

HIGH PARK NEWS

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The Gardens of High Park

By Ron Allan

In one sense, the entire Park is a garden, an oasis in the middle of a busy urban setting. Yet, there are a number of distinct areas where particular gardens have been created. Let's take a tour of the Gardens of High Park starting with the main entrance at High Park Avenue (see map of Park on page 4).

The High Park Avenue Entrance

There have always been flanking flowerbeds at the main entrance but, in the last two years, they have been attractively enhanced by Park staff. Boulders have

been brought from the Canadian Shield and placed in the beds amidst displays of native flowers. Eastern white pine trees have been planted behind the flowerbeds.

The Butterfly Garden a.k.a. Peace Garden

This garden was originally developed in 1995. Grades 1/2 pupils from the High Park Alternative School grew and planted a number of flowers native to the Park under the supervision of their teacher, Karyn Morris, one



*High Park Avenue Entrance
Photo Credit: Lisa Kemp, 2006*



*Butterfly Garden
Photo Credit: Lisa Kemp, 2006*

of our long-time High Park Council members. It remains a restful stopping place with its wildflower array, including more recently planted cupflower plants, some 10 feet tall. An undated bronze plaque set in a rock was later placed in the Garden, titled Peace Garden, "In recognition of today's youth".

The Boulevard Beds Wildflower Demonstration Garden

This display was developed as a project of the Volunteer Stewardship Program at the perimeter of the Grenadier Café and Teahouse Parking Lot. The ground was dug up, sand and small boulders brought in and the whole area landscaped. A variety of native flowers and shrubs were planted. The Boulevard Beds were officially opened in the late summer of 2004. With regular care and maintenance, it is a showcase of wild flowers and shrubs common to the Park.



The Hillside Ornamental Gardens

Some Ornamental Gardens were planted in the area south of the Grenadier restaurant as far back as the early 1900s. They were greatly augmented during the 1950s and 1960s. They now include:

- **The Rock Garden:**

This beautiful display (one of my personal favourites) is located south and west of the Grenadier Café. A stream with a series of waterfalls meanders through a variety of flowerbeds ending up at Grenadier Pond. (The water is recirculated from the Pond.) Each spring, it is a delight to see the Garden come to life providing, as it does, a habitat for waterfowl, birds, chipmunks and squirrels.



- **The Maple Leaf Flower Bed:**

This impressive floral display, in the shape of a stylized sugar maple leaf, is located at the foot of the slope near the Rock Garden. It was officially opened by Queen Elizabeth during a visit to Toronto in 1958. The display is changed once or twice during the late spring and summer and is best appreciated from the top of the hill just beyond the Sunken Garden.



- **The Sunken Garden:** Off Colborne Drive South, this area has always been a pretty spot to wander through with its shrubs and water features



(again using water recirculated from the Pond). Several years ago, the Ontario Branch of the Canadian Cancer Society came forward with a vision and a plan for redeveloping the site as a Garden of Hope, a memorial to those lost to breast cancer as well as for those who had survived the affliction. Unfortunately, sufficient funds could not be raised and the project was abandoned.

- **The Hanging Garden:** This charming site, just beyond the sunken gardens, with its variety of hanging plants, often provides a background for wedding party picture taking.



- There is a **small rock garden** in front of the Training Centre. Some of the pieces in the garden came from the ornate 1876 Customs House formerly located on Front Street West. The structure was demolished in 1919. Several carved stones were recovered and retained in the Park for a number of years until used as noted.
- There are several **floral displays** south and west of the old house originally built for John Howard's tenant farmer, and smaller flowerbeds on the flat area just south of the restaurant.

It should be noted that, while many of these ornamental gardens are a welcome addition to the Park and enjoyed today by many visitors, there still remain some 50 hectares of natural Parkland, including patches of regionally rare black oak savannah, which Urban Forestry, working with the Volunteer Stewardship Program, is diligently restoring and enhancing.

The High Park Children's Garden

This is a City project initiated in 1998 to help



Boulevard Beds
Photo Credit: Lisa Kemp, 2006

Rock Garden
Photo Credit: Lisa Kemp, 2006

Maple Leaf Flower Bed
Photo Credit: Lisa Kemp, 2006

Sunken Garden
Photo Credit: Lisa Kemp, 2006

Hanging Garden
Photo Credit: Lisa Kemp, 2006

Children's Garden
Photo Credit: Lisa Kemp, 2006



children and youth from local schools and daycares to explore the basics of urban ecology and organic gardening. Through hands-on creative programming, participants are exposed to Toronto's First Nations history, heritage, natural history, food preparation and a number of other topics. Wildflowers, fruits, vegetables and culinary and herbs are planted and cared for in raised wooden flowerbeds. The project includes a compost demonstration site.

The Restored Gardens at Colborne Lodge

John and Jemima Howard moved into Colborne Lodge in December, 1837, six months after Queen Victoria ascended the English throne. Like many in that era, the Howards shared a passion for gardening.



They practised this art faithfully up until John's death in 1890. (Jemima had predeceased him, dying of breast cancer in 1877).

In recent years, the original garden layout and surrounding paths on the west side of the Lodge were carefully researched and laid out. Based on information contained in John's meticulous journals, volunteers (The Friends of Colborne Lodge Gardens) and City staff, with financial support from various sources, have recreated a Victorian Garden typical of the period 1860-1870 and similar to what the Howards would have enjoyed.

The Kitchen Gardens on the east side of the Lodge have also been planted and nurtured to resemble what the Howards would have kept for their own use during this same period.

The Allotment Gardens

The Allotment Gardens were opened in 1974 and offer permitted plots to local gardeners for fruit, vegetable and flower plantings. They have been expanded from their original size and fenced to



prevent theft of produce and tools. These gardens have successfully blended with the natural Park setting while providing an enjoyable recreational activity for Toronto residents.

The Northeast Entrance to the Park:

The northeast corner of the Park at the intersection of Bloor Street and Parkside Drive was the site of the Lott Memorial Fountain. The impressive water feature was

commissioned by the Lott family in 1961 in honour of a deceased member, H. D. Lott.

For many years it was an attraction for birds, dogs and passers-by. In time, however, the plumbing supplying the water deteriorated



and had to be shut off. The spot developed a forlorn look and was eventually fenced off for safety reasons.

Currently, the area is being redeveloped by the City. It will again contain water features and suitable landscaping. With native tree and flower plantings, it will make a very attractive entrance to the Park, complementing the main entrance at High Park Avenue.

Each of these gardens adds its own particular cachet to the Park. Take a tour and enjoy!

Rare Swallowtails in High Park

By Bob Yukich

Along with the abundance of flowering plants in High Park and across the province this summer, many butterfly species had an exceptional breeding season. Swallowtails and other larger species were particularly numerous. High Park had many resident Black Swallowtails and Eastern Tiger Swallowtails, including a rare second brood of the latter species in August.



The real excitement came when some of the rare, more southern species of swallowtail began showing up. In June, a Giant Swallowtail was seen on two separate occasions at the north end of High Park by Jay Palock. Around the same time, two more were reported along an old railway bed in the north end of the city. Until then, only a few had ever been recorded in Toronto and just one in High Park in August 2003.

