

Conservation Gardens Tour- April 20, 2013, 1 - 5 p.m., Chapel Hill

This tour, hosted by the Reid Chapter of the NC Native Plant Society and the NC Botanical Garden, celebrates gardens that contribute to the health and beauty of the Triangle's environment. The four gardens on the tour illustrate ways to steward home gardens that enrich our lives with birdsong, flowers, shade, and water, while enhancing the environmental health of the community. In addition to showcasing the beauty of native wildflowers, these "conservation gardens" provide wildlife habitat and demonstrate environmentally friendly practices such as water conservation, rainwater harvesting, composting, mulching, and alternatives to lawns. A tour map and suggested route will be posted on NCNPS website prior to the event:

<http://www.ncwildflower.org> (under 'upcoming events')

<http://ncbg.unc.edu/education-and-events/>

GARDENS ON THE TOUR

NC Botanical Garden, 100 Old Mason Farm Rd

A stroll through the display gardens at the NC Botanical Garden offers visitors a mini-tour of the plants and character of iconic North Carolina native habitats - mountains, sandhills, coastal plain savannah, and piedmont. The native plants border, native plant water gardens, fern collection, and landscaping throughout the property also provide inspiration and information for gardening at home. There is always something new and beautiful to see at the NC Botanical Garden, but spring is a high point, especially in the mountain habitat garden. Lots of woodland wildflowers bloom in spring's sunshine before the trees leaf out and shade the ground level.

*** The NC Botanical Garden's free tour of the display gardens at 10 AM on April 20 is a great opportunity to extend your Conservation Garden Tour experience with a "Pre-Tour"**

Brower Garden, 612 Shady Lawn Rd.

Developed over more than forty years, the Brower garden is still a work in progress. An originally bare and unpromising site - only 2/3 of an acre, though surrounded by borrowed woodland - has become a "book of gardens" or a succession of "garden rooms,". Behind the house the garden descends steeply through a series of rock-walled terraces, through an increasingly natural woodland, to a stream-fed garden pool. The emphasis is primarily on native ferns, woody plants and mosses, with gradations and shades of green that can be enjoyed in any season or weather. The owners' deep love and respect for plants and nature is evinced by the fact that for the past five years the Browsers' garden has been a Certified Wildlife Habitat - a refuge and nurturing home for all creatures (though the deer have worn out their welcome.)

Prather Wood, 108 Wicklow Place

Jeff and Cheryl Prather began their garden in 1996. They restored a degraded, deciduous woodland edge, transforming their sloping subdivision backyard into their ideal secret garden, a shady "stroll garden" that focuses on native plants. They constructed all stone hardscape features and the three bridges over a wandering stream. Under full canopy in midsummer their garden evokes the coolness and quiet serenity of a mountain habitat, while in early spring the new leaves and emerging fiddleheads of the forest floor blend to create a deliciously ephemeral green. The Prathers' credit their landscape architect, Alicia Berry, for the best gardening advice they ever received: "The best way to learn about your own space is to volunteer in someone else's." Their volunteer work at the Blomquist Garden of Native Plants at the Sarah P. Duke Gardens, at the NC Botanical Gardens' Battle Park, and with TLC and NCNPS has inspired and enhanced their understanding of their own garden.

Elizabeth Pringle's Garden, 381 Tenney Circle

In 1993, when the Pringles restored the Tenney Farmhouse dating from the early 19th century, there were only a few remnants of past gardeners. The low stonewalls, the big trees and a few plants date back to earlier days. Betsy has planted many natives throughout the garden including a number of species of native Azaleas, Trillium, numerous ephemerals and many others. The sunny front garden is a sea of flowers for much of the growing season but the garden always has a number of plants in bloom including 20 some species in January and February. No pesticides and only organic fertilizer are used in the garden thereby protecting the thriving community of worms and beneficial insects. Many butterflies and birds are attracted to the garden as well.