



### **Visiting Gardens while Traveling Dianne and Gary Westlake**

We love to visit gardens while we are traveling. This year we went to Seattle, Vancouver and Victoria in the spring. We traveled to Wales, Scotland and England in the fall and this summer we visited Quebec. At each of these places we found great gardens to visit and this is the time for you to start planning a trip for next year.

In the spring of 2007, we went to Amsterdam to see tulips. We also saw the auction house where they sell and export millions of flowers. Unfortunately, the weather was unusually warm, and although the display gardens at the Keukenhoff were wonderful, the fields where they grow tulips for the bulb market were nearly finished. Fortunately, this year we found similar fields of tulips in the state of Washington that were at their peak.

We spent a whole day at the botanical garden on the campus at the University of British Columbia in Vancouver. The garden had an enormous collection of plants from all over the world. It is well organized and labeled. It had a great vegetable garden with espaliered fruit trees in amazing configurations. There was even a pear tree trained on a wire a foot off the ground. It was a great place for a walk and was not very crowded. Places like this are under a lot of pressure from building development, in this case from the University. If gardeners do not visit, they may succumb to development, so go have a look at this great garden while it is still there.

In Victoria we saw Butchart which is like Disneyland for gardeners especially in the spring. There were seas of spring flowers and a views from the top of an old quarry filled with gardens that cannot be missed. Every time we turned a corner in the garden there was another beautiful view.

This summer, we had an opportunity to visit Les Quatre Vents in Quebec. You have to plan well ahead for this one by writing the owners and asking for an invitation. Now would be a good time to do this. It is only open to visitors a few days in the summer but it is well worth the day-long drive to get there. Situated in La Mal Baie a couple of hours drive past Quebec City on the north shore of the St. Lawrence River, this garden needs most of a day to see properly.

The drive along the north shore through the Charlevoix area is a beautiful. It would be a great trip for gardeners going to the east coast of Canada, to stop at the Montreal Botanical Garden, spend a day or two in Quebec City seeing the old area of the city, then on to Les Quatre Vents and across the river by ferry to Reford Gardens on the Gaspé. Then you could either take the long route around the coast or cut across through the picturesque Matapedia area on highway 135 to New Brunswick. On the way back in St. Jacques, New Brunswick, there is a great garden just before the New Brunswick-Quebec

border called le Jardin Botanique de Nouveaux Brunswick.

On our trip to the UK this fall we had a number of surprises. Some gardens like Tatton Park that we were looking forward to seeing, were not as impressive as we thought they might be. Some we chose to visit at the last minute turned out to be wonderful. We had a great time in the Alnwick Garden in Northumberland and the Biddulph Grange Garden in Staffordshire and neither were on our list of gardens to visit. There are also gardens open for charity in England with hundreds of private and commercial properties. You can find the information by purchasing the guide called the Yellow Book at the National Garden Scheme website [www.ngs.org.uk](http://www.ngs.org.uk) for £12.99.

Now that we have seen Hyde Hall and Harlow Carr, we have now visited all of the Royal Horticultural Society's official gardens. These gardens are all grand places. Even though we live in Canada, we are members which gives us free entry to these gardens as well as discounts at others. The monthly magazine alone is worth the cost of membership.

The Botanic Garden of Wales in southern Wales is wonderful as are the Botanic Gardens in Glasgow and Edinburgh. Although we were late in the season, there was lots to admire. If the weather is nasty, they offer glasshouses full of plants from other climates. The Bodnant Garden in northern Wales was one of our favourites. When we were in Wales, there had been a lot of flooding and the stream going through the garden was a raging torrent, but the garden was amazing and spectacular even in the rain. Because the weather was bad in northern Scotland we decided to go to Bressingham, north east of London and were pleasantly surprised. It looks like a regular garden centre from the road with a train amusement park attached, but the display gardens are great. The gardens have a huge number of perennial borders and island beds to get ideas from.

Whether it be close at home or far away, we hope you will start planning a trip for next year now and that you will include gardens in your itinerary. We are not getting any younger, and putting these trips off is not an option. We are already starting to feel our joints creak as we go up and down the stairs. Please let us know if you find any gardens we should see. You can see a few photos from our trips by visiting <http://picasaweb.google.ca/gary.westlake/TripPhotos#>

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