

Pinawa blooms!

Story and photos
by Margaret Brook

“Traditional styles of gardening are a challenge in this rough and beautiful environment.”

The road to Pinawa runs through cottage country. Among the evergreens and rocks, thoughts are likely to turn to canoeing, fishing and hiking. A drive through the town quickly reveals another outdoor activity practiced here: gardening. Pinawa blooms!

Pinawa sits on the shore of the Winnipeg River, surrounded by thick forests. Originally a company town for employees of Atomic Energy of Canada Limited, the planned layout is part of the attraction. Yards are large, houses set far apart and green spaces abound. Many varieties of boulevard trees have been planted to complement the deep green forest background. Pinawa is keenly involved in the annual Communities in Bloom competition which encourages beautification, tidiness and community pride, and it shows.

Some members of the Pinawa in Bloom committee decided to organize a garden tour to share the beauty of private gardens with the public. The idea developed into last summer's Art in the Gardens. Displayed among the gardens, gazebos and homes on the tour were paintings, pottery, quilts, carv-

ings and stained glass works, celebrating the many talents of the local residents.

The logo for Pinawa in Bloom includes a planter of wild and domestic plants, a canoeist, the silhouetted shoreline of Pinawa and the three-arrow symbol for recycling. A lovely image for a community devoted to a high quality of life for its citizens, and for gardeners working to find their harmonious place in the rough and beautiful environment.

Traditional styles of gardening are a challenge here. According to hardness zone maps, this would be in zone 2 or zone 3 at best. Good soil is scarce: rock and bog are more common landscape elements, and what soil there is, is acidic. And then there are the deer. They make themselves quite at home in the town and can heavily damage unguarded trees, shrubs and flower beds.

Gardeners in Pinawa have responded to the challenges in individual and varied ways, using the setting and local materials to great advantage. Here is a look at a few of their gardens.

Kaleidoscope of Colour

The Garden of Rose & Gib Drynan

During 30-some years in their house, the Drynans have gradually transformed their

boggy back yard into a bountiful garden. The original soil in parts of the yard was pure clay, more useful for Rose's pottery work than for gardening. Now the growing areas are all raised beds, filled with imported soil mixed with peat moss and vermiculite and amended with compost every spring. They add wood ash to their compost to help sweeten the acidic soil.

The beds are supported with beautiful local rock, which Gib painstakingly hauled home and cut to size. "That's my job, now that I'm retired," says Gib, "making little rocks out of big." After building the first bed he was hooked on rocks, and hasn't stopped yet. He and Rose agree on their basic rule of garden design: Any way but straight! The hard edges of the beds just barely contain the cheerful chaos of the plantings. Rose is a painter and the garden shows her artistic flair. "I like gardens that are not organized," she says, "where the plants are mixed together, and around every corner you see something new and surprising." Tall plants, such as the Himalayan impatiens that seeds itself each year, contribute to the sense of mystery by screening the view.

Rose loves plants with a history, and points out old favourites, like a red daylily now over 20 years old, a pink phlox that came from her mother's garden and a dark rose from a friend. She experiments with plants not expected to be hardy in Pinawa. "I never worry too much about zones. Give it a try!" The happy results include flourishing plants of lavatera Barnsley and buddleia. Good snow cover makes all the difference to the survival

Drynans's pond



Scarlet runner beans on a wire trellis.



Phlox and Joe Pye weed.



of these borderline hardy plants.

Self-seeding plants are encouraged to find their own way. Calendula, annual clary, and german catchfly weave throughout the beds. Vegetables, herbs and flowers intermingle happily. The most recent addition to the garden is a large pool, edged with slabs of granite. The pool contains some local species including arrowhead, sweet flag, and wild rice.

The Drynan's now have a deer-proof fence, and the Norland apple tree that had been steadily munched for 17 years is finally fruiting. The high fence also gives privacy and sense of enclosure to this vivacious garden.

The Hidden Park The Hawton Residence

From the front, this house along McDiarmid Road looks comfortable and ordinary. But step around the corner to the back yard and you suddenly encounter a broad, sunny expanse of lawn and lush flower beds, sloping away to the dense forest. The flowing, open effect is achieved through the co-operation of several neighbours. Instead of fencing off their yards, they erect nearly invisible electric fencing around their most vulnerable plantings in the periods when the deer do most damage. The system isn't perfect. Bernice Hawton still regrets the loss of dozens of perfect (and apparently delicious!) lily buds, just before they were to bloom.

Near the house, the Hawtons have built terraces out of timbers and rough pieces of the beautiful local granite. The terrace beds feature lilies, pink yarrow and a hardy shrub rose. The island beds further down the lawn are planted mostly with perennials including yarrow, iris, hosta, monarda and more lilies. A grape-covered arbour at the bottom of the garden points to an enticing path into the woods beyond.

The Hawtons enjoy a bird's-eye view of their garden from the four-season sunroom on the back of their house. Every Manitoba gardener deserves such a room! When rain, mosquitoes, or winter rule outdoors, the Hawtons, relaxing there, can still observe and dream in comfort.

Experimental Garden

Nancy Bremner's "deer-proof" plants

Nancy Bremner and her neighbours at the end of Morris Road have co-operated on a large garden in the lamp-post circle in front

of their homes. The garden is divided into sections and planted by colour. As it is not fenced, this cul-de-sac garden is a prime testing ground for any theories about deer preferences in garden plants.

Here is Nancy's guide to her "tried and survived" plants that the deer have not destroyed. The plants are sorted by the colour schemes of the garden, and by season. They are all sun-loving plants.

The Blue Garden: Spring - Iris, pinks (*Dianthus*), blue-eyed grass, blue fescue, mother of thyme, snow-in-summer, blue columbine and white daffodils.

Summer - Daisies, pink yarrow, harebells, pink coneflowers, catmint, veronica, evening-scented stock (*Matthiola*), giant hyssop (*Agastache foeniculum*), showy milkweed (*Asclepias speciosa*), purple prairie clover, chives, Maltese cross, statice, showy pussytoes (*Antennaria pulcherrima*), white daylilies, and Jacob's ladder.

Fall - Giant hyssop, liatris, bee balm, monkshood, big bluestem, small fringed gentian, sage, showy pussytoes, and silver mound.

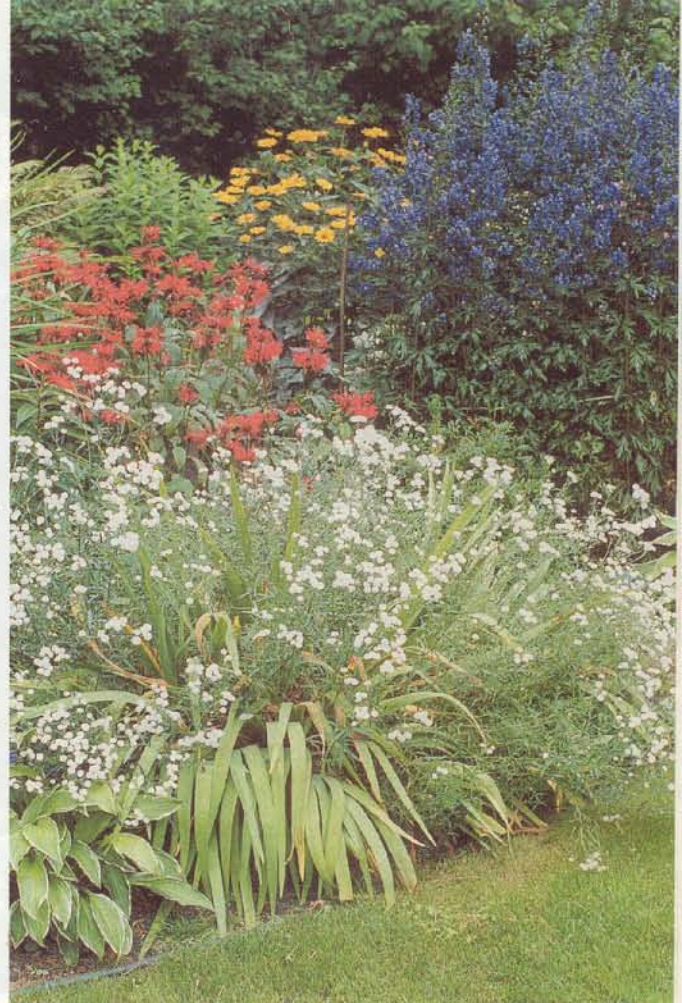
The Yellow Garden: Spring - Allegro poppies, daffodils, iris, snow-in-summer and red columbine.

Summer - White and yellow yarrow, marigold, rudbeckia, golden marguerite, painted daisy, nasturtiums, evening primrose, calendula, blanket flower and white coneflower.

Fall - Tansy, prairie coneflower, blanket flower, pussytoes, sage and silver mound.

Nancy has also had success with lambs' ears, lemon balm and any colour of dianthbridal wreath.us. But as she says,

A bird's house, a gift from B.C., awaits it's first tenants.



Summer blooms in the Hawton garden: vivacious Maltese cross, false sunflower, monk's hood and

"There are no guarantees, as young deer will try anything at least once. And who knows what they may acquire a taste for." As a last resort, Nancy suggests hanging baskets.

Margaret Brook is a theatre stage manager and knowledgeable gardener.

The forest is a back-drop to the Hawton's garden.

