



NEWS RELEASE (6-23-17)

Media Contact – Robin Trott at trot0053@umn.edu or 320-762-3890

Tour of Gardens

On Sunday, July 9, from 10:00 AM-4:00 PM, the Douglas County Master Gardeners present their annual Tour of Gardens. The Tour of Gardens is a great opportunity to see a diverse variety of horticultural masterpieces right here in Douglas County. Six local gardens are included in this year's tour, each with its own individual style and theme.

#1 Ron & Ann Branch, Berry Ridge Farm, 1301 Firemans Lodge Rd SW, Alexandria. 2017 marks the 30th year anniversary of Berry Ridge Farm. Ron, Ann and their sons sell vegetables, fruit and flowers directly to customers at their 11-acre farm and they are very active at the Alexandria Farmers Market. Ron and Ann constructed their first high tunnel greenhouse in 1992 and have added several more since then. High tunnels allow an early May start and also a longer fall season. Their crops include tomatoes, cucumbers, peppers, potatoes, beets, strawberries, 7 varieties of blueberries and more. Watering is done with drip irrigation. Sons Carl and Eric financed their own 24x92 foot high tunnel through a FSA (Farm Service Agency) Youth Loan program in 2006. It has generated enough income to finance their first year of college.

#2 Kevin & Pat Biggar, 8455 Co Rd 27 SW, Alexandria. Enjoy the variety of plants found in these country gardens; full of rustic, home-made charm. Follow the meandering path through the "shade" garden to see Japanese painted ferns, mayflowers, gas plants and more. Pat makes many of her garden elements – bird houses, stepping stones, mosaic bird baths. A cattle trough turned into an herb garden allows Pat to enjoy basil, cilantro, and more, including chocolate mint which she uses for tea. Bethlehem Star, variegated iris, Asiatic and day lilies, and clematis are just a few of the flowers in the "sun" garden that provide lots of color, size and texture. Pat uses her garden cottage as a potting shed, crafting workshop, and place to store supplies and items she collects. The outside of the shed gives Pat another opportunity to share her creativity.

3 Perry Evans, 3233 Vonderheide DR SW, Alexandria. Perry started gardening three years ago when he retired. The driveway and walkway are lined with striking pots of dahlias and large, dark red geraniums which he special orders. Golden Japanese Spikenard, hostas, day lilies, Bells of Ireland, vanilla marigolds and polka dot plants help provide splashes of color and a variety of texture and size. Continuing on, you'll find begonias, coral bells, hostas and 4 foot tall Red Quin astilbe. As you walk around the side of the house, you come to more of his "cutting garden." Perry loves to create bouquets filled with a variety of flowers and plants he grows, and then shares them with others. Beyond the cutting garden are terraced steps bordered with beds of hosta, sedum and vinca. "Sem" spirea line the steps going to the lower yard and lakeshore. Scarlet runner beans climb up the stair railings to the upper deck. Watch for the Brugmansia (trumpet flower), voodoo lily and passion vines.

4 Bruce & Terri Kakac, 8151 West Lake Union Rd SE, Alexandria. The serene, inviting patios and gardens surrounding their home have been 25 years in the making. A 25-year-old weeping white pine, magnolia bush and "Theresa Bonet" rose greet you on the left side of the

driveway. Two years ago, Bruce added a water feature that winds its way around a new patio he created and down a waterfall nestled in a boulder wall on the south side of their home. They love sharing their gardens that are filled with a wide variety of flowers, including baptista, canna, daisies, ferns, lungwort, anemones, 3 kinds of Goat's beard and lots more; plus the Lily of the Nile in containers. Many garden sculptures, stepping stones, fountains, and unique decorations add to the interest. Many of the stepping stones are family heirlooms made by Terri's grandfather. Terri says, "We live creatively."

5 Knute Nelson "Healing Garden", 1420 12th Ave E, Alexandria. The Healing Garden, created in 2007, is a peaceful area for residents and others to enjoy the outdoors in an environment that promotes healing and relaxation. The garden area includes wide wheelchair accessible paths, flowers, trees and shrubs, and water features. Benches and tables are available around this beautiful garden to allow residents to keep in touch with nature. A wrought iron fence encloses the garden for the residents' safety and security.

6 United Methodist Church Community Garden, 2210 6th Ave E, Alexandria. The community garden consists of about 40 raised bed gardens with a variety of vegetables and flowers that were planted and are being tended by local residents who do not have access to their own garden space.

Tickets are \$5 for adults; children are free (please no pets). Visit the gardens in the order of your choice and pay at the first garden you visit, feel free to come and go as you please. Some of the tour sites are off the beaten path...please drive carefully, not responsible for accidents. For more information or tour brochure, call University of Minnesota Extension, Douglas County at 320-762-3890 or stop by and see us in the Douglas County Service Center Building at 720 Fillmore Street in Alexandria. Hope to see you there, held rain or shine!

Kim Taveirne
Administrative Specialist
University of Minnesota Extension
Douglas County
Phone (320) 762-3890
www.extension.umn.edu/county/douglas