

A walk to remember

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By MATT DECEMBER

Nine area gardens will be the talk of the town next weekend with the return of the annual garden walk.

The 15th annual Friends of the Romeo District Library Garden Walk returns July 16 from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m., and will give visitors the chance to explore nine gardens in Romeo, Washington Township and Bruce Township. This year all nine gardens are privately owned and maintained by homeowners.

The Friends hope the garden walk serves as inspiration for visitors to enjoy the outdoors in their own gardens - as a place to grow a variety of flowers and plants, and somewhere to eat, entertain, relax and contemplate.

Rosemary Kern, the co-chairwoman for the event with Carole Tapper, said the walk is coming together well this year and looks to be a lot of fun.

"It has been delightful," she said. "The gardens, I think, are really gorgeous and they are so different. Each one has got personality. That's what we like in Romeo."

Kern said she hopes the event will provide inspiration to visitors to take a crack at their own gardens because it can be a fun and relaxing hobby.

"Every time you go out there, you see something new," she said. "It gets to be kind of a habit."

Elizabeth Miller, a member of the Romeo District Library Board of Trustees, volunteered her garden for the walk this year after she and her family worked on it for the last four years since moving into Romeo.

"We enjoy gardening. It gives us lots of pleasure. We have three children who have also participated in the building of our garden as well," said Miller.

Miller said one of her goals was to fill the garden with as many edibles as possible, including a variety of fruits and vegetables. The Miller Garden also features reused materials, including a retaining wall made out of the concrete from the home's original drive.

Miller also said the garden was designed to complement their house's architectural style.

"Because it is an arts-and-crafts house, we tried to reflect that particular architecture into the gardens," said Miller. "In the arts-and-crafts movement they used a lot of Asian design as well."

Ruth Heidebreicht said her collection of six gardens was created around a large pond and against a natural woodland setting to create a sense of tranquility.

"I used to design landscapes and perennial gardens," she said. "I took all of the plant materials that were on the property and moved them. I formed mass plantings and created a couple of themed gardens."

Heidebreicht said she is also a yoga instructor and that has added to her goal in attempting to create a peaceful setting.

"I'm trying to create a peaceful, serene environment," she said. "We had such a beautiful natural backdrop of the woods that I tried to keep everything very natural."

"I'm just trying to create an oasis," Heidebreicht added.

Jan Bryant maintains her garden amidst a large backyard that includes dozens of trees. Bryant said during the last 40 years the garden has gone through stages, and changed mostly as the trees have grown and provided more shade to the yard.

"There was nothing on the property when we moved in," said Bryant, who lives with her husband Dean. "It used to be a sunny garden when the trees were young and as they matured it became a shade garden, or a woodland garden really."

Bryant, who has had her property featured in the garden walk in the past, said she really enjoys the hobby and strongly recommends it to those thinking of trying their hand at the activity.

"I like coming out and being alone with the garden," said Bryant. "I like working with the plants. Some plants arrive in your yards; you don't know what they are but when they are young growing plants, you feel like you want to experiment with them and see what they really are. I highly recommend gardening."

The other gardens that will be available to tour include:

* The McMillan Garden, which is a perennial memory cottage garden. The garden was started by Nadine and is currently maintained by homeowner Michele. There are many varieties of perennials in the garden, as well as hostas, lavender, a patio fountain and more.

* The Kane Garden was professionally landscaped by local architect Jason Amott as a personal summer retreat for owner Sue. The garden features a tree-canopied stone circle patio, flowers in unique planters and evergreens. Amott will be on hand to answer questions.

* The McManus Garden is maintained by Sean and includes a greenhouse and gazebo. The yard features a wide variety of flowers, including lilies, sunflowers, daisies and more.

* The Kerr Garden, maintained by Joyce, features dense plantings in a small lot, including lilies, sedum, mums and many annuals. A 200-year-old chestnut tree shades the backyard.

* The Wing Garden, maintained by Rob and Kim, is an English garden developed as a courtyard setting with a fountain and pond. The garden was designed to create a sense of coziness as it is enclosed by tall cedars and has a natural sunken effect.

* The Tapper Garden, maintained by Richard and Carole, returns this year. The gardens cover more than 3 acres with both a Japanese and European atmosphere. The gardens include three Japanese-style ponds, a 180-foot reflecting pool and three waterfalls. The garden also includes sculptures, a raised vegetable garden, and more than 4,000 trees, bushes and plants.

Also returning this year to the garden walk is the artist market in the barn of Patty and Bob Kelly. The market will include 12 artists, antique dealers, the Romeo Garden Club and more. A portion of the proceeds from the market will go to the Friends of the Romeo District Library.

Tickets for the 15th annual Friends of the Romeo District Library Garden Walk are available at the Graubner and Kezar libraries, as well as Kane's Town Hall Antiques.

Cost is \$10 per ticket. Proceeds go to the Friends of the Romeo District Library to support both branches of the Romeo District Library. For more information or to volunteer for two hours the day of the walk, call 752-0607, Ext. 101.