

SECRETS OF THE GARDENS

Tour seven gardens on the Long Beach Peninsula July 13

BY SYDNEY STEVENS FOR COAST WEEKEND

A ‘G’-rated Love Shack? Eleven outdoor ‘rooms’ on three-and-a-half acres? Rhubarb and lavender grown for local distilleries? Who would have believed that gardens on the Long Beach Peninsula harbored such interesting secrets?

On Saturday, July 13, from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m., seven garden gates on the Peninsula will open for the 13th Annual Music in the Gardens Tour, a fundraiser for the Peninsula’s Water Music Society. From pocket-sized with panoramic views, to ten acres focused on edibles, the gardens are as varied as their locations.

Tickets are \$20 and are still available online at bit.ly/2RY0Fmc, at the English Nursery in Seaview, the Basketcase Greenhouse in Long Beach and the Bay Avenue Gallery in Ocean Park. Additionally, visitors can purchase \$5 raffle tickets for intriguing objects, often garden-related, which will be on sale at the various venues.

Music and artists in the gardens

Musicians this year include guitarist George Coleman; jazz pianist Tom Grant; two music duos, Tanz and Sea Strings; guitarist Brian O’Connor; guitarist Terry Rob; Jean-Pierre (Garau) and Al Perez; guitarist Dave Drury and pianist Tom Trudell.

A highlight will be the

If You Go

What: 13th Annual Music in the Gardens tour

When: 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. Saturday, July 13

Where: Various locations along the Long Beach Peninsula

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music of saxophone player Tristan Trudell, a senior at Ilwaco High School. Trudell is the first student to perform in the Music in the Garden’s 13-year history. Proceeds from the tour go toward the Ocean Beach School District music program.

Artists at work in each garden include Susan Spence (basketry); Stan Reidel (watercolors); Renee O’Connor (tile work); Nansen Malin (welding for topiary); Jacob Moore (sculpture) and Somsri Hoffman (eclectic paintings on unusual objects). Selected works will be for sale.

Willapa Bay, Ocean Park gardens

At the Peninsula’s north end, a five-acre garden nestled next to Willapa Bay both enhances and celebrates the natural environment. Nearest the house is a colorful area where purple poppies, Rozanne geraniums and tree peonies gradually progress into discreetly managed wilderness. Every bit of this garden is deliber-

ately open for wildlife and pollinators, so no chemicals are used.

Overlooking the Pacific Ocean in Ocean Park, homeowners have designed their garden to embrace the constant westerly winds. Dozens of ornamental grasses bow and curtsy to the breeze, all complemented by carefully chosen flowering plants in the free-form terraces above.

Long Beach, southern Peninsula gardens

By contrast, magic and whimsy seem to be themes in two Long Beach gardens. One, described by the homeowners as “a perfectly imperfect woodland paradise” includes a fairy garden with tiny castles nestled among the tree trunks and playful touches like an old dresser with open drawers overflowing with bright impatiens.

Not far away, in another garden full of happy surprises, are plantings in jam-packed proximity with garden sculptures, bright blue beads, colored floats, ceramic starfish – all gloriously united by color and clever placement. Among the flowers, almost hidden, are lovely glass blossoms – bearded iris, morning glories – as well as birds and abstract shapes.

Also in Long Beach are two unusual side-by-side gardens overlooking the bay. Though visitors can easily walk from one property to the other, there is no mistaking which is which. Each is perfectly adapted to the acreage, yet each is in direct contrast to the other. Busy, ambitious, passionate, sustainable, eco-centric best



Photo courtesy Bob Duke

On this ten-acre property, the raised beds in the foreground (just beyond the bayshore) contain the melon garden, while those to the west of the house contain heritage tomatoes and rhubarb.



Photo courtesy Nancy Allen

Garden steps lead through beautifully tended shrubbery to a panoramic view across the Columbia River and beyond.



Photo courtesy Nancy Allen

Forty varieties of heather are nestled in this large garden bed, each specifically chosen to provide year-round color.

describe the most northerly of the two, while serene, contemplative, magnificent and thoughtful might come to mind while strolling the paths of its southern neighbor.

Just a taste of the north garden: a fruit orchard of peaches, plums, apples, pears and cherries are supported by six mason bee houses and several ladybug houses for pollination and pest control; a melon

patch of 24 raised beds; and overlooking the water is a “s’mores garden” with no plants at all, just a patio and firepit for roasting marshmallows. To the south: quiet pathways through acres of rhododendrons. Once a part of the renowned Clarke Rhododendron Nursery, today’s garden preserves and honors the Clarke legacy while enhancing it with new plantings. And, although rhododendrons are

the stars here, they are lovingly illuminated by other plants such as an 80-foot coastal redwood from the 1940s.

At the very southern end of the Peninsula is a small, perfectly groomed garden perched high above Bakers Bay and the Columbia River. Each planting beautifully frames breathtaking views from the river’s north shore to Saddle Mountain in the distance.