

The Zurich Garden

To enter the Wolf Gap Road garden of Jennifer and David Zurick is to be gently enfolded by forest and flower, birdsong and frog splash, stone and mountain. Stride becomes step becomes stillness; human doing eases into h

A blending of Appalachian and Far Eastern sensibilities, the Zurick garden is one of three new gardens added to the Berea Arts Council's annual Garden Tour, which is comprised of six private gardens open to the public on Saturday, May 21, from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m.

When the Zuricks first moved to their five acres in the woods 25 years ago, they started with a simple homestead. What followed was, as David calls it, "a work in progress, as all gardens are." It became collaborative art: David's travels in Japan, China, Tibet, Bali, Nepal, and India led to a study of Asian gardens, which in turn influenced the planting, decoration, and atmosphere of a large part of the space below the house. Jennifer brought perennial flowers, herbs, and vegetables from her old plot in Jessamine County to create an English cottage garden above the house. Commercial nurseries, wild transplants, and plant exchanges with friends have been and remain a source of plants.

The garden is basically composed of four interconnected "rooms": two ponds, one large, one small, both with a variety of aquatic plants; Jennifer's vegetable garden; a short woodland trail leading to a rivulet into which early spring rains add a waterfall; and a shaded Asian-inspired meditation garden with landscape stones, evergreens, and statuary from David's journeys.

One major design idea was triggered by nature: the large pond at the front of the house was formed by a thicket of scraggly pine trees, uprooted by a hard snow in 1998, creating a large hole as well as opening what had been understory maple trees to sunlight. David developed the pond with local stone, water lilies and other aquatic plants, and a Balinese goddess statue, and then stocked it with small koi. It was quickly adopted by indigenous frogs as a place to shelter, sun, mate, and possibly meditate (or whatever they do when sitting still for an extended time), with as many as 18 amphibious residents. The frogs are well used to human company, as the pond has also become a favorite place for David to relax in the morning. The small lower-garden pond has become home to a different, much smaller species of frog, drawn, David hypothesizes, by a watery space more suitable to their size.

More than a few gardeners find that their work evolves into more than ornamentation; it can transform into what writer Wendell Berry calls an essential "sense of place": a transcendent connection of body, mind, and spirit with the land. The garden becomes a personal sanctuary of inner healing and peace.

"This is our retreat," says David. "We don't necessarily want the busy world here." Jennifer, too, prefers the quietude of the garden and her studio to the human cacophony outside their borders. "I can get caught here for weeks on end, except to go out for groceries---and I don't even want to then."

Garden Tour visitors may come away from the Wolf Gap garden with visions of their own havens, their own private places of quiet contemplation, connection, and inner joy that produce the same response that the Zurichs enjoy with their creation. Says David, "We can while away hours."

The Berea Arts Council Garden Tour is Saturday, May 21, 9 a.m. - 4 p.m. Tickets for the self-guided tour are \$12 in advance (must be purchased by May 19), \$15 on Tour day, and are available from the BAC Gallery or participating gardens. For more information, contact the Berea Arts Council: www.BereaArtsCouncil.org or (859) 985-9317.