

“Garden Evolution”

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In gardening, the only constant is change... in the plants, environments and the gardeners. Because change is inevitable over time, an essential skill for gardeners involves adapting to and guiding the evolution of a garden.

Often a gardener's changing taste dictates graceful incorporation of new ideas into an existing garden scheme. A desire to have a new formal straight-line element like a clipped boxwood-edged garden, espaliered fruit trees or a Japanese style clashes with an established informal design of curving borders filled with more naturally grown plantings. How can you have both? How can you screen one from the other and create a transition between the two? New functions, say a wished-for water feature or patio, also force gardeners to invent and imagine the melding of new elements with what exists.

Time can have a huge impact on plant size and environment. A gardener needs editing skills to manage plantings that become unbecomingly crowded. Sun-lover plants may need to give way to shade-lovers. Trees may eventually shade a vegetable garden initially planted in full sun. Perhaps the vegetable garden could be reestablished in a sunnier area, even the front yard.

One of the most enjoyable ways to acquire the ideas and skills to manage one's evolving garden is to borrow from others. While books, magazines and professional advice help, nothing beats visiting another person's garden for ideas. On the first sunny Saturday of the year, I visited a 70+-year-old garden handed down through generations. There, in 3-D, were so many examples of how to adapt to increasing shade, incorporation of new garden styles, transitions between formal and informal, between vegetable garden and patio. As in all gardens, some areas were in a state of transition, while others seemed at the peak of perfection.

You can glean ideas from the garden described above and four others by attending the Secret Garden Tour, Saturday, June 18th from 10 am to 4 pm, presented by WSU Jefferson County Master Gardeners with the generous help of five private garden owners on the beautiful Toandos Peninsula in southeast Jefferson County. Tickets are available at local garden centers. Call 360-379-5445 or go to <http://mq.jefferson.wsu.edu> for more information.