



Milton & District Horticultural Society's 2014 Garden Tour of 11 properties included this beauty with extensive gardens that continue behind the house.



TOWN GARDEN TOURS:

Best of the Best

By Gloria Hildebrandt ■ Photographed by Mike Davis except where noted

MANY COMMUNITIES HAVE THEM. They are a wonderful way to celebrate the warmer seasons. Last year we enjoyed some of the gardens of three towns, through Carnegie Garden Tour of Dundas, Georgetown Horticultural Society Garden Tour, and Milton & District Horticultural Society 2014 Garden Tour. ►

Gardeners know just how much work is needed to get a place ready to show. It is astonishing, therefore, to see the neatness, tidiness and beauty of all the gardens on these tours. Sometimes there's been a lack of rain or irrigation. Sometimes plants are not in the absolute best bloom, as they were last week or may be next week. Sometimes there has been a pruning mishap. Gardeners know. They understand. They accept. They have been there.

Yet not all of us have had our gardens be a stop on a public tour by paying visitors, who point to things, ask boring or difficult questions, or photograph good ideas to use in their own gardens, if only they had the time/

energy/money. Some of us can't imagine having our gardens under such scrutiny.

So those who do, are hard-working, talented and brave. It is their sweat and dedication that make these tours possible. Some tours support charities. Some support horticultural societies. All are signs of the gardeners' generosity. All are either inspirational or depressingly impossible. And garden lovers look forward to each tour.

These are some of our favourite photos from these tours. Examine them for flaws, plunder them for great ideas. Plan to go on a tour in your area. If your community is having a garden tour not mentioned here, please let us know!



▲ June is when peonies and clematis burst out in beauty. At the back of this Georgetown garden, this impressive pergola perfectly supports two lush clematis plants. PHOTO BY GLORIA HILDEBRANDT



◀ The inviting white seating area adds glamour to this Georgetown back yard. The expanse of lawn is dramatically framed by a rich curving border of evergreens, colourful shrubs and flowers planted on a berm for better viewing.



(Top left) When is hardscaping a garden? When it's a sliver of a space in the shade beside a heritage worker's cottage in downtown Dundas. A mirror, a bench, a fountain, some ferns in hanging baskets, and this challenging space becomes a place to linger in.



(Top right) This property, nestled on a gentle slope of the Niagara Escarpment near Milton, has a great view of Lake Ontario. The back yard is inviting with sunny and shady outdoor living spaces by the pool.

(Middle right) The Niagara Escarpment rises verdantly beyond this downtown Dundas house. The no-mow garden in front is lovely with year-round interest from pockets of colourful shrubs.



(Bottom right) A rural Georgetown gardener makes the most of a large space that perfectly frames an old farmhouse. Charming birdhouses are everywhere in this garden.

(Bottom left) This is only the lily pond part of a large, beautiful and varied garden in rural Milton.

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◀ *(Top)* Red and pink roses in lush bloom and a pot of pansies love the sun at the front of this Georgetown house.

◀ *(Bottom left)* Art in the garden, garden as art, come together in the dramatic shady border at the back of this Dundas yard.

▼ *(Bottom right)* Our own gardening columnist Sean James, of Fern Ridge Landscaping & Eco-consulting, created this lavish design for the front of this new Milton house.



Sheds We Love

Ah, the lowly garden shed. Not part of the house but a necessary addition to a yard, the place we fling tools and where squirrels nibble a hole and store nuts. Not glamorous, and so small that when anyone bothers to spruce it up even a bit, it can look cuter than anything else on the property. Here, from the tours, are charming sheds we like. **NEV**

► (Top left) This shed in a tiny garden in downtown Dundas has great presence due to the urns on elaborately carved pedestals. What catches the eye even more is the sign for seeds.

► (Top right) On a large rural property near Georgetown, this little shed with a window box and a tiny porch is a delight. Close examination suggests this is a “bunkie,” a separate accommodation for an overnight guest.



▲ At another Dundas town house, a luxurious verandah overlooking a lushly planted pond, a beautiful carriage house, but stealing the show is a sweet storage shed bedecked with window planters.



▲ Pool shed fronted by garden. What could be better than having a lovely shed for your tools and stuff close at hand for gardening, until you need to cool off with a dip in the pool? This Dundas property has it all.