

On May 27 we ventured out to visit 3 very different open gardens that were part of the Garden conservancy's Open Garden days. All were beautiful in their own way and all very different from each other. It was a great mix of gardening styles.



Bill Schiavo is a self-confessed lazy gardener. When he moved into his home first job was rip out all the grass and replace it with tough, deer resistant plants that basically take care of themselves. What he ended up creating was a relaxing woodland garden, full of little surprises and a certified wildlife habitat in Wading River. The garden has 3 water features and the sound of water trickling and running was so peaceful and relaxing. There are seating areas all around the garden to invite the viewer to sit, enjoy and relax. The garden is a wonderful blend of leaf texture & colors.

The garden start at the top on a steep hill, the boarder is planted with Bluestem grasses, carex, Korean boxwood (*Buxus sinica*) which is not only deer resistant but also doesn't succumb to the boxwood blight. It stays low and spreads outward. It pairs beautifully with the red maple above it. This was a texturally rich garden. The hard smooth stones, the long strappy leaves of the carex, tiny leaves of the boxwood, and the bright feathery red leaves of the maple gracefully spilling down create a wonderful tapestry. And this was only the view from the street; we hadn't even got into the garden yet!



I loved how the light worked in this garden, the sun peeking through the tree canopy created even more interest as the shadows danced on the stone pavers, creating even more texture. I loved the way the plants glow when backlit by the sun, it is a most beautifully constructed garden.

While Bill is a confessed lazy gardener, loads of work was put into the creation of this garden; the water features, to give garden sound, the placement of the plants to create that wonderful texture. A favorite vista for me was in the back by the waterfall and the pond; a red maple, the undulations perfectly matched the steps of the waterfall. We should all follow Bill's lead; do less, sit back and appreciate more.

The next garden was in Old Field. It is a showcase of mature deciduous and conifer trees. It was a amazing display of the color and texture that can be achieved when using a mixture of different conifers. I was thinking to myself why do people plant a row of just arborvitaes? They are surely missing out!

Again this garden was created with the idea of less work in mind, though the owner did have a lot of work in the beginning to get the trees off to a good start and keep them healthy. It's just now a low maintenance garden as they are all mature specimens.





There was one tree he was very proud of; *Magnolia macrophylla*, Big leaf Magnolia a very unusual specimen indeed. He acquired it in a plant auction around 10 years ago. The leaves and the flowers are downright huge! Leaves can reach up to 3 feet in length and it is fragrant.





The last garden was in St. James, the owner is a landscape architect and this was the most varied garden of the day. It was a series of garden rooms and vistas. Different themes and design styles throughout. I think maybe it is a working garden in that she might use it to showcase her work to prospective clients. There were lots of creative ideas throughout. I especially liked the seating area outside the carriage house that is her office. French doors open onto a wonderful garden with a bit of whimsy with the Venetian style poles holding up a wire trellis.

