

Mark your calendar: Doors Open at Merlin's Hollow



By Dierdre Tomlinson

Don't miss your chance to visit Merlin's Hollow on Saturday, August 18 as part of the thirtieth annual Doors Open Aurora Event. Be sure to drop by between the hours of 10 a.m. and 4 p.m. at 181 Centre Crescent (a tiny road off of Centre Street between the railway track and Industrial Parkway with the garden the only house on the left).

The garden first opened to the public 37 years ago in 1981, and the open days have been free to all who come. David Tomlinson started as a gardeners assistant, age 14, in England and worked his way up the ladder and became a landscape architect for 40 years. The garden was a flat square of grass when David and Dierdre bought the property. David designed and built a series of four gardens, each with its own distinct character enclosed by high cedar hedges. As you enter the winter garden at the front of the house there are two Celtic Knot gardens, each with handsome snake sculptures by sculptor Ron Baird. This leads into the main garden where beds are filled with perennials from 8' to 12' high. A series of arches invite visitors from one garden to the next. A ¼ acre fragrant garden is full of many secrets. Before the hedges grown a friendly neighbour used to look across and say, 'Ah! Adam and Eve in the Garden of Paradise?'. That inspired the stained glass window in the gazebo. There is a frog pond surrounded by bog beds and extensive rock garden beds behind the house.

The garden is filled with huge range of plants, most of which David grew from seed, a thousand packets of seed a year, from different parts of the world, New Zealand, China, the Middle East, Europe and South America, that has certain parts with a Canadian climate. Each year they put 130 bags of leaves on the garden beds, other than the sand and gravel garden areas.

The diversity of flowers in the garden attract a number of different insects including many species of bees and Morning Cloaks, Red Admiral, Painted Lady, Tortoiseshell, Mustard White, Azure Blue and Tiger Swallowtail butterflies. More than 92 different species of birds have been seen in the garden, from red and white winged cross bills, nuthatches, sharp shinned hawks, wild turkeys, ruffed grouse and raven last year for the first time. Frogs, toads and fish breed in the pond as well.

The garden is though by some as a sanctuary for people, who enjoy and learn from what they see. It is good to see familiar faces returning to the garden year after year as well as many new visitors with their children. One little girl asked Dierdre, 'are there any fairies in your garden?' and Dierdre replied, 'there are but they are very shy, you might not see them!'. The garden has attracted many photographers who come and take incredible photographs of plants, insects or scenes of the garden. Many of these are posted on websites that spread the word of what this garden has to offer, such as [Portcullis.ca](#).

Come and enjoy Merlin's Hollow with family and friends for free.

Many more sites are also participating this year, including: Aurora Readiness Centre, Hillary House, Hillary House Barn, The Patrick House Art Studio & Gallery, Pine Orchard Quaker Meeting House, Theatre Aurora, Aurora Public Library, Church Street School, Scarborough Model Railroaders, Trinity Anglican Church, Victoria Hall, the Aurora Rising Sun Masonic Lodge, and Aurora Farmers' Market and Artisan Fair.

For additional information about Doors Open Aurora and to print a copy of the Doors Open Aurora 2018 Map Guide, please visit www.aurora.ca. Map Guides will also be available at the Doors Open Aurora headquarters booth at Town Park, located at Mosley

Street and Wells Street and other Doors Open Aurora participating sites on the day of the event.

We hope to see you there!