

August Garden Tour in Midtown Kitchener

Garden A: 385 Duke Street West

Memberships available here! (Cash only)

Garden owner, Catherine, built the gardens on this property over the course of 10 years. Upon her arrival, over 50 to 60 foot spruce trees covered the area, making it difficult to grow anything beyond grass. Several of these trees were removed and swapped for more suitable varieties, but four large spruce trees, between 60 and 70 years old, still remain. Despite the challenges, Catherine now boasts multiple gardens around the property that offer visitors an unexpected sense of privacy. The backyard is also home to outdoor seating areas and fire pits. Most of the plants featured in Catherine's gardens were either gifted by friends and neighbours or purchased from various plant sales at Rockway Gardens. With a motto of "green is also a color," Catherine believes in filling bare spots with plants wherever possible. Almost all of the gardens consist of perennial plants.

Enjoy light refreshments at this garden.

Garden B: 361 Duke Street West

Blaine and Kevin, the owners of 361 Duke Street's century-old house, have utilized the property's old trees to create distinctive water features in their backyard. They have built gardens on three sides of the house, primarily filled with perennial plants. Furthermore, they took the chance last year to replace their driveway with a permeable surface, not only to be more environmentally friendly but also to add more greenery to the property. The way they have incorporated garden structures to enhance their plantings is truly remarkable, and worth a visit. Kevin will be on site during the tour to answer questions, but Blaine adds these notes,

"I love the garden for different reasons. It's both private and open to my neighbours. (I don't like when a garden is completely walled off.) I like the garden as a relief from working at a desk. I like the different shades of green and the shots of colour that I add. I like it in every

season, and being able to see it from the back of the house, which is mostly glass on the first floor. When I bought the house, the garden was more or less the shape it is now, but it was very different – the previous owners liked big beds with little in them and lots of red mulch. I was lucky to make two gardening friends after moving in. One especially was a veteran gardener, who's garden in Belmont village I loved. She would have different parts of her garden for different functions, and I got the idea of placing colourful annuals in pots among the greenery from her. The shape of the garden has changed over the years. There was a very tall, 80-year old spruce tree in the centre of the patio at one point, that fell during a big wind storm a few years ago. Having the patio rebuilt and suddenly having a lot more sun in that part of the yard prompted a lot of work. The stone paths have been recycled and rebuilt, the clothesline deck has been rebuilt with artificial wood, an arborist opened up the maple tree growing through the clothesline deck, and when the original pond failed, an architect friend reproduced a modern, deeper pond design (so the raccoons can't reach the fish) for me and I had it built. I'm not an expert, but figuring things out as we go along. I really enjoy tweaking and trimming, which a garden like this needs. It's definitely not a low maintenance garden."

Garden C: 163 Louisa Street

The third property of the tour is owned by Lori and Greg. It features one of the original houses in the neighbourhood, boasting a rich history of over 150 years and currently undergoing a renovation. Outside, almost all of the gardens on the property feature raised beds, providing architectural interest. The current owners have lived in the house for 20 years and started working on the gardens their very first spring. At that time, the gardens were quite basic, but about 15 years ago they decided to pursue a complete renovation. The backyard's current layout featuring the garden boxes has been developed over the past five years. If you appreciate the use of raised beds to enhance your property and stand out from traditionally designed beds, you will thoroughly enjoy touring these gardens. Notably, the front yard also showcases some of the largest hostas we have ever seen. Host, Lori adds the following,

"We love our gardens because it's been years of working together as a family. Our front yard makes our house feel like a home and shows our family personality and gives a warm welcome to our home. Our backyard is a work in progress and is starting to feel like our own private hidden outdoor living space in the middle of the city. We like low maintenance plants, so using perennials and having them grow and mature each year, changing every year in their size and shape is like welcoming home an old friend every spring. We love the climbing hydrangea on the southwest side of the house, it was a housewarming gift and has been a part of our gardens since the very first year. We also love our hostas, especially our big daddy in the front yard."

Garden D: 145 Shanley St.

(Front Yard Only)

Claudia and Rich, the owners of this property, have transformed their front yard into a vibrant display of colours from early spring through late fall. Instead of traditional grass, Claudia has opted for pollinator-friendly plants to attract butterflies and add a burst of colourful beauty. Throughout the garden, you will find a variety of plants including allium, Asiatic and daylilies, Solomon seal, hostas, poppies, and as the season transitions into fall, an array of cornflowers and asters. Claudia and Catherine (Garden A's host) have a tradition of sharing and splitting plants, further contributing to the diversity of the garden.