

BEDFORD PARK BULLETIN



... your community voice is more important than ever before!

September 2020

We invite you to step into the oasis below, to delve into the pages of this newsletter, and to read about some of the most beautiful gardens we judged this summer. Enjoy fond memories of summer and the gardening season as we slip into fall.

Our first-ever 1st Place Winner of the 1st Annual Bedford Park Garden Contest!



Daryl's Place, an oasis, and our first place winner, submitted by Tony Bessell, at 336 Fairlawn Avenue.

All photos courtesy of Michelle Moore except where noted.



OUR FIRST GARDEN CONTEST

How it came to be

Summers are generally quiet in Bedford Park. Ours is truly a residential neighbourhood with not a lot of nightlife or summer events. This was one of the reasons we began to consider having a *Garden Contest*.



BPRO's revival is still quite young, and we don't want to be just about development and safety. Ultimately, we want BPRO to help connect us to each other, so that we can know our neighbours and support each other through whatever changes our neighbourhood faces.

While Covid-19 caused us to cancel our *Community Yard Sale*, it created an ideal opportunity to launch the *Garden Contest*. As it turns out, it connected people and helped build community in wonderful ways.

We were happy there was real enthusi-

asm for the idea including, somewhat surprisingly, from many who didn't register. We considered the 15 entries a good number to launch what we plan to be an annual event.

Everyone involved, from the volunteer organizers to the participants, were thrilled with BPRO's first ever *Garden Contest*. One participant told us they registered specifically to encourage others to start gardening. Others told us they joined because gardening was going to be more important than ever with Covid-19 cancelling so many other typical summer activities. And of course, many joined because gardening is their passion.

The participants gave the three judges a real challenge. There was apparently much debate among them, until

they were satisfied that they could agree on the winners and honourable mentions.

A big thank you to each and every participant for making the inaugural year such a success.

From the judges: *Each garden had something special about it, and we regret not all could be winners. We can't tell you how much we enjoyed meeting you, experiencing your gardens, and witnessing their evolution, even during those wickedly hot summer days. Thank you all so very much. We are honoured to have been invited into your gardens.*



CONGRATULATIONS TO OUR WINNERS!! and to our Honourable Mentions ... but of course!

Thank you to everyone who participated in our first *Bedford Park Garden Contest*. We are thrilled to announce the winners.



1st Place, Tony Bessell
336 Fairlawn Avenue



2nd Place, Marlene Peltz
184 Douglas Avenue



3rd Place, Sara & Payam Kazemi
130 Bedford Park Avenue

Honourable Mention (in no particular order)

The Reynolds Family, 76 Roe Avenue
Gail & Martin, 339 St Germain Avenue
Katherine Quan, 186 Brookdale Avenue



MASTER GARDENER & OUR JUDGES' CRITERIA

We had experts, and they took their job seriously

We were lucky to have a Master Gardener as one of our judges - *but just what is that?*

Toronto Master Gardener's website explains: *All Master Gardeners have successfully completed university horticultural studies and must meet ongoing continuing education requirements to make sure that our advice to gardeners is based on current horticultural knowledge.*

Master Gardeners share their knowledge as horticulturists and volunteer their services to home gardeners in various ways, from speaking at community groups to running workshops. Through their website, gardeners can write or phone in with questions – what a wonderful service!

Our judges worked diligently to come up with a framework to assess all the entries. Here's the criteria they established to compare the many lovely gardens they were invited to consider:

Overall impression - is there an intention for the garden (flowers, pollinator, vegetable, etc.); if the front and back garden are both entered, then how do the two gardens flow together to contrast or complement each other.

Content – are there plants that offer interest through the season; are additional features like water, art or rock incorporated into the garden design.

Diversity and sustainability – is there diversity in the types of plantings; are eco-friendly practices in place to nourish growth from the ground up (compost, rain barrels, bee houses, bird baths etc.); does the space creatively accommodate a diversity of uses (play, cook, eat, lounge).





1st PLACE WINNER

Tony Bessell, 336 Fairlawn Avenue

Daryls' Place

There is beauty, and then there is beauty that moves into one's heart, drawing us in further, asking us to look and see, to smell and even to touch. Daryl's garden drew the judges in, asked us to wander and to look into corners, to find the little surprises left to delight us in our explorations.

The first thing anyone sees is a front garden filled to the brim with flowers bursting to bloom, spring through fall. It's a painting! A party! It's a celebration of colour! *An artist lives here*, one of us said as we approached, and we were right.

But the best garden is out of view to anyone simply walking by. Up an average driveway, and through an archway of runaway (monster) vines, a slight turn to the right and we are moved into a new place, barely does it resemble a residential neighbourhood like Bedford Park. It's magical and moving.



We are greeted by a daunting assembly of flowers in all stages of their short lives. A path guides us further to an open grassy area, guarded by a purple weeping birch. This sentinel, with its claw-like roots, draws the eye upward, while its draping branches oversee all that grows below.

Daryls' Place, continued

A bee incubator is nailed to the pasture fence to the west, and that low fence opens the view making the yard seem much wider than it really is. A pair of birdbaths reflect the blooms nearby. Further back is a low stone border in the shade garden where an ornamental stork suggests, with a cock of its head, to have a look "over there" ... *something could be growing that you might like!*

The tall stand of pines in the neighbour's yard to the east, provide a lattice for white clematis to climb, and climb they do! All the way up the fence and onto these trees, about 20 feet up and 10 feet wide, when they are in their full glory.

Turning back toward the deck, which is dotted with potted flowers and more vine, there is a comfortable dining area, shaded from the mid-day sun by a green umbrella. This garden is a painter's palette - every colour is dolloped in fresh hues just waiting to bloom.

This is a sustainable pollinator garden and it met every criterion we set for this contest. There is height, depth and breadth to everything growing to create a memorable space.

Daryl's Place was built on the love she shared with Tony in the life they grew together. It was the last thing Daryl saw before she passed away in 2018. Tony spends his days with his wife's legacy. He gives full credit for the garden to his wife, but it is clear he learned from her everything he needs to know to continue to cultivate this beautiful space. Because of Daryl's care, Tony is a true gardener.

Congratulations Tony! *Daryl's Place* is the first-ever winner of BPRO's *Garden Contest!*



2nd PLACE WINNER

Marlene Peltz, 184 Douglas Avenue

The Queen's Garden

Attached to the gate that admits us into this backyard entry, there's a stone sign. Carved into it, along with a regally crowned head, are the words *Garden Queen*. A gift, the contestant told us, from her children who clearly know the gardener well.

One step past the gate and we are in another world, resplendent in its attention to the details of design. It is a pared down version of a walled castle garden that is indeed fit for a queen. Surrounding the living area, speckled with potted plants with space for lounging and dining, the garden pushes against the borders of the property lines. Creatively on one side

there are low pine topiaries and an open gap that connects this property to its neighbour to the west, thus adding width to what would otherwise be a cozy space.

The garage, half covered in vine, is stained red-brown and blends into view of the main garden. In front is a beautiful pond full of water lilies that bloomed in late August. An ornamental red maple overhangs the pond, which is walled in stone and barely visible for the many plantings of shrubbery in different shapes and shades of green. Placed just so around the pond's borders, are pots with flowers that bloom in their turn throughout the seasons as well.

The Queen's Garden, continued

The remains of a witch hazel tree, its branches twisted like crone's fingers, makes the perfect trellis for a mandevilla vine and its heat-loving blooms of white with a bright yellow centre. Charming ornaments poke through all the growth - a dragonfly cast in metal tries to fly away, and blown glass bulbs add spots of colour in the greenest patches.

Along the other fence line, there is a tall pine that has been managed extremely well so that are plants able to grow underneath it - hostas and ferns, and even some blooming flowers flourish there. There is likely a trick to planting more than hostas in the acidic soil of a pine tree, but every queen has their secrets!

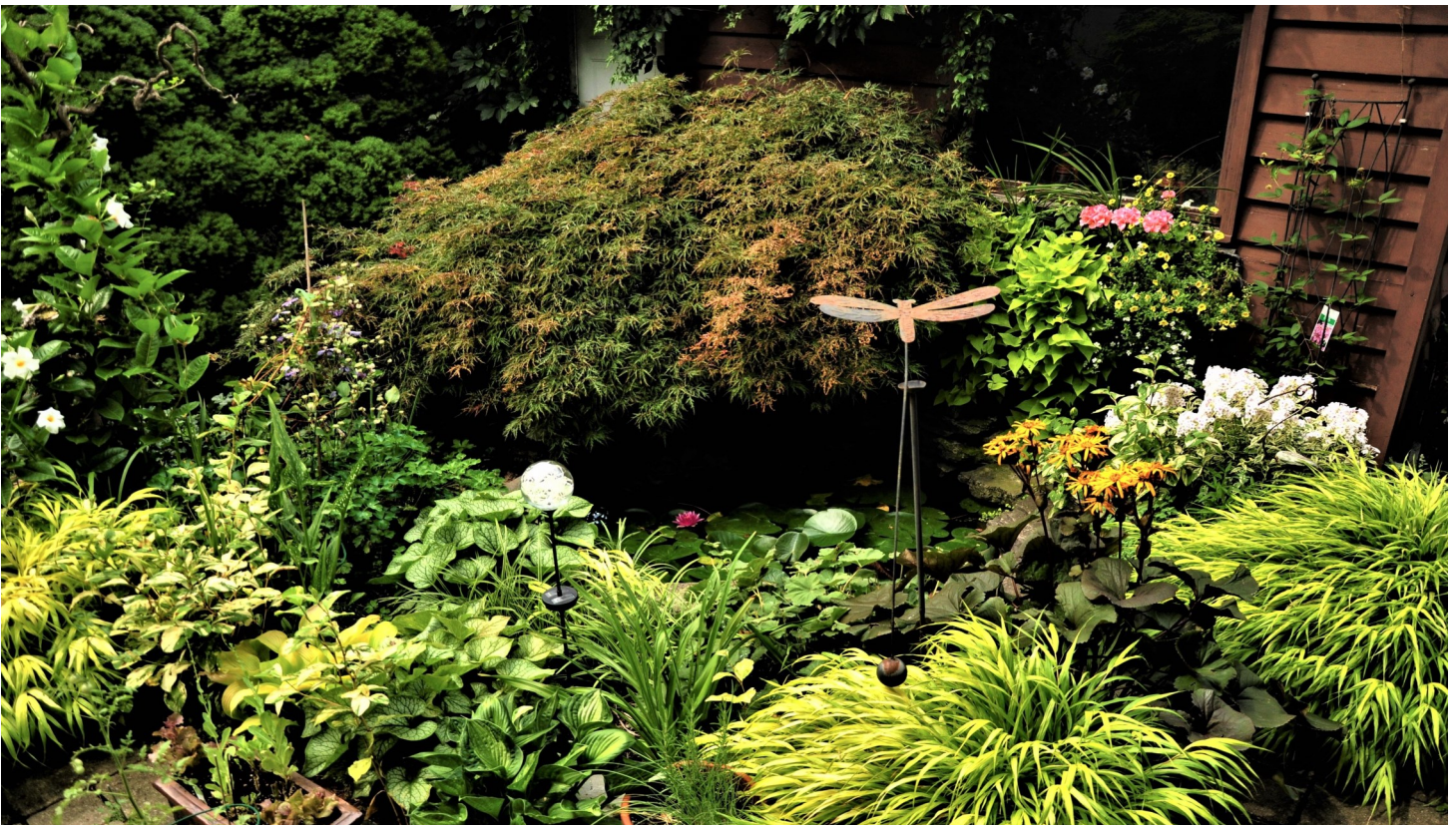
What makes this garden truly regal, is a small area accessed through the back gate. In olden times, this would be where the hunting party entered after a day's foray. Walking into the garden from the back feels like walking into a grove. Clematis climbs all over one side, a praying an-

gel is tucked into a corner surrounded by more flowers, and shrubs and pines, big and small, leave a path just big enough to walk through.

Guarding it all is a single orchid, out for the summer season as tall as any greenhouse orchid, perhaps taller. Standing there on the narrow path, the sound of water from the pond just around the corner, calls the ear to listen and is instantly calming.

The judging between this and the first place garden was truly a challenge. Both are strong examples of the creativity and knowledge required to create a winning garden. Each are well established gardens with skilled attendants (and a Queen!), but we had to make a choice and this one earned second place by a vine's breadth.

Our most sincere congratulations to Marlene, the Garden Queen on her 2nd place win!





3rd PLACE WINNER

Sara & Payam Kazemi, 130 Bedford Park Avenue

Butterfly & Veggie Garden

There was a time when front gardens were the way neighbours socialized with each other. Beds filled with flowers and vegetables were the homeowners point of pride, and sometimes used as an excuse for a little friendly competition with their neighbours. Front porches were for sitting, and lawns were for playing. Children could find friends up for a game, while the parents and neighbours visited and kept an eye on things. This garden hearkens back to that time.

The front porch here is not quite big enough for sitting (although a stoop is a stoop...). Instead, there is a lovely bench placed by a garden growing against the front of the house. The bench faces out across the front lawn to the street and gives anyone sitting there the opportunity to smile and wave, and even to invite a neighbour to take a seat.

This garden is wide open, and it doesn't matter if one is sitting on the bench or standing on the sidewalk.

The longer one looks, the more there is to see.

Planted for butterflies, the main garden is bursting with blooms of various heights and colours that reach right up to the front window of the house. On the side, near a well established and beautiful maple tree, is an impish butterfly water dish hanging from a high plant stand.

Down between the long front walkway and the property line, on the narrow side, is a garden bed



Butterfly & Veggie Garden, continued

running the full length of the front yard that bloomed wildly with spring flowers. What made this garden a winner is that it evolved over the summer into a vegetable garden. Some flowers, like the stunning African daisy, continued to bloom as the vegetables grew. But as summer progressed, a small variety of tasty treats grew for the picking as they ripened.

This garden required very real planning. The maple tree's shade mostly misses both garden beds, though

it covers much of the lawn. Working with that took considerable forethought, as did the side garden that slowly transformed from spring flowers to a summer's harvest.

Choosing our 3rd prize winner was as big a challenge as choosing our 1st. There were many contenders but ultimately the evolution in this garden and its classic design edged out the other contenders to make it a winner. Or, perhaps, it was the beating of a butterfly wing?

Congratulations Sara and Payam for your 3rd place win!

Postscript: The judges never met Sara until they presented her with her prize. She told them this was her first garden, and that she'd spent the winter ordering seeds and planning how it would grow. It was an experiment for her, in which she clearly succeeded. We can't wait to see what you do next year Sara, as your garden can only grow from here and you set the bar really high for yourself.



HONOURABLE MENTION

The Reynolds Family, 76 Roe Avenue Family Garden

The front garden is tucked up against the family home. A beautiful wrought iron, hay-rack window box immediately catches the eye. From it spills ivy and ferns, with tall grasses and bright flowers pushing up above. Below is a well tended garden filled to the brim with shrubbery, more flowers, and rocks strewn like they have always been there. This front garden suggests a home that is warm and welcoming.

With this first impression, we walked into the backyard to discover a living space for the entire family to use. A children's playhouse in the middle of a play area, shaded by maples, is off in one corner. Across from it is a garden shed with as much window as wall space. It's painted blue with white trim to look like a cottage. Planter boxes below the window, overflow with a beautiful trailing ivy. And a bench against the fence line on the same side, in the maple's shade, completes the impression of cottage country.

A beautiful fern hangs from the maple tree, as full as any in nature. There is a bird-house above it, and below is a cast bird bath with a mother and her ducklings on the ground underneath, as if this little oasis is for her family too.

There are two living areas. The first, in the middle of the garden, is the dining area. A large table is surrounded by plants and flowers, with ornaments that made the judges think this gardener has excellent taste, and a lovely sense of humour.

Family Garden, continued

The back deck is overseen by flowering trees, above which a distressed steel dragon is keeping guard. On one side a hot tub that despite its size, fits perfectly into the space. If this deck had walls and a roof, it would be a family room. There is a comfortable seating area with lovely outdoor furniture, and even a cushy outdoor rug that gives easy access from the deck to the hot tub.

This garden is an extension of the family home, another living space that is well loved and appointed. It is the total effect that makes it worthy of an Honourable Mention.



HONOURABLE MENTION

Gail & Martin, 339 St. Germain Avenue
Bird Garden

If you approach the front of this property just as the sun starts to shine its most golden light, you would agree there is a special curbside appeal to this garden. Tall grasses, planted to be a waving border for this corner lot, glow in the late day sun. There are truly interesting particulars planted with care, both grown and ornamental - from a piece of wrought iron fencing with flowers planted beside it, to the low shrubs banked up by a boulder.

Large stones edge the walkway creating a simple and solid continuity. There is much texture in the plantings and a real appreciation of basic geometry. A small tree by the front walkway balances out the much older and taller maple on the corner. The judges couldn't help but notice how much thought was taken to make the front garden shine in its design when the light hits it just so.

This keen attention to detail extends into the backyard. Here smaller stones, each with its own character, are positioned with the spacing given to new plantings and they edge the backyard flower beds. There is a garden shed with a window box that makes it look like someone could live there.

A mirror coyly covered with trellis reflects light back into the flower beds. A water fountain gives moisture to the Rose of Sharon that is tall enough to bloom above the fence. The seating area is attended by a dogwood tree that we had the pleasure of

Bird Garden, continued

seeing in full bloom in June. Truly stunning. Amidst the beauty is just enough room for the grandchildren to play.



Every detail indicated that this garden was planted for the birds. With fresh water to drink from the water fountain, there is also a stone bird bath on the ground surrounded with pieces of driftwood - perches for the birds to sun themselves after their ablutions. A rustic wood bird house takes a prominent position in view of a back room window where the owners/gardeners/bird lovers, can watch the birds come and go all year round.

This garden is one of the reasons the judges struggled to pick this year's top three and is more than worthy of the Honourable Mention it receives.



HONOURABLE MENTION

Katherine Quan, 186 Brookdale Avenue
Northern Garden

As we walked up to this front yard garden in June, we were greeted by a grey and white kitty, who sat just long enough to give us that what took you so long look before leaving us to explore for ourselves. In this inspired garden, a part of the self-sustaining north country was brought into the city.

The small front yard is transformed to look like a patch of Georgian Bay that's blended with regional flowers, low shrubs and ground ivy. The use of stones is even handed and provides both a border for the garden beds, and a floor where a lawn likely used to be. The stones are not so much a walking path as pieces of Precambrian Shield that lost some of its earthy covering. Between the stone is sedum moss - soft against hard. Low pine and other shrubbery border the garden edges, with blooming clover and bursts of purple and orange in the spring flowers.

There is proportion to this garden. Everything fits together in what could almost be considered a miniature replica of Ontario's grand nature. It became clear to us that a tree sharing the border with their neighbour, whose garden beautifully melds into this one, had been removed relatively recently. That tree, we thought, would offer the shade that would allow this garden to thrive. We had concerns that the sedum could be hurt

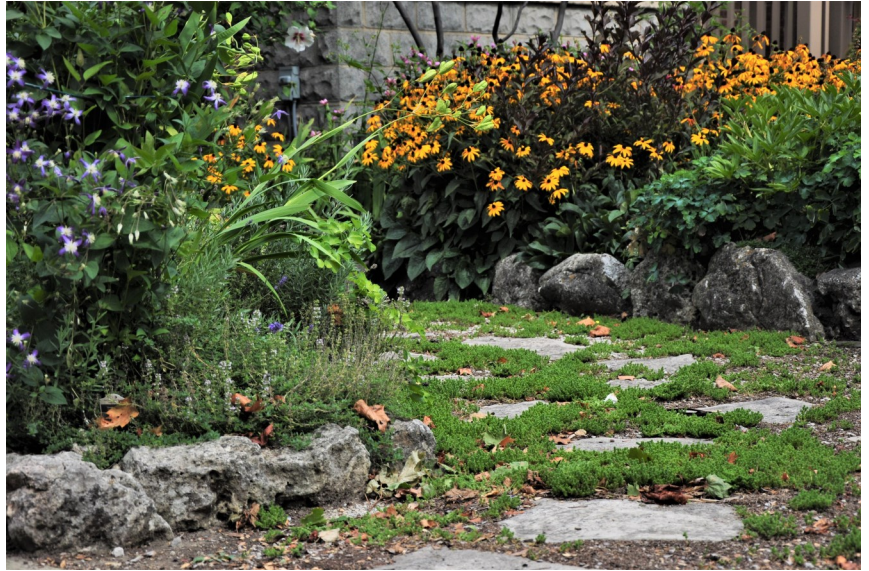
Northern Garden, continued

the heat of summer.

But when we came back in August, the garden was blooming with late summer flowers, such as black-eyed Susan's and filloxx, and a clematis growing on a short cage fitted into the garden. The sedum, while stressed, proved more resilient than we thought and remains a key feature to the design.

This gardener's vision is extremely well considered and executed. In a normal summer this garden would be low maintenance and fairly self-sufficient. This is one of the most sustainable gardens we had the pleasure to view and it is certainly the most unique, and truly deserving of an Honourable Mention.

If you get a chance and feel a longing for our North Country, take a walk on by and be sure to tell kitty *Hello*, should he or she come out to greet you.



Other glimpses of the neighbourhood.





MEET THE JUDGES

Our expert panel

A big thank you to our judges for the diligence with which they approached their duties.

Ellen Farrelly:

Ellen is a Master Gardener. She was honoured to be a judge in our first ever Bedford Park Garden Contest and we were certainly very grateful to have her vast knowledge and experience. She was very enthusiastic about supporting our initiative to build community while encouraging sustainable, beautifully designed gardens.

Ellen's lifelong passion for gardening began with her grandmother, who taught her that *planting one seed respectfully changes everything*.

That wise advice has guided Ellen throughout the years, including her membership with the *Toronto Master Gardeners*. Ellen has been involved in community projects such as Through the Garden Gate, Canada Blooms and Green Thumbs Growing Kids.

Michelle Moore:

Michelle planted her first garden in 2004, her first full summer in Bedford Park. As a renter, she can only plant annually, but like everything in Michelle's life, she doesn't let this be an obstacle. Every year she tries new things and builds on what she's learned in the past.

Michelle began the initial planning of our contest

with BPRO Board member Marybeth Ashbourne. It turned out that Michelle got into every aspect of the contest, from planning, to judging, photographing, communicating with the gardeners and writing all about it.

She said the best part was seeing many beautiful gardens and meeting so many talented neighbours in the process. I am in awe of the creativity grown in each and every garden.

John Miles:

John is an avid gardener and has lived in Bedford Park for 30 years. As a BPRO Board member, John was ineligible to enter the contest, but he didn't hesitate to help judge. It's a good thing for the winners, as his own garden would have definitely been a top contender (as you can see on the left).



The judges, in John Miles' gorgeous garden.

*Left to right:
Michelle Moore, John Miles,
Ellen Farrelly*



BACKYARD FENCES

Do you Like Them Tall, Short or None at All?

One of the most surprising, and lovely things we discovered while viewing the gardens of Bedford Park is that a few backyards share a low fence with their neighbour. Of our *Garden Contest* participants, there were two like this. Plus another garden avoided a fence along one side altogether – they divided the space with their neighbour using pine shrubbery for part of the property line, and left the rest wide open.

Gardeners can make good use of the high fences to grow various vines and hang flowers and so on. But those with low fencing have a more expansive sense and are all the more beautiful for it.

Here's how these three back gardens with minimal fencing looked:





THE THREE PINES

... living on as a memorial

As we are learning from the history articles by Gary Schlee in the *Before Our Times* series, the Bedford Park area, being so close to Yonge Street, was one of the earliest to develop beyond the village of York.

Bedford Park was once a little village in the Yonge Lawrence area. In 1889 a tract of land was bought, bounded by Bathurst and Yonge, Lawrence and Woburn, with the intent to build a factory and hundreds of small houses for the employees. Before the plan was realized, the villages of Bedford Park, Davisville and Eglinton amalgamated in 1890 and became North Toronto. The new town council voted against the proposed factory but approved the housing. The streets were planned and the houses gradually built.

In the late 1920's property, measured by linear frontage was a tenth of the cost of what could be bought near Upper Canada College. .05 cents a linear foot vs. 50 cents a linear foot south of Davisville Avenue.

This may explain why many of the lots in Bedford Park are so narrow. People bought what they could afford. Several post-war, single storey homes remain in our neighbourhood, although, year by year, they are being developed into much larger homes.



Between the turn of the last century and through to the late 1920's, when the depression and World War II slowed development, many homes were built and families moved into Bedford Park. Children

grew older, and some of them went off to either the First or the Second World War. As in any war, many young men did not return home.

To pay tribute to their fallen soldier-sons, it was a common practice for families to plant trees in memory of those they had lost. Often white pine and maples were planted as they were known to grow tall and live the long lives that the sons would have lived had war not taken them too soon.

We were told this story while looking at three pines growing side-by-side, taller than the houses, in a backyard of one of our participants. The sun was setting, casting the tops of the trees in a golden light. We all paused for a moment not saying anything, just taking in the sight in silence. The family that had planted them is long gone. We don't know if their sons survived the war or not, but, given this tradition, it is likely that these three trees live on as a memorial.



BEDFORD PARK, 90 YEARS AGO

We've come a long way!

Check out these photos of two neighbourhood “gardens” 90 years ago. How nice that Bedford Park looks so much more beautiful these days.



Top: The backyards of 245 & 247 Bedford Park Avenue, June 8, 1931.

Bottom: Front garden of 245 Bedford Park Avenue, September 9, 1930. The tree below had to be cut down in 2017 by the current owners.



Photos courtesy of Toronto Public Library Digital Archives.



MEMBERSHIP & COMMUNITY

Or is it the other way round?

These two things go hand-in-hand with BPRO. We are nothing without the community. We are nothing without members. But from our perspective, when the two are combined, it's a win-win scenario.

Membership in BPRO leads to a greater sense of community, and a sense of community will help lead to more members of BPRO. The more members we have, the better we are able to represent the neighbourhood.

We have a wonderful little story that exemplifies this. Whenever a new member comes on board, we always ask them how they heard about us, and what prompted them to join. This was a lovely recent response:

This is how I discover BPRO. I was working at the front of my house on Brookdale when a lovely lady stopped to chat and compliment me on my garden. She asked why I was not in the Bedford Park Garden Contest. Not knowing anything about the organization she proceeded to talk about the group. A few days later I received a lovely card this talented women had made with all the information. This was Susan walking her dog, Henry. We chatted for quite awhile with lots in common. We both are artists and I enjoyed meeting her so much. I look forward to meeting other members and volunteering.

Thank you Susan, and thanks to others who help spread the word about BPRO as well. Every new member counts, so we appreciate your efforts.



THANK YOU TO OUR SPONSORS

We couldn't have done it without you!

Thank you to the following retailers for their generosity in providing BPRO with prizes for our contest winners:



Bayview Blossoms
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3313 Yonge Street, (416) 481-8877



Sheridan Nurseries
www.sheridannurseries.com
2827 Yonge Street, (416) 481-6429

HOW DOES BPRO'S GARDEN CONTEST GROW

Yep, start planning for next year now!

As the judges made their way through the neighbourhood they couldn't help but notice many gardens blooming away that were obviously nurtured by owners. Professionally tended gardens often have a similar feel, while gardens tended by a resident gardener have their own

distinct look, unique from being grown by trial and error, and over time.

We truly hope to see more of you talented gardeners on board next year when we will host the *2nd Annual Bedford Park Garden Contest*.



FINAL WORDS

From our judges, from BPRO

From the judges: *To those who didn't win this year, keep on growing! The margins between the ultimate winners and the rest were so very narrow – our decision making wasn't easy. Think pollinators, think sustainability, keep being creative, and please try again next year. Until then, we wish everyone a happy winter of garden planning!*



And a final but most important note from BPRO, our readers and our participants:

A special shout out and huge thanks to Michelle Moore, our social media volunteer who ran our first ever *Garden Contest*. Michelle's passion for gardening and love of Bedford Park was the driving force behind the success of our contest. This is evidenced by her new relationships with all our contestants, her wonderfully creative writing about the gardens, and all the many gorgeous photographs throughout this issue as well.

Thank you Michelle!

COUNCILLOR'S CORNER

Mike Colle, Ward 8

To visit the councillor's website,

[click here.](#)

To read his latest newsletter, [click here.](#)

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