



GardenWalk
Buffalo



GardenWalk

Buffalo

A celebration of urban gardens

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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BUFFALO
HERITAGE
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Printed and bound in the United States of America.

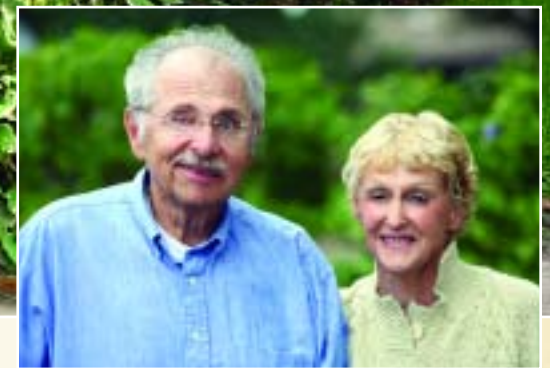
ISBN 0-9788476-0-1

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The bench Lunenfeld and McCarthy installed outside their home at 231 Norwood.



Marvin Lunenfeld and Gail McCarthy.

Garden pioneers

When Marvin Lunenfeld and Gail McCarthy planted a bright perennial garden around their corner property at Norwood and West Utica, they stood out on their block. Passers-by stopped to admire the flowers, some even planning their daily routes to pass the garden. Lunenfeld and McCarthy placed a bench just inside their property line, close enough to the sidewalk for public use.

“The garden started a number of dialogues,” says McCarthy, who had lived in Washington in the 1960s and had admired Lady Bird Johnson’s use of gardens to combat urban blight. “We became very sensitive to the fact that gardens do great things.”

When the two approached the Norwood-West Utica neighborhood association in 1994 to start the first Buffalo Garden Walk, their neighbors had two fears: that no one would come or that there would be vandalism if they did come. Their fears were not realized.

“From the beginning, I wanted no prizes and no admission fees,” says Lunenfeld. “I didn’t like the idea of elitism or exclusivity.” He spent almost every day of the winter of 1995 trying to get free publicity for the walk and making sure that enough gardeners would be on it. As it would be for the next four years, the headquarters for the walk was the Lunenfeld/McCarthy porch at 231 Norwood Avenue. Here, maps were dispensed, donations were taken, and, in some years, a string quartet played.

And, from the beginning, the Walk was scheduled for the last full weekend in July. “Because it was usually warm then, and people were still around—not away on vacation,” explains Lunenfeld. “A lot of established perennials are at their zenith then,” adds McCarthy, “and the annuals are really cooking.” The two also wanted to avoid other popular Buffalo festivals.

The difference in their neighborhood after Garden Walk was immediate, according to the two founders. Not only did more gardens begin to appear up and down the block, but home-

owners became more conscious of how their houses appeared to others and many houses changed hands from absentee landlords to resident owners. “By the second or third year, the whole look of the street changed,” says McCarthy. “We felt better about where we lived.”

In 1999, Lunenfeld retired from his professorship at Fredonia State College, and he and McCarthy felt they could leave the active leadership of Garden Walk to others. Lunenfeld started the Elmwood Village Gardening Group, in the process bestowing a name upon the Elmwood neighborhood that has since become its official title.

“I’m terribly proud that it’s still going and it still brings people into the neighborhood,” he says. Lunenfeld and McCarthy now live in Florida for most of the year, but always try to be in Buffalo for Garden Walk.

To this day, thanks to the vision of Marvin Lunenfeld and Gail McCarthy, Garden Walk Buffalo remains one of the biggest and most egalitarian garden tours in America.

How to start your own garden walk

It is best to start small, perhaps with fifteen to twenty gardens in the first year.

- Set the geographic boundaries for the tour, keeping them as walkable as possible.
- Identify the participants. These are best located through personal contacts, community meetings, or through notices in local publications. Once a core group has been formed, the word will spread and it should not be difficult to find more gardeners eager to enter each year. Create an entry form to keep track of the participating gardeners and collect information about their gardens.
- Get as many volunteers as possible involved in running the event. A good coordinator is necessary to make sure things get done on time. Committee meetings will be needed from time to time, but should be as short and infrequent as possible, and their timing should be based on when the tasks of organizing the walk need to be completed.
- Create a calendar of what needs to be done and when. This will include:
 - contacting prospective participants, collecting needed information from those who enter, and developing a map/guide.
 - creating and distributing signs and markers to show where the gardens are.
 - printing and distributing publicity materials and the map/guide to the gardens.
 - publicizing the event. This includes having flyers and posters at home/garden shows, and local nurseries, sending out a series of press releases, with images whenever possible, and creating large banners for outdoor display.
 - communicating with gardeners to make sure they know what to expect.
 - creating a centrally located headquarters where visitors can go to get maps and information throughout the walk. This should have restroom facilities and water available.

In addition to these practical tasks, there are institutional needs, such as:

- developing a budget and getting funding for it. Money can be solicited from neighborhood businesses, from civic and government groups, or from individual contributions. You may want to charge admission for the event. (Garden Walk Buffalo does not.)
- taking care of legal matters, including tax status and liability insurance purposes. Liability insurance must be in place, and can most easily be implemented under the umbrella of another, larger neighborhood organization, as can non-profit status, necessary for receiving grants.

And the most important instruction of all:

Have fun! It's important to make this process as enjoyable as possible for the participating gardeners and all the volunteers. Make sure there are plenty of social gatherings and small perks for everyone who is working on the walk.

Left: 1045 Elmwood Avenue.



Delaware District

This area comprises gardens in the northeast range of the Walk, closest to Delaware Avenue.



The Northeast section of Garden Walk is more sparsely populated with gardens than some of the other areas, but it offers a splendid array of architecture and green spaces. Highlights include the magnificent Bidwell Parkway, designed as part of a comprehensive Buffalo parkway system by Frederick Law Olmsted, and large mansions up and down Delaware Avenue, many built by such well-known architects as McKim, Mead, and White, E. B. Green, and Esenwein & Johnson. Bley and Lyman's 800 West Ferry, Buffalo's most distinctive apartment building (now condominiums), is also a prominent feature of this section of Garden Walk.

Delaware Park, the centerpiece of Olmsted's Buffalo park network (planned and implemented by Olmsted and his partner Calvert Vaux 1868-98) can be seen along Rumsey Road, which borders its southwestern edge. Walkers can easily visit the Delaware Park rose garden as well as the Japanese garden on the other side of Hoyt Lake, near the Buffalo and Erie County Historical Society. Beautiful Linwood Avenue, lined with more homes built by the area's finest architects, is also a must-see highlight.

Frederick Law Olmsted designed a system in Buffalo where several parks were connected by parkways; the parkways were designed to accommodate both horseback riders on their central medians and vehicles on the paved roadways. Bidwell Parkway and Chapin Parkway, as well as the circles at Soldiers Place and Gates Circle are part of the system, leading north to Delaware Park. All can be seen in this section of Garden Walk. Although visitors are unlikely to see many horseback riders, the broad, gracious medians intended for them are still part of Bidwell and Chapin Parkways.

Opposite page: Jacobs Executive Development Center (Butler mansion), 672 Delaware Avenue.





Still life with koi

Jennifer Guercio describes her garden as an “artist’s canvas ... a tapestry that makes me happy when I see it.”

Guercio has lived in her large Victorian at 755 West Delavan—a house whose painted details vie with the bright flowerbeds outside for a visitor’s attention—since 1991. Like many of the properties on Garden Walk, this garden developed gradually, and changed considerably over the years.

One element that has remained constant is the lively English border in front of the house, a burst of color that immediately sets it apart from its sedately lawn-clad neighbors up and down the rest of the street. Indeed, a vibrant perennial garden in the front yard instead of grass is one of the hallmarks of many of the Garden Walk gardens.

As the garden proceeds around the side of the house, a series of trellises, containers, and arches invite the visitor, ending in a magnificent tableau where Guercio’s large koi pond takes center stage.

“I still have fish from sixteen years ago,” Guercio relates, explaining that she carries the large fish—cradled in her arms—to a basement greenhouse

“I still have fish from sixteen years ago,” Guercio relates, explaining that she carries the large fish—cradled in her arms—to a basement greenhouse each fall.

each fall, as the shallow pond will not allow the koi to survive the winter.

Guercio’s hands-on approach extends to all elements of the large space, including a large grape arbor she helped construct and the patio bricks she has laid by hand several times. Containers contain both annuals and perennials, including elephant ear (colocasia), coleus, astilbe, hosta, an unusual yellow impatiens, and much more. The containers surround the pond and groupings of containers help define the different spaces of the garden.

Guercio joined Garden Walk in 1998, but by then her garden had already won several awards from the Buffalo in Bloom yearly competition. Although her garden is somewhat apart from the busier areas of the Walk, Guercio’s property has long been considered one of the “must-see” gardens.

HIGHLIGHTS Bright front border, trumpet vine arch, grape arbor, koi pond, artful container plantings **WHAT THEY ASK ABOUT** The time it takes to maintain the garden



