

29th Annual Ann Arbor Garden Walk^(tm)

Saturday, June 8 10 am to 4 pm

Garden Descriptions

Street addresses are included on ticket and published one week prior to Garden Walk day

Garden 1: Water Hill Retreat

This Water Hill house, originally built in 1938 by the Nagler family, who owned Nagler Furs on Main Street, has been home to the current owners since 2006. The neighborhood is named for the streams that ran down the hill before hydrological engineering confined them to underground pipes.

The design of the backyard garden is based on an underlying geometry of a major axis, golden section rectangle, circle, and squares. The main central axis extends through the living room from the bay window on the east through the French doors on the west and continues out through the garden, through the pond and dry creek bed, terminating in the garden shed on the west. The grassy area in the backyard is roughly a circle, with a metal "globe" at the center and the garden beds and hostas defining the edge of the circle.

The pond started out with a small round shallow bowl on Father's Day that has since been relocated to the garden adjacent to the front door. This water feature then led to the larger golden section rectangular pond, excavated by the father and son one summer. The pond depth steps down so the fish can survive the winter; various water plants thrive at the upper and lower levels of the pond. A trypic of three fountains at the center provides bubbling water sounds that dampen nearby road noise.

The dry creek bed, a collection of stones from the owners' travels, leads from the pond to the garden shed. The remains of a former playhouse, the garden shed is painted aquamarine blue on the interior and a fish sculpture floats in the opening. The lighting at night highlights this "aquarium" that terminates the vista from the interior of the living room.

The patio bricks were re-laid 10 years ago to solve a drainage issue at the rear of the home – this is Water Hill, after all! The patio geometry is two squares of 15' x 15', edged in limestone, with steps salvaged from the garden.

Plantings include hostas, peonies, roses, day lilies, poppies, Lenten roses, hydrangea, coral bells, and more. A Japanese maple replaced a redbud a few years ago. Walnut trees along the west side provide a challenge and much of the yard is shady. Containers with annuals provide color and the owners play with groupings of colors and textures each year to vary the look.

The four bamboo posts symbolize the family of four and the heights represent the individuals. There are various pieces of artwork and candle holders throughout the garden that the owners have collected from their travels and from Treasure Mart and architectural salvage places. The garden is especially lovely on a summer evening when the tea candles are lit and the water fountains splash and bubble.



Garden 2: An Art-ful Garden



This beautiful and colorful four-acre visual and musical arts garden offers surprises at every turn. Surrounding the beautifully restored 1860s Italianate farmhouse and 1800s-inspired 'carriage house' is a wide variety of flowers, plants, trees and wildlife.

The homeowners have done all of the house and garden work themselves over the past 25+ years. After restoring the dilapidated, neglected farmhouse, they turned to tackling the property which was overgrown with buckthorn, honeysuckle, multiflora rose, gout weed, mustard weed, and more. It has been an ongoing challenge getting rid of invasive species and keeping out invading species, thus a 2000-foot deer fence around the back of the property installed by Dave.

Carol, an artist, uses the garden as her canvas, doing the garden design and all of the plantings – arranged so that each season offers its own unique variety of colors and textures. As she learns more about the importance of sustainability and our local environment,

she has turned her attention to native plants. The focus is now on ecological balance by incorporating more natives which will provide food and shelter for birds, bees and butterflies – and for healthier humans!

As you walk up the driveway, notice the new plantings of native wildflowers on your right which will eventually replace the lawn – milkweed, wild bergamot, mountain mint, golden alexander, and coreopsis, to name just a few. Perennial flower beds line the passage through the arbor gate into the back garden. While your eyes feast on a conifer garden and raised tomato beds, your ears will be delighted by beautiful classical music being performed in the gazebo by Carmen and Forrest Flesher and fellow local musicians. Enjoy the music while swinging on the glider, or sitting on one of the garden benches.

Meandering down the numerous garden paths in the back you will hear the gurgling fountain and see several colorful glass sculptures purchased over the years at the Ann Arbor Art Fairs. Don't miss Carol's Concrete Quilt, a 30'x12' river-stone mosaic path designed and created by Carol and Dave in 2018 – a creative re-use of an old cracked concrete slab that served as a foundation for an outbuilding from the last century. From the hosta garden, if you look to the west you can see the remaining stone foundation from the old 1860's barn. Be sure to saunter down to Honey Creek along the back of the property to see the fish and visit the log cabin playhouse along the way. Look for more wildflowers, elderberries, black raspberries, and birdhouses.

Garden 3: Flowing Harmony of Plants, Water & Stone



This house and the house next door were the first two houses built in this neighborhood in the late 1950s in a unique ranch style. The garden began with strong Asian influences by an expert gardener with great love, knowledge, and vision. In recent years, the current owner has infused several features of Southwest desert rock garden into the original Asian theme. Today, the garden isn't defined by any specific theme, but instead expresses the owners' taste for creative design and beauty using natural stone, rock sculptures, and multiple water features that reflect their personalities and lifestyle.

Many visitors are surprised to find that both the house and garden are much larger than expected; only the front section of the garden and carport are visible from the street. The best garden and fountain views are from inside the house, where extensive glass, sun rooms, and skylights blend with and reflect the peace and calm of the garden creations outside.

The garden is in three sections: The front area, visible from the street, is on a hill and reminiscent of ancient ruins, with flagstone paths on terraced levels. The middle section by the house has a more Southwest influence, featuring combed gravel beds decorated with unique stones, corals, and a pond and fountains surrounded by thuja trees and unusual plants, flowers, moss, and miniature trees.

Behind the house is a relaxing and inviting “Zen” sanctuary area centered around waterfalls in a flowing brook leading to a large pond with fountains. Our goal is to make the garden beautiful yet simple to maintain and a wonderful place to escape for evening dinners on the patio.

Garden 4: Re-imagined Home & Garden

This half-acre lot is a former churchyard. The church was torn down and the house built from recycled materials, completed in 1932. The previous owners bought the house around 1962 and owned it for nearly 50 years. The current owner acquired the house in 2011. He decided the house needed a larger kitchen, and this evolved into an addition more than doubling the size of the original house. Keith Fineberg of KSF Architects in Milan, MI, and the owner developed the plan, creating an addition matching the original style so successfully that it is difficult to differentiate the old from the new.

There was likely a brick wall around the churchyard perimeter, which made digging post holes for new fencing a difficult challenge. The brick paving on the lot had sagged and buckled over time as well. The owner dug up all 1600 bricks and pressure-washed them himself to be used to repave the area around the garage and side door. The original garage was an attached structure which has been converted to a vestibule. The current unattached garage was built around 1964. The brick playhouse was built in 1934.



After the addition was finished in 2018, Fred Knight of KC Runciman Landscapes in Milan, MI, was asked to design and install new landscaping. The city required a rain garden to absorb the rain runoff from the roof of the addition. This was a difficult project due to the very deep layer of clay. Fred’s solution is a beautifully imagined deep “chasm” filled with rocks, boulders, and moisture-loving plants and trees. It has become a focal point in the garden, which features very mature trees and large areas of groundcover including pachysandra, ivy, and periwinkle.

Garden 5: A Garden of Four Themes

This Craftsman-style farmhouse was built in the 1920s on a tract of land originally including surrounding subdivisions and Pioneer High School. The owner, an avid gardener, has lived here for the last 44 years. Recently, she’s had able assistance from gardener David Wanty. In the last four years, Fred Knight of KC Runciman Landscapes has been engaged to replace many trees and shrubs and design and build all new hardscape.



The challenges included visually “orienting” the house south toward Pauline Boulevard when in fact it faces east, integrating new plantings into the old, providing privacy, and minimizing maintenance while promoting sustainability.

Repetitive fencing and stone choices tie the spaces together. Extensive use of ground covers, limited grassy areas, multiple water sources, raised beds, and compost bins provide easier maintenance. The property divides into four areas with distinct purposes:

Exuberance: The front flower garden in its sunny location set off by a white picket fence provides a glorious two-sided view. This garden offers bold colors all season with a wide array of perennials, annuals, and bulbs. It lifts the spirit, generates neighborly conversations, and supplies endless cut flowers.

Nourishment: To the west of the garage is the newest garden of raised vegetable beds with ledges, cold frames, drip watering system, water barrel, and compost bin.

Entertaining and dining: A bluestone patio anchors the back of the house. A dining table, a wisteria-laced pergola, and trellises for clematis and mandevilla create privacy. This area features several specimen trees including a ‘Green Cascade’ Japanese maple, a Japanese Stewartia, a ‘Green Thread’ false cypress, a ‘Fat Albert’ blue spruce, and a ‘Red Obelisk’ beech.

Reflection: On the east side of the house is a private, narrow, shaded area with a winding bluestone pathway, bench for meditation, flowering spring and fall shrubbery, hostas, anemones, and lily of the valley. This is the most private area of the property, hidden from view of the street and neighboring houses.



Garden 6: Potager Garden: Aesthetic & Edible



This vibrant garden features terraces and beds which combine flowering and fruiting plants. In the front of the house, the garden wall is alive with roses, grasses, lavender, and salvia. The front beds are planted with spring bulbs, followed by spring crops of carrot, lettuce, leek, kale, and fennel. Several types of tomatoes, squash, pumpkin, kohlrabi, eggplant, cucumber, and dahlia tubers come next, growing quickly on the warmth of the stone wall.

The owners enjoy experimenting with annual cutting flowers: State Fair zinnias and Valentine sunflowers grown from local growers' seedlings as well as sweet peas, snapdragons, and cosmos from seed.

Fruit trees accent the front yard, including one Gala and two Honey Crisp apples as well as two espaliered Kieffer pear trees from River Road Farms in Tennessee. Blueberries and blackberries on the west terrace wall contribute fruit. Against the front face of the house on

the north is a selection of rhododendrons, azaleas, and hostas enclosed by a boxwood hedge, with a backdrop of Boston ivy on the house.

In the backyard sit three raised troughs. One trough holds a palette of herbs for the kitchen; the others are planted in succession with fast growers such as radish, bok choy, and nasturtium. Further back in the yard is a selection of hellebores, ferns, and lily of the valley. Two sunny beds hold perennials. Plantings are challenged by the chickens, who often free-range. Cherished plants include some moved from previous homes: phlox, pulmonaria, toad lilies, and coneflowers. The lupine grew from seeds from an aunt in Maine.

Wonderful service providers have included John Cullen and crew from Celtic Gardens, who built the stone wall and pergola and planted the perimeter of thuja trees. Andrew Kyte, a master ironsmith/artist at Kyte Metalwerks in Ann Arbor, designed and fabricated all the ironwork on the house. Mary Kalmes, architect, and Johnson Brothers Builders created the accessibility-sensitive addition to the house, including a new attached garage and first floor suite.