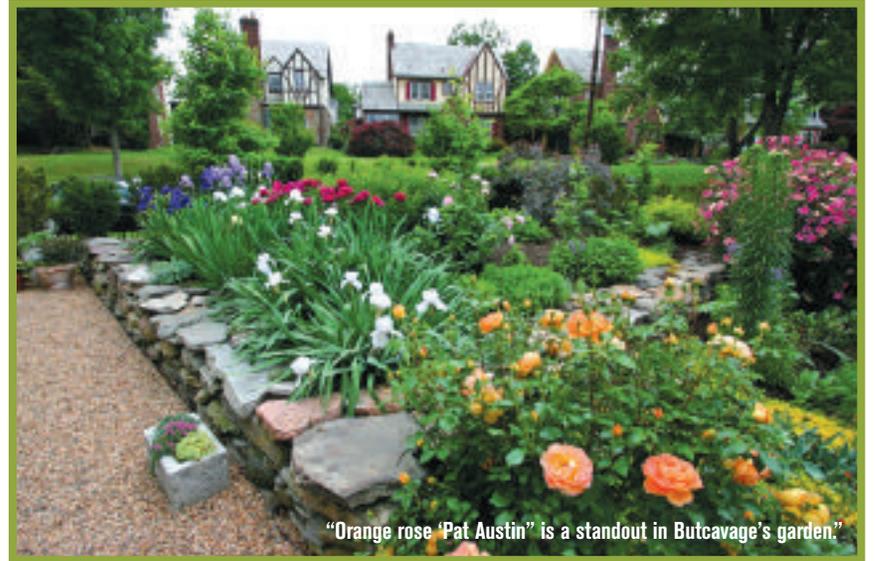




“Butcavage’s talent with color shines in his container gardens.”



“Orange rose ‘Pat Austin’ is a standout in Butcavage’s garden.”

A Neighborhood in Bloom

The Third Annual Shepherd Park Garden Tour

ARTICLE AND PHOTOS BY ERIKA PACKARD

With streets named for flowers such as jonquil, geranium and iris, Shepherd Park is a particularly fitting location for a spring garden tour. Indeed, on May 20 the Shepherd Park Citizens Association hosted its third annual garden tour in this neighborhood located north of Walter Reed Army Medical Center between Georgia Avenue and Rock Creek Park. The event featured seven private residences and drew more than 70 visitors, the largest number in the history of the event.

“Washington, DC, is a beautiful city, but that beauty is not just found around the [National] Mall,” says Gloria Owens, this year’s garden tour coordinator. “Shepherd Park and Colonial Village are just two of the hidden enclaves of beauty that make up this great city.”

Owens selected this year’s gardens from past tour participants, word-of-mouth recommendations and by driving around her neighborhood checking out people’s landscaping.

“If they had a nice-looking front yard, I peeked in their backyard,” she says. She eventually solicited participation from 15 homeowners, and seven chose to be featured on this year’s tour. Then 15 association members went to work photographing the homes and designing the full-color brochure that each visitor received.

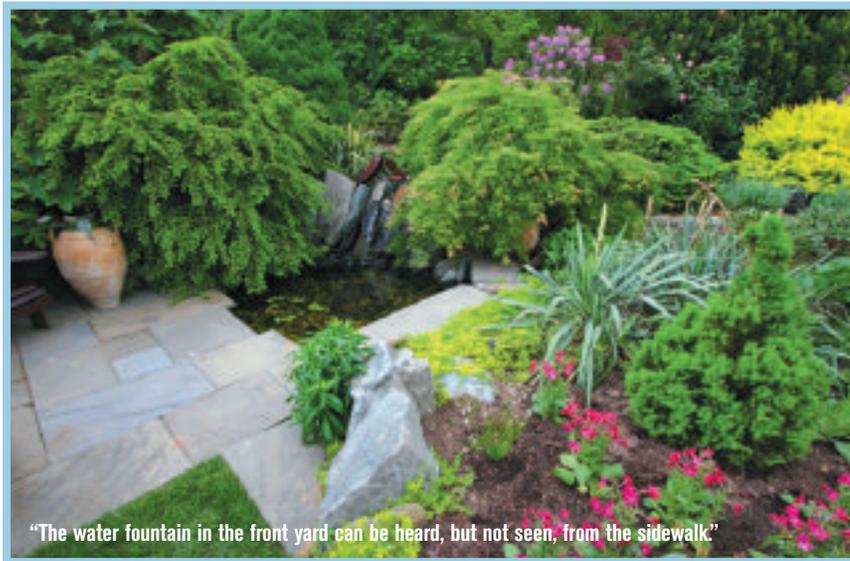
The day of the tour dawned with the threat of rain hanging in the air. But only a few raindrops managed to reach the ground, and the weather cooperated during the afternoon.

Most homeowners were on hand to discuss their gardens, and some even shared their best tips during impromptu seminars for the assembled crowds, says Owens.

A highlight of this year’s tour included the garden of Thomas Butcavage, at 7520 Morningside Drive, NW. Butcavage is a local architect, and his training is apparent in his well-designed garden. Taking a cue from his Tudor-style home, Butcavage’s garden feels as though it was transplanted from the English countryside. Pea gravel paths wend through raised beds that feature exuberantly blooming English roses. A standout is the orange-red “Pat Austin,” a very fragrant cultivar hybridized by British breeder David Austin and named for his wife.

“Red roses frame the entrance to Corrina and Larry Posner’s home.”





Only three short years ago, Butcavage's garden was just grass, a big shade tree and an asphalt driveway. Then, inspired by his travels, he got to work.

"I had visited a lot of gardens," he says. "Different areas of my garden are about different famous gardens." For example, the medieval-style herb garden was inspired by the Cloisters in New York City. Swarthmore College's rose gardens and the National Bonsai and Penjing Museum at the United States National Arboretum were other influences.

Future plans for the garden include turning a bed of blue-flowering plants such as lavender, which Butcavage says is now a "metaphoric pond," into a real pond complete with a fountain, fish and water lilies. Butcavage's artistic touch may soon be seen in other gardens in Shepherd Park: During the tour, neighbors were vying for his design services.

The home of an actual garden designer, Corrina Posner, was on view at 1837 Plymouth St., NW. The Posner's front yard is all the advertising Corrina needs for her landscape design business, European Garden Designs, says her husband Larry. Corrina completed a master gardener program, and liked it so much that when her children went away to college, she enrolled in George Washington University's landscape design program.

"I practice on my own garden," she says. One day an elegant woman stopped her car in front of the house while Corrina was working. The woman asked Corrina who her garden designer was.

"I said, 'You are in front of the garden designer,' and she hired me on the spot," says Corrina.

The Posner's garden wasn't always beautiful enough to stop traffic. When the family moved into their painted-brick Colonial in 1983, it was a disaster. "There was no garden!" says Larry.

Corrina adds, "It was a stinking mess!" After removing poison ivy, four dead hem-

locks, a discarded child's pool filled with rotten vegetation and "all sorts of schnitzel," the couple built retaining walls, leveled the property, and trucked in loads of soil. A particularly intriguing element of the garden is that it features multiple levels, each accessed by winding paths lined with foliage. It has the effect of making the already large garden feel twice as big, and adds an enchanting feeling of exploration to walking the property.

The garden features two waterfalls that spill into ponds. Each fountain is highlighted by metal crane sculptures, which the couple brought back from a visit to South Africa. Corrina's latest challenge is her Gunnera, a dramatic tropical plant that looks as though it belongs in the Jurassic era. She's attempting to grow hers near her backyard pond.

One aspect of garden care that she has down-pat is maintaining a 20-year-old wisteria that covers a side deck. In fact, Corrina's so expert that Washington Post garden writer Adrian Higgins wrote a 2004 feature article on her tips, which she says she learned from an old gardener while renting a home in her native Germany.

Garden aficionados each paid \$15 for tickets to the tour, with proceeds to benefit the Shepherd Park Citizens Association. Association members will use this year's event revenue to purchase flowering plants and mulch for Shepherd Park Elementary School, says Owens. In year's past, the association has planted flowers in Marvin Caplan Memorial Park off Alaska Avenue and has given money to the Lowell School for their ecosystem garden.

For more information on the Shepherd Park Citizens Association, visit www.shepherdpark.org.

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