

AUDREY & MIKE'S HOME GARDEN WALK 2020

I would like to start my story with a poem by Edgar Guest, one of my favorite poets. It was interesting to read a short story about him living in Michigan where I have lived



most of my life. I was born in Cookeville, TN, but my parents relocated us to live in Detroit, MI when I was only three months old. I met Mike where we both worked for the USPS.

Edgar Guest (1881 - 1959) was born in England, but moved with his family to Detroit, Michigan,

when he was ten years old. He worked for more than sixty years at the *Detroit Free Press*, publishing his first poem at the age of seventeen, then going on to become a reporter and columnist whose work was featured in hundreds of newspapers around the country. Edgar is said to have written some 11,000 poems during his lifetime, most of it sentimental, short, upbeat verse. Critics often derided his work, but America adored him. He was known as the "People's Poet," served as Michigan's poet laureate, hosted a long-running radio show and TV show, and published more than twenty books.

PLANT A GARDEN BY EDGAR GUEST

If your purse no longer bulges
and you've lost your golden treasure,
If at times you think you're lonely
and have hungry grown for pleasure,
Don't sit by your hearth and grumble,
don't let mind and spirit harden.
If it's thrills of joy you wish for
get to work and plant a garden!

If it's drama that you sigh for,
plant a garden and you'll get it
You will know the thrill of battle
fighting foes that will beset it
If you long for entertainment and
for pageantry most glowing,
Plant a garden and this summer spend
your time with green things growing.



If it's comradeship you sight for,
learn the fellowship of daisies.
You will come to know your neighbor
by the blossoms that he raises;
If you'd get away from boredom
and find new delights to look for,
Learn the joy of budding pansies
which you've kept a special nook for.

If you ever think of dying
and you fear to wake tomorrow
Plant a garden! It will cure you
of your melancholy sorrow
Once you've learned to know peonies,
petunias, and roses,
You will find every morning
some new happiness discloses.



My thought for this year is, "What is going on!" The world is turned upside down with an unbelievable virus called COVID-19. It's like it started so suddenly. Mike and I had just gotten back from a trip to Panama in late February to really understand that the virus was dangerous and spreading quickly. We had to take action and started planning our strategy and seeing how our family and friends were surviving. That was February and



now it is July and the virus is still among us. We don't socialize much at this time but we have ventured out to places to get food and supplies. At first we just ordered food on line and had it delivered. Mike is really good at on line shopping and ordered us medicines and other supplies to be delivered by personal delivery, US postal service or UPS. We still went bird watching at several locations in the spring that we're

familiar with. We still take many bike rides at our favorite parks and local areas where being around people is not a health issue. We always wear our masks (that I hand made). I made over 100 masks with help from my husband to donate to the military, health workers, family and friends. I cook and bake everyday and try to make our food and supplies last as long as possible. I have always cooked for Mike and I, we rarely go to restaurants to eat so I had lots of tried and true recipes and I am always open to try new ones. Mike makes us his delicious pizzas, bread sticks, garlic knots and homemade butter spread. It can be fun or super aggravating trying a new recipe but that is the way you find exciting variations to your everyday food selections. I have always been an avid

reader of cookbooks and baking shows so it was not difficult to keep us fed. The difficult part was getting the ingredients for the recipes or use what I commonly had in my cupboard.

Not sure how long the virus will make our daily lives change, how it makes us feel about losing so many loved ones and people we don't even know getting sick. How much pain and worry we feel for our health care workers, essential workers, grocery workers and everyone involved taking care of us. I am truly grateful for you all.

I could go on forever about my life and thoughts but let's get to my Garden Walk. The reason I am making this garden walk slideshow is to bring a bit of happiness that only a garden can bring. Since garden walks have been put aside for another day when the spread of COVID-19 is safely under control, I thought of showing my little garden to anyone who would like to view it. So many nature things are going on in my backyard garden that I would like to share them with you. Franklin Park butts up to our backyard and part of the walking path comes close to our backyard. Franklin Park has gone through many changes since I had my house built in 1976. My subdivision was created from property that used to be a farm. I met the owner of the farm one day when I was in my front yard laying down sod. He peeked out of his truck and asked if the owner was around and I told him it was me. We talked for a bit and he told me how it had been his farm and he sold it so it would be developed into a subdivision with a park and school. Throughout the years many of the original trees in what is now Franklin Park were taken down and a whole new plan of landscaping was planned by the city. I don't agree that the plan was developed by experienced landscapers as the trees picked were not always the right kind and were positioned too close together in some areas. One of the areas drastically affected was the five pines that were planted abutting my property. After years of growing these pines create so much shade along with the trees I already had planted in my yard that my backyard is flooded with shade and little sun. One year a storm knocked down one of the pines and I finally had a bit of a sun area. Along with the pine falling down we help pay for our neighbor to have a large tree with signs of dying removed. Now I have at least a small area in the yard that gets sun so I can plant sun loving plants.

The other day Mike told me that a Dad was walking his little boy through the park and the little boy said "Can we go inside that park?" And his dad said, "That's not a park son that's someone's yard." I use to have Fredonia Grape vines growing on the back fence and people would stop and pick the ripe fruit and take the grape leaves. I suspected that they wanted the leaves to make a recipe of stuffed grapes leaves. They never asked me to pick the grapes or take the leaves but if I saw them I told them that the grapes might have worms in them because I had not sprayed them. Having the park as my backyard neighbor can be nice and other times it can be challenging with people and the city.

HOW MY GARDEN ADVENTURE BEGAN:

My favorite time of the year is when the snow finally melts and I watch out my backdoor to see what plants have survived the cold winter. The first to appear are my Helleborus orientalis, also known as the Lenten rose, a stray daffodil and patches of Lily of the

Valley. Spring and springtime refer to the season, and also to ideas of rebirth, rejuvenation, renewal, resurrection and regrowth. Slowly my backyard gardens “spring forth” and new plant growth appears. I look all around for signs of plant life, wondering what happened to my gardens during the winter. With Michigan weather one day ‘April showers bring May flowers’ and other days it snows. I always say don’t store away the snow shovel yet. I love to see my Magnolia tree start to get its blooms only to cry as frost comes and damage occurs. But every spring my garden is always going through changes, some for the better and some for the worst. I have been living in my house for 44 years as an original owner. I picked out my house from a model and made a few changes to the construction. My property had to be landscaped and I had no idea how to do that. Many plants and trees I originally planted are gone or have been replaced with something that better fits the property now. I still have the mature trees in my backyard that I planted as small young trees and they add a lot of shade to the backyard that I love and regret because lots of plants with beautiful flowers love the sun.

My backyard gardens just had a way of evolving with no design in mind. My husband Mike made my dream of a beautiful yard become a reality. We made curved brick walls and filled them with shade loving plants. We hired a company to put in a brick walkway so that we could walk into the yard from the front of the house and into the backyard. I remove trees, shrubs and overgrown plants every year and plant as many new ones as I can every year. I love plants and so many would wow me that I would come home with a SUV full of them and Mike would look at me and sigh “I guess I am the one to dig the holes?” I tried to pick the correct spots for the plants but as my yard changes the place I put the plants changes, the light source is different or the space is too small. It is a hit and miss garden with full price plants and plants on clearance at the garden centers. Some of my best plants are clearance plants that I got for pennies on the dollar. This year I don’t go hunting for clearance plants but hope to next year.

I took lessons to become a Master Gardener and worked with a woman that really knew about plants and how to take care of them. I worked with her for six years and then quit Master Gardener club and joined a local garden club called Shelby Gardener’s. I learn about plants and how to take care of them at my garden club meetings. We go on trips to garden centers near and far from our location. We all learn and share thoughts and skills about how to grow a garden and are bound together by people who love gardening. Our club takes care of Shelby Townships’ beautiful Heritage Gardens located behind the Municipal Office at 52700 Van Dyke Ave. south of 24 Mile Road at sits adjacent to a 2.5 acre spring-fed lake. Because of COVID-19 we were unable to attend to the gardens this year.

I don’t mind getting my hands dirty, keeping short unpolished fingernails, sweating on hot days, having pain in my legs and back because the results are worth it. I like spring the most when things start to emerge. Later in the summer I like sunny days when my garden and myself enjoy ample sunshine. The low impact exercise I get when gardening might not be enough for cardiovascular fitness, but I will benefit by being outside soaking up the beauty of nature. Being outdoors and present in the here and now is the part of gardening that reduces stress and anxiety. Scientific research has shown that people over 60 who enjoy gardening are less prone to developing dementia and

Alzheimer's disease. These findings suggest that the physical and mental activities involved with gardening help with keeping the mind strong. For people in this age group, just walking in the garden can be therapeutic and have a positive impact. It is a well-known fact that the sounds, sights and smells of a garden reduce stress and help with relaxation. Few people have the opportunity to watch the miracle of nature from start to



finish. We enjoy are back yard garden watching the many species of birds that come to the feeders and water sources, some birds just migrating through others that stay in the area. Mike can't wait till the first hummingbirds start slipping up his homemade nectar. We get animals visiting our yard, of course the squirrels are always around being funny to watch or being a pest and basically tearing up the gardens. We also

have had groundhogs that can be very destructive. On occasion chipmunk, skunk, bunny and raccoon have been seen. Geese and ducks in the park and sometimes in our yard. Once a turkey showed up and ran around our yard till it flew away. You always know when the hawks are about as the alarms from the birds and squirrels start up and a frenzy of birds darting away starts up. The groups of crows are funny to watch and sometimes they get in the trees in our yard and start mimicking human speech. We have had some toads showing up in my gardens lately and they are nice to see and prove that we try to keep our gardens toxin free. At dusk the fireflies start their signature glow and the little brown bats emerge to begin their foraging. It is also fun and productive to be able to go into the garden and pick some fresh herbs for recipes. I am trying to grow one tomato plant that produces a large tomato and a few cherry tomatoes plants this year....hoping I might get some tomatoes called my 'Happiness Project'. Anyone that grows tomatoes knows weird stuff can go wrong. I know some people have a green thumb and can grow a crop of great vegetables. I don't have the space or the skill to have much of a vegetable garden but I hope to harvest a few tomatoes.

I am trying to have a positive outlook that a COVID-19 virus vaccine can be developed, so that people can begin to get back to a better healthier life. We live in very difficult times that lead us to a dystopian reality. The world is changing by leaps and bounds and we need to have answers, set deadlines, think about what will happen after these quarantines. We will still grieve about the death and sickness caused by the virus but we will strive for daily recovery and solidarity. We must as people get along with each other, support each other, love each other. As Ringo Starr says "Love and Peace".

You can take care of our earth, animals and nature by simple things you can do, reduce, reuse, and recycle. Plant a tree to clean the air and plant flowers that bees and butterflies like. Beesponsible in support of pollinator friendly, pesticide-free gardening.

I hope you will enjoy my virtual home garden walk through my property located in Sterling Heights, MI. Don't wait for someone to bring you flowers. Plant your own garden and decorate your own soul.

Happy gardening! No matter when you travel or just how far you roam there's just no other place quite as nice as home.

Audrey & Mike

