

HERALD THURSDAY, JULY 12, 2007

Home & Garden

COVER STORY:

Tour
takes in
gardens,
quilts —
really,
Page 8

Another
tour
includes
Camano
aerie,
Page 3

Ecoturf:
It's not
your
father's
lawn,
Page 7



Joining forces

Quilters and gardeners come together to present a new kind of garden tour

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■ Herald Writer

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There are all kinds of specialty garden tours.

Some showcase local art amid lovely garden backdrops. Others incorporate live music performances. Still others set the stage for educational demonstrations.

But have you ever been to a combined garden and quilt tour?

Thanks to members of the Mukilteo Way Garden Club and Mukilteo Lighthouse Quilters, you can attend one this Saturday when the two groups launch their inaugural Mukilteo Garden and Quilt Tour.

Susan Palmer, a quilter from Stanwood and a member of the Mukilteo Lighthouse Quilters, came up with the idea about a year ago and called garden club president Patty Snyder.

"I said, 'What a novel idea!'" Snyder said. "It's going to be a fabulous time. The gardeners are all working furiously to make things spiffy, and the quilters are all polishing up their stitching."

Though quilting and gardening may seem worlds apart, they have a great deal in common, Palmer, 42, said.

Both require imagination, dedication and a lust for collecting new, exciting and, sometimes, exotic things — plants for gardeners and fabrics for quilters.

Both try to turn those collections into beautiful displays through imitation or artistic experiment.

Not all gardeners are quilters, but "most quilters are gardeners, too," said Palmer, who tends roses, hydrangea, lavender and many other plants in her garden. "Instead of building the fabrics together, you're making patchwork quilts in your gardens."

Tourgoers on Saturday can tour 10 gardens, including the garden of Mukilteo Mayor Joe Marine as well as seven gardens with grand water views.

That includes the half-acre waterfront garden of Giles and Sue Shepherd, who have a stunning view of Possession Sound from their large backyard lawn.

Though their lawn isn't painstakingly manicured or their garden perfect, it's supposed to be that way, said Sue Shepherd.

"It's a work in progress. It is a lot fun," she said. "We've had to bring in topsoil and compost and all those lovely things."

Sue Shepherd, who joined the garden club in the last few years, started gardening in earnest when they moved into the home, owned by her late mother, in 2003.

"It's sort of the Wabi-sabi style of gardening," she said, referencing the Japanese philosophy that expects and accepts imperfections. "It's sort of a more relaxed way of gardening."

The Shepherds have been renovating their 1958 home inside and out, including a new large patio of Montana slate that runs throughout their covered, skylight-laden back porch and along the length of the house, providing all kinds of outdoor living spaces that take advantage of the view.

But the real star of the landscape is their entryway garden, featuring a large pond with a rocky waterfall softened by laceleaf Japanese maples and a small but stately Japanese white pine sporting large pinecones.

Presiding over it all is a canopy of mature green-leafed Japanese maple or *Acer palmatum*. It's also where First Snow, a quilt with an Asian theme by Ann Lindquist of Mukilteo, will hang gracefully in the shade on the day of the tour.

"As soon as we saw that quilt, we knew it needed to be there," Palmer said on a recent visit to the garden. "It was so perfect with this water and the Asian feel of it."

Water lilies and koi mingle under a small bridge that takes you from one side of the pond to the Shepherds' front door, where you can see clear through the house to the water.

Other stops on the tour include Fowler Pear Tree Park, started as an orchard in 1863, and the peace garden at St. Hilda St. Patrick Episcopal Church in Edmonds, featuring a labyrinth built in 2006.

There are also two small garden spaces at the Willows Edge Tea Room and Gallery Homes Real Estate, both ticket sellers for the Mukilteo tour.

See QUILTS, Page 10



TOP: Flowers in Boxes, a quilt by Susan Palmer of Stanwood, blends in with the foliage of nearby trees in the garden of Giles and Sue Shepherd of Mukilteo.



ABOVE: Members of the Mukilteo Way Garden Club and the Mukilteo Lighthouse Quilters stand in front of African Coins, a quilt by Sheree Van Berg of Everett, as a cargo ship travels near the shore.



Take the tour

What: The Mukilteo Garden and Quilt Tour features 10 gardens with quilts gracefully integrated into various garden vignettes.

Who: This inaugural self-guided tour is a joint effort by the Mukilteo Way Garden Club and Mukilteo Lighthouse Quilters with a portion of the proceeds going to Kids-Dream of Snohomish County, an organization that helps abused and neglected children.

When: 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. Saturday

Where: Gardens are in Edmonds, Everett and Mukilteo.

Cost: Tickets are \$10 at Emery's Garden in Lynnwood, Willows Edge Tea Room in Mukilteo, Needle and I, Pacific Fabrics and Pacific Stone in Everett and — on the day of the tour — Gallery Homes Real Estate, 610 Fifth St., Mukilteo, and St. Hil-da St. Patrick Episcopal Church, 15224 52nd Ave. W., Edmonds. Tickets include addresses, directions and maps as well as garden and quilt descriptions.

Information: See web.mac.com/peawink/iweb/MLQ or call 425-343-7201.



ABOVE: Blue Margaret, a cat statue, stands guard over Hidden Faces, a quilt by Pat Proctor of Everett.

LEFT: First Snow, a quilt by Ann Lindquist of Mukilteo, turns slightly to reveal a real-life scene almost exactly like the one it depicts on its face.

Quilts: Unusual tour combines two creative interests

From Page 8

Tickets to the tour include addresses, directions and maps as well as detailed garden and quilt descriptions, including the name of each quilt, who made it, techniques the quilter used and the inspiration for each piece.

Palmer hopes the tour, which will raise money for KidsDream of Snohomish County, could take place every other year.

"I think what's going to happen is we're probably going to be biennial," she said. "That way, our groups can focus on things besides the tour."

Palmer said the tour is a big event for the Mukilteo Lighthouse Quilters, which started in 2004 and

has since grown to 40 members who will feature more than 60 quilts on the tour.

"This is the first time we're going to show our quilts off as a group," Palmer said. "It's really exciting."

Terry Rose of Mukilteo, who will be featuring her garden on the tour, said the gardeners — organized as a club since 1933 — definitely have an appreciation for the artistry, planning and passion required for quilting.

"They do the same thing with their fabrics as we do with horticulture," she said. "The quilts are like gardens in themselves."

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TOP RIGHT: Koi swim lazily by water lilies in the pond at the Shepherd home in Mukilteo.

ABOVE: A laceleaf Japanese maple hangs over water lilies in the pond in the garden of Giles and Sue Shepherd.

Gardening tips

Giles and Sue Shepherd (pictured) of Mukilteo will open their garden to the public for the inaugural Mukilteo Garden and Quilt Tour this Saturday. Here are some gardening tips from Giles Shepherd about their adventures so far.

Plan to prune with tags: Though Giles Shepherd prefers to prune his Japanese maples when they're leafless, he watches them all summer long and tags the branches that he thinks need to go.

"It's easier to see what you're going to do when the leaves are on it," he said. "But it's easier for the plant if you prune when it's dormant."

Tagging will also keep you from whacking out branches that are important to the plant's winter shape.

Winged euonymus, also known as burning bush, is one of Giles Shepherd's favorite deciduous shrubs overlooking the couple's pond. "Some genius put that in the original plan," he said of a previous homeowner. "In the fall, it's



fluorescent red. Then you're left with little orange berries."

Stabilizing slopes isn't easy, but the Shepherds are gradually making progress removing blackberry bushes and replacing them with native plants.

"Blackberries get too heavy and they slump down. Rats like it. They tunnel through," Giles Shepherd said, adding that native nootka roses do a much better job: "It sends runners and it roots like crazy. I've taken the volunteers and replanted them."