

# Kenyon Garden Walk Notes for 2008 Season

8/23/08

Tony's mom joined us – Irene has been house and cat sitting for the past two weeks, and is also a gardener. Say 'hi' if you see her.

Toni's turtle heads are in bloom - pretty purple flowers over dark blue-green foliage - about 18" high.

For those on the west side of the street who have bogs on the back line - they flourish in wet shady conditions.



Phil reports that trees and shrubs are 40% off now at Millane Nursery, perennials, 30% off, etc. It's an unadvertised sale which will become public on Sept 1.

Millane Nurseries  
604 Main Street - Cromwell, (860) 635-5500

If you missed Dave Gosselin's house tour, here's a recap. It was built as a Philadelphia 2-family in 1897. That's one family on the first floor, with part of the third floor for servants, and one family on the second floor, with part of the third floor for servants, etc. Sometime in the 1920 or 30's it was converted to a legal three-family.



We were able to see the first and third floors. The first floor has a front and back parlor (fireplace and traditional mantel in the back - pics attached), bay windows in each of the three main rooms: front and back parlors and dining room. Two



bedrooms, bath, large kitchen and two small pantries. I assume the second floor is a near duplicate. The third floor is huge - about the same layout without the pantries, but in addition has a large central living room space over stairwells on the lower floors. Most of the rooms have full ceiling height because of the full attic above.

Dave is an accountant who has renovated historic houses in

Providence, where he owns some property (his father did the same). He is about to have the porch repaired and the house painted (you can see paint swatches on the front), but does the interior work himself - including stripping the woodwork. This is his last house renovation... He reports he'll move into the first floor when he's finished it.



8/09/08

We start out with a long chat on my front porch – catching up.

Then off to Phil's to check out his planned modifications. He'll switch the grass around the terrace fountain that has gotten too tall with the shorter version used near the plum tree.



The bonsai garden is looking spruced up. Phil brings the plants in each winter.



Interesting tidbit: The Connecticut pea stone is a different size, depending on whether you buy it on the east side of the river or the west!!

We were all interested in this plant.

Then off to Toni's to admire her new bed.



We meet up with half the neighborhood along the way: Scott is painting his porch, Doug Campbell's huge black maple took a direct lightning hit, and has to come down. Kimberly may be taking an assignment for 9 months in Mexico. Kate and John are into the idea of a Kenyon rotating outdoor film fest next summer! Great walk!

6/28/08

We have several newly spiffed up landscapes - some from beginning gardeners, and others that got the full treatment. To take a look at some of them that have been noticed recently on the block - [click here](#).



We talked about varmints: specifically about chipmunks (recently appearing only in the past two years). Chipmunks (although cute) are much more destructive of plants than squirrels. Phil recommends D-Con, or perhaps an aggressive hunting cat to keep them at bay. They multiply and are tough to get rid of. Love rock walls and woodpiles for shelter. We talked about containing dogs. The electric fences are great for larger dogs, not a big deal to install, not very expensive and effective. But the collar is large if you have a Shih Tzu puppy who likes to charges through the “fence” and tumbles out the other side. The older he gets, the better the system might work.



I showed everyone a favorite tool – the Fiskars Pruning Stick. It gives me another 3-4 feet of reach for small, low tree branches, climbing roses, etc. Ace and Home Depot have it for about \$45. Many of the early lilies are in bloom – my ‘Agrippa’ are just out and lovely. Stargazer will be out in a



few weeks, followed by Casa Blanca – the white ones out front.

Plants: For hot, sunny, dry spots try Vinca Rosea – an annual that withstands almost complete neglect. (Carolyn and Tony and Randy have them in the front.)



John McGarvey asked for advice on his plantings in the urns out front. John – we all agreed they are spectacular! A mix of coleus and sweet potato vines in beautiful contrasting shades. While we were there, we admired Carol and Meg’s new stone wall. Would like to get the tour...

Phil showed us his spectacular acquisition – a 4’ ceramic vase fountain – briefly



available at Milane Nursery for ~\$300. It just burbles at the top and flows down the sides of the vase – a pretty green – brown glaze. Only trouble – take care to drain the fountain well and keep water out during the winter – ceramic usually cracks here over winter.

Cuttings: Phil cuts a 12” piece of hydrangea stem, removes the bottom leaves, dips it in rooting powder, plunks it in a sand-filled tray and places a clear plastic soda bottle over the top to create a little greenhouse. When it roots, he has a new hydrangea plant.



Hydrangeas like moisture and part shade. His “Everlasting Summer” are about 3’ high now and in full bloom. Spots near the stone wall have pinker blooms (leaching from the masonry?). For more advice on changing hydrangea color and drying hydrangeas, click here: [Hydrangea Advice](#)

### Ponds:

Phil’s pond is about 2.5’ in depth, he’d like it to have been 3’. The pump is rated at 750 gallons an hour. The goldfish overwinter at the bottom. The key is to have a hole in the ice so the gasses can escape. Phil keeps a small pump going in the winter that maintains a hole. He also designed the pond so that the water falls at the opposite end from where the pump is located. This maintains a circular flow of water. Ponds should be situated in at least partial sun – about 4-6 hours a day.



Phil’s arborvitae ‘Green Giant’ is a very fast grower – It’s only been in two years and is taller than the fence. It gets to be about 40’ high – needs full sun, possibly partial. It is shaped like a narrow Christmas tree. He selected the specific plant to have only one trunk so it doesn’t outgrow the space. It will screen the corner from the rear neighbors’ yards, but not get too big.



We stopped by to check out the sunflower seedlings at Mary and Nancy’s. They look to be over 6” high – planted as seeds about 3 weeks ago.



Toni’s daylily ‘[Alabama Jubilee](#)’ is a stunner – it’s in bloom now planted right in the street apron. Fragrant, full or part sun, 30” high. White Flower Farm sells one for \$12.95.

Toni’s new front garden will be filled with rock cotoneaster (4’ high x 15’ wide) She has 5 of Dave’s giant orange canna and an elephant’s ear to fill the space.

The frontpiece is a Harry Lauder's Walking stick – a uniquely twisted member of the witch hazel family. It will eventually look something like photo.



It is very dramatic in the winter. Her ground-creeping sedum is doing very well – self-seeding and taking well to dividing.

Toni is using her west-facing glassed-in sleeping porch as a greenhouse – useful from March on. She put down a one-piece sheet vinyl over the flooring and an old long and narrow picnic table under the window holds her plants. She started the canna, and then planted it out.

We caught Sherry just as the gas mower pooped out. Phil has switched to an electric mower and loves it. It's quiet, lightweight, and always starts. Our lots are small enough to make them practical. Toni has seen ads for a battery operated one, but no one had info on whether it was any good.

Trish and Sherry's grape vines are right at home on their new wood arbor. The garden walkers are credited with the idea for their privacy / dog-fencing solution: Don't eliminate the mature row of grape vines – just remove the current supports and build a higher system of supports, adding a wire grid at the bottom to keep the dogs in. The vines will reach the new height in the first year if you trail some of them up.



The yard looks wide and large now that the tree has been removed – it was a gonner, filled with bolt bracing and cement down the center to try to preserve it awhile. Speaking of preserving, their neighbor's huge black walnut was directly struck by lightning. Probable 50-50 chance of living. Their juniper 'Skyrocket' are also getting to the top of their new privacy fence. They will get 15' high x 3' wide. Their white and green euonymus that previously climbed for miles up the tree has been reduced to a small cutting that has been planted on the same fence. In a few years, it should top the fence and add extra screening.



They are working on a reconfiguration for the back yard. Lots of details.

While we were out front we admired the new plantings at Russell's. The house looks colorful and very cute from the street now – friendly and inviting. Congrats, Russell!



Next garden walk is in two weeks. It starts at Toni's porch (96) and is at 9 AM on Sat July 12.

# Garden Walk Notes

## Gardening for Beginners

6/6/08

### On Watering:

Plants need about 1" of rain a week, on average. The best way to check how much it has rained is to have a rain gauge, preferably the kind that has measurements on the side and is a steep cone shape to let you detect even small amounts of rain.

Fake rain gauge: You can always take a clear plastic glass with straight sides and mark 1" with a black sharpie. Put it in the yard *with no plant or tree overhang above*. Check it every Saturday AM to see if you need to water to make up for lack of rain for the week. Then empty the glass for the next week. The glass might need to be stabilized with some stones or bricks around it to keep the wind from blowing it over.



How do you know if you are watering 1"?: Check it with your gauge the first time. Move your gauge to a spot that catches the sprinkler, or your watering with a hose. Water the entire area, and time how long it takes to achieve 1". It takes longer than you think...~ 3 hours for many types of sprinklers.

Checking: FYI - all the downpour of rain on Thursday, June 5 was only 1/4". Big downpours that drop a huge amount of rain in a short time are almost worthless to a garden. Most of that water drains right off rather than sinking slowly and deeply into the ground. Also soil that is sheltered by your house overhang, trees and shrubs is not getting much water benefit from the rain. To really check, stick your finger an inch or two into the soil to see if it is moist. Spots that have a slope have the same problem. These are good spots to put plants that like dry conditions.

During the first several weeks for new seeds and seedlings, make sure that the ground doesn't dry out. If it's hot and without rain, water it every 2<sup>nd</sup> or 3<sup>rd</sup> day, rather than once a week. Thereafter, water only once a week to make up the difference between what rain you got and 1". Watering small amounts all the time creates roots that stay near the top. You want to encourage roots that will go deep to get the moisture. These plants are much less vulnerable to drought.

# Garden Walk Notes

## Gardening for Beginners

5/26/08

### [Gardening for Beginners](#)



Mary and Nancy (and Samantha and Alex) put in a flower garden this weekend. Two varieties of sunflower seeds and some impatiens in the front. So look for the sunflowers as the summer progresses.



One thing I learned is that my planting tip sheet wasn't nearly explicit enough. The link to the revision is above. It is much more detailed about planting. Also, Liza was right in pointing out that veggies should not be planted along the foundation site where there might be lead lurking from old paint. Mary and Nancy put their tomatoes and peppers in pots.



Russell is working on putting in some plantings, and Kate and John plan to target their front yard. I haven't gotten around to my annuals yet - I may just miss the season if I wait much longer...

Give a yell if you're looking for some advice. Let us know if you want to show off your garden. Happy gardening.

# Garden Walk Notes

## Gardening for Beginners

5/18/08

### Locating a Garden and Preparing the Soil

You should be thinking about a spot to plant your flowers on the 26th.

The best is a spot with full sun (on the south side - closest to Farmington Ave for most houses, and without much root competition. We can plant in partial shade, but the plants are much more limited.

full sun - (6-8 hours of sun)

partial sun (4-6 hours)

shade (1-4 hours)

You'll need to prepare the spot: Generally - soil test – add elements to the soil if necessary (take the results to your garden center – they can set you up with what you need based on the test results and what you want to plant. Most plants like neutral soil acidity – but not all. Add 1/3 compost to your soil if it's not an established garden, top dress it with an inch or so of (dried) manure, turn the soil to at least spade depth - best to dig in deeper if you can. Put shredded pine bark mulch on top once the plants have been planted to help retain moisture and keep the weeds down.

I can be by Memorial Day weekend to help you pick a spot and help think about what you want to put there. (My mom will be here - she's a veteran gardener).

I am attaching a copy of [Garden Design Tips](#) - which is really looking at your entire yard to design it, but the principles are still the same for small spots. Also – here's a [weekly set of garden notes](#) from White Flower Farm covering the entire garden year in New England.

I'm cc:ing a few others who might be around to help out.

5/5/08

Cedar-Apple Rust Fungus

Mildred noticed a bright orange jelly "flower" on her cedar tree. According to Phil, it's a cedar apple rust fungus, which usually doesn't kill the cedar, but can denude or kill apple or ornamental crab apple trees. Remove them ASAP. While the spores may wander as much as five miles from the "mother" cedar, most apple infections occur within a few hundred feet.



If you have any that look like this on an evergreen - cut it off the tree. A couple of weeks ago, before the spore stage, it looked like a lumpy, pitted orange-brown golf ball.

By June the infected crab apple trees will begin to get hundreds of black spots on the leaves and fruit, on top and underneath the leaves, creating spores and perpetuating the cycle.

**Cedar Apple Rust Fungus**

**Dormant Stage - Before May:** Cedar apple rust gall. Removal at this stage prevents spores from denuding apple and crab apple trees.



**Spore Stage - Late April, Early May -** Hard galls become bright orange with jelly-like protrusions during warm, wet weather in April and May. Remove these. At this stage, they release two billion spores. May spread 5 miles, but usually affect trees within a hundred feet.



**Apple Tree Damage - Beginning around June:** Damage to Apple and Ornamental Crab Apple Trees. Spraying just when leaves and blossoms emerge in April will help. Remove damaged leaves.



If you have an affected crab, spraying the crab apple tree for the disease in mid-April when the leaves and blossoms are emerging can help protect the apple trees. Some apply a second application in June. Also remove the affected leaves.

For articles with more information, click [here](#). Thanks.