

A Gardener's Dreamland

Art-filled gardens surround craft studios and a gourmet cafe in Brackley, PEI

The Dunes, PEI



plant with faith...to see is to believe...to visit you must!



The gardens at the Dunes Studio Gallery and Cafe are the highlight of any visit there. The Dunes is located on the beautiful North Shore of Prince Edward Island in Brackley Beach, 16 kilometers north of the airport in Charlottetown. The building, which started out as a pottery studio and outlet for local craftsmen, has grown with several expansions into an impressive 18,000 square foot complex that now includes a loft for potter/owner Peter Jansons, a restaurant and lounge, fashion and jewelry boutiques and a selection of galleries.

The creation of the gardens began a few years following the first phase of the building, after a journalist wrote: "...despite the sterile looking exterior, the gallery inside hosted a richness of colour and texture". Peter responded with plantings across the front and sides of the building and much to his delight, another journalist found the building to be "enveloped by flowers". The building and planting have never stopped since, and now the garden is busy with tourists, islanders and many couples eager to tie the knot among the abundant beds. The original beds were more about landscape design, but now the emphasis has shifted to include cutting beds for flower arrangements. Peter is renowned for his unique ikebana dishes and the dozens of inspired arrangements

displayed in them. The restaurant tables are resplendent with these, as are the plates of food coming from the kitchen decorated with edible flowers such as Calendula, Nasturtiums, Marigolds, Roses, Pansies, Daylilies and a variety of herbs from the kitchen garden.

With Peter's lack of previous gardening experience, and equally naive students to help, the gardens have evolved despite a hit and miss approach. During the early years, Peter spent a huge amount on annuals for the flower beds. Nowadays, having discovered the beauty of compost applied annually, 90% if the garden is perennials and shrubbery with Daylilies, Asiatic and Oriental Lilies topping the list of favourites. Some of the annuals that are still planted include Cosmos and Cleome (the two tend to partner well), Sunflowers, Pansies, Snapdragons, Zinnias, Alyssum, and various Marigolds.

The framework or bones that create the layout for any garden is key to its success. While collecting and designing for his galleries during his winters in Bali and Thailand, Peter has been fortunate to gain access to a huge variety of river stone, marble, teak and ironwood decking. The gardens are adorned with modern and classical carvings, large and small, from Indonesia. Jamie Smith and his talented team at Red Oak Landscaping have played a key part in the development of the landscaping through the creation of pathways of paving stones, water supply and drainage systems for marble fountains, and the planting of trees, shrubs and lawns. Peter, the designer and a Capricorn true to his form, can't help but be involved in every detail. The main source for the hundreds of varieties of plants in the Dunes gardens has been Van Kampen greenhouses in Charlottetown.



For 24 years, Peter has been living in the building in a loft apartment that opens onto a 1000 square foot roof garden. This garden is skirted by six to eight inch deep reflecting pools with a lily pad dining area in the middle of one of them. Large round river rocks and submerged pots of Ribbon grass are arranged with the odd piece of driftwood and stone sculpture in the pools. There is one large



Daylilies, dazzling in their variety of shapes and colours, burst forth from beds at every turn. Most originated with PEI's resident Daylily breeder, Nancy Oakes, at Red Lane Gardens in Iona. A visit there in Daylily season is a must do for any gardener visiting the island, where hundreds of varieties are there for the viewing or collecting.

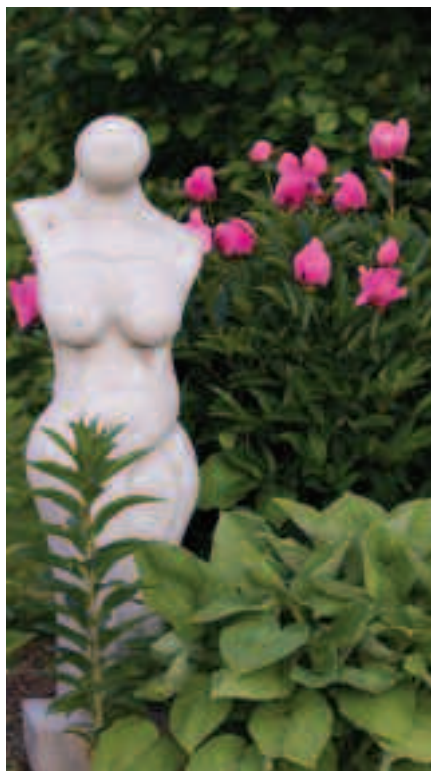
flower bed with Sedum and yellow Daylilies and an ever changing mix of annuals – favourites being various Geraniums, Daisies and Marigolds. Guinea Impatiens, German Ivy, Lobelia, Wave Petunias, Wojo's Gem and other flowering trailing plants overflow from planters placed around the patio and mounted on the walls. Dracaenas, which are over wintered inside, some for as long as 14 years, lend a tropical feel to this roof top oasis. Peter's mother Velga, also a potter, was author to some of the large coiled planters. This roof garden is open to the general public until 5:30 daily, when it is closed so Peter, his partner Nash and visiting family

and friends may relax and enjoy the views of the ocean and gardens below.

The ground floor of the restaurant opens onto a patio of pavers laid in circles leading off in different directions. The three connecting water gardens are next, with a bridge leading to the large central lawn, the heart of the backyard. There are rows of carved stones from Bali and Java to be enjoyed and purchased. Flower beds surround the water gardens, with the odd Ganesha spewing water into a pool or Bhuda crouching among the flowers. Irises, Waterlilies, Ribbon Grass, and Arrowhead abound in the water

gardens. Here and there, scattered or grouped among the trees and flower beds, are teak root chairs, tables and benches.

The new gallery in the Annex building opens onto a patio of tumbled marble and river stone with a 24 by 36 foot raised marble fountain. The front lip makes for comfortable seating, while the back houses a beautiful display of statuary fountains spewing water into the pool. Central is a massive urn, gushing thousands of gallons of water an hour. The fountain patio makes a great restful meeting place and has already been the site of many receptions.



The cutting and kitchen gardens are an array of circular, triangular and large rectangular beds of rows in the north east part of the backyard. The circles contain perennial herbs such as Mint, Bee Balm, Tarragon, Lemon Balm, Wintergreen, Lavender, and Oregano. One of the beds sports tall Teddy Bear Sunflowers, surrounded by Nasturtiums and edged with a circle of large red cabbages. Having mixed them up with the ornamentals one year, Peter liked the look and surprise value of these large vegetables peaking out of the flower beds and therefore continues to plant them out in odd spots in the gardens. The two large rectangular beds are a mix of vegetables, herbs and flowers. Some flowers are planted out in the gardens to add colour to areas where the perennial blooms are spent. Annuals that lend themselves well to transplanting are Bachelor Buttons, Asters and the favourite Lavatera, in its various tones of pink and white. This year, large areas where harvesting and transplanting had occurred were filled and seeded with Buckwheat. Weeds will not flourish where Buckwheat is sown, so not only do the banks of light green leaves with delicate white flowers look attractive, they also keep the weeds at bay. Six 60 foot rows of both Dahlias and Gladiolas form the northern edge of this large rectangular bed. Gladiolas are planted in three successive plantings, two weeks apart and provide fresh stalks for cutting from early August until the frost in mid-October. Because of its proximity to the bay, this garden is spared from the first frosts to hit inland P.E.I., as early as mid-September. Some years, when time and labour allow, this large garden has seaweed (excellent for inhibiting weed growth) laid in the paths between rows.

Veseys Seeds, in York, is a great source for interesting spring bulbs, which are planted in small groupings of seven to fifteen bulbs throughout the gardens. The unusual Parrot, Lily, Double, and Bunching Tulips add an exotic feel to the spring garden.



To the south is a rock garden whose tiers ascend up a full storey to meet the restaurant deck. These gardens are resplendent with Stonecrop Sedum, Asiatic Lilies, Hens and Chicks, Pineapple Ivey, Pink Potentilla, Purple and White Phlox Hydrangeas and a variety of daisies.

Some favourite perennials are Delphiniums in various pastel shades, Rocket Ligularia (with its tall stalks of yellow blooms), Balloon flower (purple star shaped beauties), fuzzy stalks of Gayfeather Liatris, full pink self-seeding Somniferum Poppies (with peony like blooms), Siberian Iris in vivid purple, Chinese Loosetrife (with delicate white gooseneck flowers), Solomon's Seal (adored for its long symmetrical stems with white pearl like blooms - great for adding wings to large arrangements), Red Hot Poker (absolutely lurid red and yellow spikes of bloom), Sneezewort (masses of fine rust flowers in fall) and the ever present mix of lilies and hostas. The ever persistent Obedience Plant makes a presence, perhaps fittingly a gift from Peter's mother. Shrubs include Dogwood, Hawthorne, Potentilla, Hydrangea Snowball, French Lilac, Honeysuckle and flowering Quince. Old Lindens, Austrian Pines and Birches and Larch dominate.

New plantings include Japanese Maple, Ginko, Rose of Sharon and Wisteria - a far cry from the Arctic Willows and Rugosa Roses that Peter first planted, believing not much else would survive so close to the ocean...plant with faith...to see is to believe...to visit you must!





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