

DIG THIS By Peg Tillery (for 5-31-06) Great Garden Tours © 2006

Two upcoming local garden tours offer lots of inspiration and ideas for gardeners new to our area and to those who've been gardening here for what seems like forever.

Bainbridge in Bloom is the premier garden tour event in our area but the Gig Harbor Garden Tour is not far behind in popularity.

The Bloom runs Friday July 14 through Sunday July 16. Saturday and Sunday are the usual two days for the tour, but the preview party and special tour is on Friday July 14. Tickets are \$30 for adults and \$15 for children 4-12. Tickets for biking the bloom, the Friday tour options and the tour on Saturday and Sunday are available by calling 206-842-7901 pr 206-219-3182. Log on to www.gardentour.info for more information or order tickets online.

This is the eighteenth year for the Bloom. This year three of the gardens are on the same street and a fourth is around the corner. Five of the gardens overlook the water. Also featured are tours of the Garden Classroom at IslandWood and friends and family landscaping at Voyager Montessori School.

This year's Bloom poster will not disappoint. Artist Victoria Harrison's creation titled "Garden Pearls I" is an exquisite work featuring *Cistus Laurifolius* 'Bennett's White.' Harrison says, "I adore this plant." Upon first glimpse several gardeners have been positive the illustration shows *Romnyia coulteri* (matilija poppy). *Cistus Laurifolius* has upright growth and similar stature to *Romnyia coulteri* but is not as fussy or as difficult to establish in our Kitsap gardens. As soon as you purchase the Bloom poster by Harrison for \$22 you'll want to rush out and purchase the plant *Cistus Laurifolius* for your own gardens. I think I'm going to purchase my plant now before the nurseries run out.

The Bloom also features arts and other gardening temptations at Bainbridge High School, along with abundant instructional demonstrations. This portion of the Bloom is free.

Garden luminaries Ciscoe Morris will be on hand at the luncheon site as well as Lucy Hardiman who will escort premier partygoers on their own van on Friday evening. Bloom goers will also learn about noxious weeds, composting, eco-friendly gardening, historical trees and take home abundant information. WSU Master Gardeners will be acting as special docents at the gardens to answer your horticulture questions.

I've personally seen all the gardens myself and they will appeal to those with no gardening experience and those who are collectors and avid gardeners. You can catch a sneak peak at the gardens and the stories behind the gardens for both tours in the summer issue of "WestSound Home and Garden" available at local nurseries, bookstores and design centers the first full week in June.

The ninth annual Gig Harbor Garden tour is Saturday June 24 from 9 a.m. to 6 p.m. The tour features seven enticing gardens. On Sunday Erin Rockery, Rosedale Gardens and Peninsula Gardens will feature special events and speakers. Scott Junge will speak on

Landscape Design at 12:30 p.m. at Rosedale Gardens; Erin Rockery will have a free pond class for the first 50 to reserve a space, and local designer and garden personality Sue Goetz will talk about “Foolproof Perennials for the Northwest” at Peninsula Gardens. Order tickets from Tacoma Community College in Gig Harbor at 3993 Hunt Street or call 253-851-3776. Tickets are \$18 if purchased before the event or at the door for \$20. Visit the website at www.gigharborchamber.com. Proceeds from the tour benefit student education at TCC in Gig Harbor.