

'A September to Remember' Garden Tour Sept. 8 & 9

By Betsy Hasselquist, Jan Thompson, and Mike Brown

The Marais des Cygnes Extension District Master Gardeners will soon be holding their 2017 garden tour from Paola to Louisburg. This year's tour includes six private gardens and two public gardens, featuring butterfly gardens, water features, hardscape usage, unique natives, edibles, flowers, fruits and heirloom plants, and works of art.

This month and next we will describe three private gardens – their intended uses, their focal points, even their histories. Please join us and enjoy driving through the rolling hills of Miami County. Experience these amazing, diverse educational gardens and savor the great outdoors.

Casa de Mariposa

Owners: Sondra and Tom Dela Cruz, MdC Extension Master Gardeners

Sondra started this urban butterfly garden in 1994 in a spacious backyard surrounded by wonderful, mature trees. She experimented, learning to grow and nurture shade loving plants. Numerous hostas blossomed here which she divided and shared with family and friends, who blessed her with many "starter" plants in return.

Sondra was inspired by a Miami County garden tour and strived to create a small garden pond and a cozy urban feel. She dug her own pond and added a waterfall with lighting. The gardens evolved into a butterfly haven. Her interest became a passion and her colorful butterfly garden was born. Butterfly bushes were easy to grow and are true favorites in this yard, now a certified monarch butterfly waystation.

"Butterflies are like gardens with wings." Sondra tries to plant a new host plant each year to entice ever more butterflies and encourages others to plant their own butterfly garden, as her own grandchildren have done.

The 'House of Butterflies' offers different varieties of milkweed (for Monarch butterflies) and dill, fennel, rue, pawpaws, sedums, and pipevine (for Swallowtails), providing an annual challenge to add new and varied host plants to attract new and different butterflies. Sondra has added colorful, sun loving perennials including giant castor beans. A variety of coneflower continue blooming through the fall.

Long Lips Farm

Owners: Lenora Larson, MdC Extension Master Gardener

Long Lips Farm is well-known locally and nationally as a certified butterfly garden because the owner, Lenora Larson, writes extensively about butterflies for numerous publications, including *The Kansas City Gardener*. It is a beautifully designed two-acre garden in the English Estate landscape style with 18 rooms and 500+ species. Hardscaping functions as the cohesive structural element with raised beds and pathways defining the garden's design.

It is a North American Butterfly Association (NABA) Certified Butterfly Garden and is certified as Monarch Waystation #875, a Wildlife Habitat by the National Wildlife Federation (NWF), and as a Pollinator Garden by the Xerces Society. Because Lenora is also an artist, the garden also functions as an outdoor gallery with numerous colorful art objects to ensure four-season interest. Water features entertain and nourish the abundant wildlife. It demonstrates that native plants and wildlife can be welcomed to an ornamental garden without have to compromise beauty or function.

The garden includes over 50 species of butterfly caterpillar host plants, primarily natives, nestled among ribbons of purple, chartreuse, and silver foliage. Continuity is accomplished through the repetition of four perennials: Golden Mound Spirea, Purple Smoketree, Catmint and Artemesia 'Powis Castle'. Brilliantly blooming flowers feed the pollinators with favorites including old-fashioned self-sowing annuals such as Balsam, Cosmos, Cleome, Celosia, and Marigolds plus Butterfly Bush and Lantana.

Boston Berry Farm

Owners: John & Denise Johnson

This three-acre sanctuary of garden rooms stimulates all of your senses, inviting you to linger, touch, smell, and taste. Wander through the garden rooms taking in cottage gardens with grandma's old fashioned favorites (antique roses), native gardens and a southwest cacti garden. It is the kind of place that the grandchildren can explore – picking flowers, chasing butterflies, and watering their favorite plants.

You'll discover edible and pollinator gardens incorporating repurposed garden art throughout. Stroll grass pathways and hear bird chirping, bees, buzzing, and butterflies fluttering. Wildlife is welcome in these pesticide-free gardens. Native and pollinator plants, as well as fruiting and thicket type plants, are gifts for the birds.

John and Denise want their garden to have history and tell a story. They have integrated heirloom plants from grandparents' farms, some going back four generations, and use old tools such as grandma's sheep shearers for garden art. The owners too and empty slate and created wind blocks, garden rooms, and natural borders for privacy, turning a farm field into a park-like atmosphere.

Be sure to check out the assorted and unique edibles, white strawberries and herbs used as ground covers, mass plantings of colorful annuals, brick patios, a fire pit and water feature, and a wooden arbor completely covered by massive musk roses.

While in Paola, you may want to make a quick stop at the public gardens maintained by the Marais des Cygnes Extension District Master Gardeners at the Miami County Courthouse (102 S Pearl) and the K-State Research and Extension Office (104 S Brayman). Tickets are \$10. For more information, visit www.maraisdescygn.es.ksu.edu or www.facebook.com/mdcemg.