

# The Everitt garden in Pinawa:

serenity and siege

by Jo Simon

**M**aria and Richard Everitt have come a long way since they took up residence in their Pinawa home in 1983 and began laying plans for their first-ever garden. Their property, a large spread of land patched with large, luxuriant flower beds and a profusion of trees, stretches back some 142 feet from its frontage on Grey Crescent, close to the Winnipeg River, and merges into the open, but richly treed, suburban-type landscape they share with their neighbours.

Today, the Everitts have come to terms with the challenges of the cold climate, pil-

laging animal life and the difficult, hard clay which serves as soil in much of this tidy little town, as well as the shade which reaches across much of their back yard. Annuals which in the early days reigned supreme, are being relegated to more of a supporting role. Perennials which are deer-resistant, and some which aren't, along with summer bulbs and a wealth of shade-loving plants bring drifts of radiant colour to the yard, and alternatively a woody serenity.

It is, after all, the challenge of the deer – a herd of them has taken up residence in the

town – and the beauty of the always-changing landscape that together have shaped their approach to gardening.

Though there are bears, cougars, foxes and miscellaneous other animal life, the deer and their foraging habits have, to some degree, dictated what plants they would put in their garden and pushed them to grow the remaining, beloved flowers under stucco-wire covers. But the landscape itself has helped determine how the battle with the predators would be waged.

“If we had it to do all over again,” Maria

*Dianthus*



*Daffodils*



*Campanula and inpatiens*







White astilbe is radiant among the ferns.

confides, “we’d probably put up some sort of fencing to enclose the yard. But it would have obstructed the view, which is quite wonderful from the house, extending all the way through everyone else’s yard. All treed and open and free.” And, Richard quickly adds, a fence would have blocked out the woodland scene through the three seasons when the flowers no longer need protection. As it is, the couple are in the habit of simply wandering out of their yard and walking through the treed neighbourhood, eventually turning southward for an always-exhilarating stroll along the river.

In the meantime, the Everitts have mightily transformed their own land. Where the previous owners had planted only a vegetable garden, and scattered patches of rudbeckia, the Everitts have brought the grounds to life with a brilliant display of flowers and greenery.

In front, on a sunny summer day, lavatera, sweet william, daylilies, rudbeckia, canna and petunias light up the yard. In back the one-time vegetable bed, a large central garden, is a mass of brilliant colour, with many of these same summer bloomers, along with purple and blue delphinium, allium, marigolds, cosmos and many others.

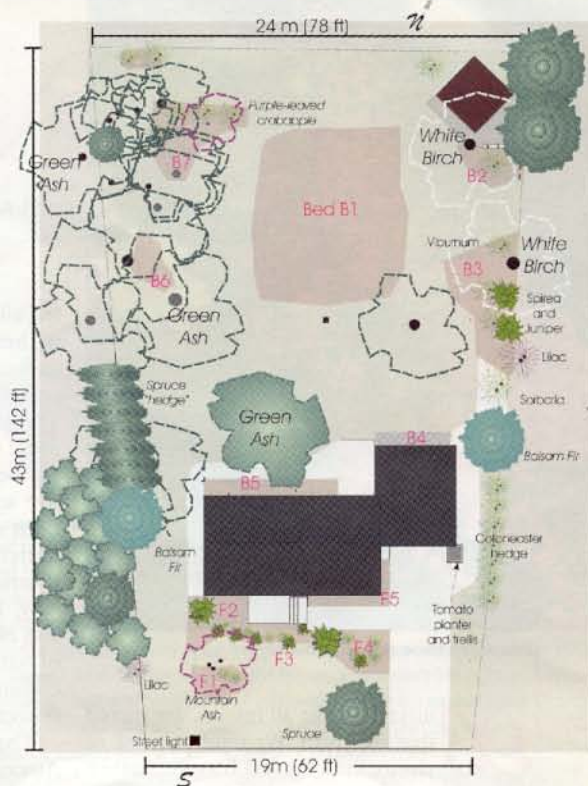
Front and back, the flowers offer a happy and continually changing display of colour through the gardening season, beginning with the early-spring show of crocuses, scilla and white and pale yellow daffodils.

Fifty trees grow in the Everitt back yard: white birch, green ash, spruce and purple

leafed crabapple, growing bigger with each passing year. The shaded beds around them hold some striking plant and colour combinations, confirming Richard’s artistry. White astilbe and other white perennials are eye-catchers in the sometimes heavy shade; hosta, ferns, vinca, sedum and the astilbe are a study in contrasting textures; bishops goutweed and ferns, growing under a green ash, form a simple, woody scene near the house; sedum gives a patterned edge to a border here and there.

The daffodils (usually), rudbeckia, marigolds, peonies, campanula, irises, shasta daisies and monkshood have a special status in the garden. They are the worry-free plants that the deer avoid. But the animals love many others, such as the lilies and lavatera, and the Everitts weekly spread blood meal around those plants for protection. They cover the impatiens and tuberous begonias which grow throughout the back garden with the cage-like, stucco-wire structures, shaping these to fit the flower bed. “It’s very time consuming putting them out,” Maria complains mildly. The Everitts, enjoying their flowers, manage not to notice the cages. Marie acknowledges visitors would probably be bothered by them.

Richard Everitt is the main force behind the garden. He lays out his garden plan on the computer, planning the season’s succession of blooms. He has continued to learn as time passes what works and what doesn’t.



Richard grew up in a succession of small mining towns where gardening wasn’t a viable pastime, and he came late to his gardening passion. “But I used to like to paint, with oils and water colours. A garden is another palette and very satisfying.” Maria, who shares his pleasure in the activity, is in charge of maintenance – especially when Richard’s work takes him on trips abroad.

The problems don’t end with the deer. The Everitt’s dianthus is always being hit by leaf spot – perhaps, Richard says, because dianthus likes a dry climate and Pinawa gets a lot of rain. Much of it dies each year, but the couple keeps adding more. Meanwhile, powdery mildew continues to ravage the rudbeckia.

To protect their tomatoes from leaf spot, the couple grow them through landscape fabric covered with gravel. These plants, including a cherry tomato, are one of their great achievements. Grown in a large planter at the front of the house, the tomato plants (Sweet 100 and Yellow Stuffer) shoot up past the top of the garage each year.

The beauty and serenity of Pinawa and, on the downside, the ever-present animal life produce what seems like a mild ambivalence toward their Pinawa lifestyle. “It’s a very strange experience,” says Maria, reflecting on the wild creatures that are never far from their property.

“It’s been an education,” Richard picks up. “You really get to see how everything is interlinked. One year you have squirrels. They get into everything. The next year you have hawks. The third year, you don’t have a squirrel problem.”

One day soon, when Ottawa closes its Atomic Energy operations in Pinawa, the pair will be leaving Pinawa, the garden and woodland they so enjoy, and the deer that lurk beyond their doorstep. The date of that closure still isn’t known.

Lavatera, daylilies, cosmos, petunia and canna sparkle in the back yard.

