

THE MYSTIC TIMES

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LET'S GO

Stonington's private gardens opening up in June

By BILL HOBBS

Special to the Times

The Borough of Stonington is renowned for its iconic waterfront setting and beautifully preserved historic homes, many of which belonged to prosperous seafaring captains and other notable personalities. Tucked behind these charming residences are captivating private gardens, each uniquely designed and naturally distinctive.

In celebration of the Stonington Garden Club's 100th anniversary, the public is invited to explore 12 of these extraordinary landscapes during the club's popular "Gardens by the Sea" tour, to be held Friday and Saturday, June 12-13, from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m., rain or shine.

According to Anna Bell McLanahan, the event's Gardens Committee Leader, the number of gardens on this year's tour has expanded, with eight appearing for the first time.

"We have a great legacy of wonderful tours, and we wanted to live up to it," she shared. "Visitors can explore a dozen or so gardens, including two with guided paths and a shaded terrace garden tucked into a larger property."

Some of the gardens are notable for having been documented in The Garden Club of America Collection at The Smithsonian Archives of American Gardens.

"Our team has approached the tour as if we were curating an experience," McLana-



PHOTO BY DODIE BUMP

Gardens by the Sea sponsored by the Stonington Garden Club provides a rare opportunity to see many of the area's beautiful and exclusive private residences.

han said. Two years of planning went into this year's event to ensure variety, ranging

from artists' gardens to estates with water vistas. The gardens are kept "secret" until the day of the tour, further heightening anticipation.

Enhancing this year's tour will be onsite educators in many gardens. These educators include Master Gardeners, horticulturalists, and landscape designers, who will offer insights and answer questions.

Attendees will receive a garden guide that will include a map and a QR code that links to a webpage with more detailed descriptions of each garden, including plant lists. The plants themselves will be clearly marked with both botanical and common names.

Adding to the atmosphere, "Plein Air" artists will be painting in selected gardens, giving attendees the chance to observe creativity in action. Their work will also be on display at the La Grua Center. The club's three community gardens will also be open, including the Stonington Community Center (COMO) Children's Learning Garden, the club's signature project.

According to Laura Metzger, tour adviser, "Gardens by the Sea" is held every three to four years, and this event marks the 15th tour in our history. This June, we hope to attract over 2,000 visitors from throughout New England."

She added, "It truly 'takes a village,' and we are so grateful to our garden hosts; tour planning committee, club and community volunteers, local town officials, market-

place vendors, and generous sponsors for helping to make this a memorable experience for our attendees."

"The net proceeds from 'Gardens by the Sea' enable us to give back to our community for the next three to four years by supporting our various community projects, grants program, and educational scholarships," said Jill Corr and Pamela Wright, the club's Co-Presidents. "We look forward to welcoming attendees to historic Stonington Borough in our 100th year as the Stonington Garden Club," they added.

Wadawanuck Square marketplace

Over 30 vendors offering garden-inspired items, clothing, jewelry, and home décor will be featured at the tented Marketplace. Several community partners and non-profits will also be on hand to answer questions about gardening, the environment, and volunteer opportunities. The Marketplace will be free and open to the public during the tour hours.

Ticket Information

Tickets are \$50 online until midnight on June 8 or \$65 onsite on the tour days. Tickets are valid for both days and are non-refundable. All gardens on the tour are conveniently located within walking distance, and complimentary parking will be available. To order tickets, visit www.stoningtongardenclub.org/gardentour. Any questions, contact sgctourinfo@gmail.com.

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