rhubarb, a patch of asparagus in need of some tender loving care, and an experimental plot of peanuts.

"I try something and if it works, it works," she says. "If it doesn't, it is kind of fun to say I tried."

Walking through the garden, it is hard to believe that that was the overriding vision of how the garden took root in the first place. Having lived on the property since 1985, there was no particular game plan on where she would start.

The starting point was actually building a pool on their sharply sloping property. To shore up a corner of the deck, stones were thrown down the slope for some extra support. Sensing an opportunity, that cascade of rock quickly gave way to a rock garden. The rest, including a fledgling woodland garden, followed suit.

"I find peace and relaxation out here," Anita explains. "There were mature trees here and lots of opportunities to be outside. I am out

here every day whether I am working or not. The slope of the property dictated how the garden evolved and when we put the pool out where it is sunny and open, the rest of the property became the park.?

After graduating from nursing, Anita spent a year living in Northern Ontario. It was there she discovered her love of open space and the great outdoors. Although communities up there were small in and of themselves, she found as soon as she was beyond city limits, a wave of peace washed over her.

?I felt a sense of a relationship with nature, with God, or whatever you want to call it,? she says. ?I felt at one. I couldn't have that when I moved back to the city, so this became an alternative.?

Perhaps it awakened something that was lying dormant in her as her mother was an avid gardener, even in the confines of an apartment. Her mother, she says, had the nurturing instinct when it came to her plans and just simply couldn't let them die. Then again, Anita says she doesn't actually remember lending her mother's green thumb a hand.

?My learning to actually garden was trial and error.?

This weekend will be one of those moments for the Eveleighs as they open their garden to the public for the first time. They were first approached to participate on the tour three or four years ago, but home renovations got in the way of their participation. This year, however, everything aligned.

?I garden regardless of whether or not anybody comes in,? says Anita. ?We like to entertain, so I want an attractive warm place to do it. Regardless of whether or not we were on the tour, I would still be working towards that vision. When the garden first came, my vision was one of simplicity. I was working at the time and had young children and I wanted plants that basically took care of themselves ? a lot of foliage, but different textures and colours.

?I want people to enjoy the garden and see that it is a warm, relaxing place. I also have a couple of gardening dilemmas, so if anyone has a piece of advice, I am open to it!?

Tickets for the Aurora Garden Tour are available for \$15 at Caruso & Co., Carmichael's Garden Centre, Blackforest Garden Centre, and this Saturday, July 5, at the Aurora Farmers' Market. For more information, and same day ticket sales, visit [www.gardenaurora.com](http://www.gardenaurora.com) or call 905-727-5926.