

Get ready for all our local garden tours! You'll want to mark your calendars now so you won't miss any of them. June 24th is the Suquamish Garden Tour and it's free. Bainbridge in Bloom is Saturday and Sunday July 15 and 16 and all proceeds support the Bainbridge Island Arts and Humanities Council, a non-profit organization. Last but not least is Kitsap Peninsula's 1st Annual Summer Splendor Garden Tour on Saturday and Sunday August 5 and 6 to benefit the Clear Creek Trail. Read on for details.

The Suquamish Garden Tour starts at the Coffee Cantina. Stop there to pick up your map of the charming gardens nestled in Suquamish. This year's route will feature gardens along Angeline North and South and Harris Avenue. Tour organizers promise an informal, enjoyable and entertaining event. Visitors will experience gardens, art and a plant sale. An added flavor this year is all the fireworks stands located close to the Cantina. Rumor has it Betsy Wittick (Bainbridge Island Winery) has offered to ferry garden visitors in a horse or pony drawn shuttle. Plants will be for sale at a booth next to the fireworks. For more information contact Betsy Smith 598-3836 or Bethany McDonald 598-4732. I can hardly wait to attend this event. I've missed it the last two years and kept my calendar free this year. The tour starts at 10 AM and continues until 5 PM, Saturday June 24. Don't miss it.

Another not-to-be-missed event is the Bainbridge In Bloom Garden Tour. Tickets are 25 dollars for adults and 10 dollars for children under 12 (kids under 4 are free). Tickets must be purchased in advance and all proceeds benefit the non-profit Bainbridge Island Arts and Humanities Council. Tickets are on sale now at Bainbridge Gardens, Bainbridge Chamber of Commerce, Bay Hay and Feed, Flowering Around, Winslow Hardware, Berger's Garden Center, Carter's Garden Center, Kingston Garden Shop, Port Orchard Nursery and Valley Nursery. Included in the ticket cost are free gardening lectures, a book sale, a garden art fair featuring 27 local artists, Master Gardeners to question, and a rare plant sale by Reflective Gardens. Gourmet lunch can be purchased at several of the gardens, catered by the award-winning San Carlos Restaurant.

Ticket brochures will list lecture locations; no-host lunches will be served in the same garden as the lecture. Saturday July 15 speakers and times are: 12:00 Marty Wingate, PI Garden Writer, "Horticulture in Literature;" 1:00 David Sessions, Interior and Exterior Designer, "A Demonstration in European Style Container Design;" and 2:00 Lindsay Smith, Hooplah Garden Accessories, "Designing and Constructing Rebar Garden Ornaments and Supports." Sunday July 16 speakers and times are: 12:00 Peg Tillery, Garden Writer Kitsap Newspaper Group, "Stepping Stones and Hyper Tufa Pots, Art for your Garden;" 1:00 Phil Wood, Garden Designer, "Garden Design for Fragrance;" and James "Ciscoe" Morris, "Ciscoe's Favorites."

Featured gardens (and their owners) are: Old Fashioned Enchantment (Caren & David Anderson); Wide Open Spaces (Carol and Gene Johanson); Woods, Water and Wildlife (Gwen and Will Thomas); Heart's Delight (Shelly and Steve Johansson); Country Acres (Lynn DeVrees and Marilyn Turkovich) and Flora Galora (Teri Cole). Visit the website at www.artshum.org/bloom for more information or call the Bainbridge Island Arts and Humanities Council at 206-842-7901 or order tickets at 206-219-3182.

The third garden tour benefits the Clear Creek Trail Task Force "to create and maintain a community-wide network to mobilize, support, educate and focus actions to preserve, protect and restore the Clear Creek Ecosystem." Tickets for the tour are 15 dollars and the dates are Saturday and Sunday August 5 and 6. The Garden Tour Info Line is 360-692-6800. It's sponsored by the Kitsap Newspaper Group and the Silverdale Chamber of Commerce. Visit www.silverdalechamber.com/GardenTour. Discount packages are available – buy 18 get 2 free. Volunteers are needed to serve as garden tour docents and guides (and attend for free). Featured gardens are in Silverdale, Seabeck, Erlands Point and will include a 200-variety rose garden right by the entrance to the Clear Creek Trail.

That's only one garden tour per month. Sounds delightful doesn't it? We'll still have at least three weekends per month to work in our own gardens and squeeze in some vacation time too. Get your tickets today, you won't be sorry and you'll be supporting some worthy causes too.

Tip of the Week: Want a totally carefree rose? Try any of the four shades of Flower Carpet Roses (red, white, yellow and dark pink). These roses are nearly free of blackspot and I've yet to see them with an aphid. They live happily in a large pot on decks and survive shade and sun plus will bloom from April until almost

December. Most nurseries carry them. They're awesome in rockeries if you need a large shrub. Happy gardening.