

## Three Local Gardeners Welcome Garden Club Tour

By Jan Corsello



Phyllis Pylko in her garden.



The bird sanctuary in the Sagmiller garden.

Twenty members of Pine Knoll Shores Garden Club and three guests attended a brief business meeting on April 9 and then enjoyed a tour of the Hereth garden and three private local gardens. Guests were Marilyn Smetana, former club member Dot Belding, and her daughter Carol Belding.

We first enjoyed the beautiful Hereth garden in front of town hall that has been lovingly tended by club members Joan Smith and Lois Jean O'Keefe since it was dedicated in May, 1999. The poor original soil was amended with composted leaves and rotted cow manure before planting began and is amended again with natural materials each time a new plant is added. This public butterfly garden is planted for year-round interest and is maintained organically. Most plants are perennials, but several varieties of annuals are changed out seasonally. Year round greenery is provided by dwarf euonymus and sky-pencil hollies. In bloom for our visit were pansies and violas, Lenten roses, snapdragons, salvia "maraschino cherry," wallflower "Bowles mauve," and sutera cordata "bridal shower," among others. Joan will identify the current plants for any interested members.

The second garden visited was at the home of Leslie and Paul Pylko. The lot, which Leslie described as a "jungle" when she and Paul began gardening there 14 years ago, is now a beautiful peaceful garden. The use of many fountains, wind chimes, and Paul's playful garden art enhances the woodland setting. It is a relaxed, natural looking setting, which gardeners know is a lot of work to create and keep from returning to the wild. Leslie has lavishly planted bulbs, hundreds each year, in every nook and cranny and shared a daffodil secret with us. In our sandy soils, where the bulbs sink deeper each year, Leslie places a shell beneath each one to prevent the downward drift. Leslie likes to experiment, often starting with a small cutting from an interesting plant to see if it will adapt to her garden. As we departed, Leslie presented us each with a small datura (angel trumpet).

We then walked across the street to visit the garden of Peggy and Gene Sagmiller. It is a "younger" garden than the Pylko's, having been started in 2000. The builders left them with a ragged lot that took two years to re-grade and install French drains to control water flow. It's mostly a

sunny garden, but with a few shady areas, so their plant selection varies accordingly. Unlike the Pylko's, this is a more formal garden, but the Sagmillers also strive for a tranquil feel. On one side of the drive is a tiny but meticulously kept lawn of zoysia grass. On the other side is a lush mature windmill palm that was in bloom for our visit. Another specimen plant is a pineapple guava which will bloom around Christmas. A banana shrub perfumes the late afternoon air with distinctive fragrance. A Burkwood virburnum is also currently blooming, as is a purple garden orchid. They even have a bougainvillea that lives here as a perennial! Gene especially loves vegetable gardening, which will give them fresh produce from mid-summer and into the fall. Peggy has gradually completed a lily garden, which will be spectacular when in bloom. The birds find it a welcome habitat, with plenty of cover, generously replenished feeders and a birdbath.

Our last garden visited was at the home of club member Lois Jean O'Keefe and her husband Paul. Hundreds of azaleas were in bloom at the edges of the wooded setting. Their first ones, "Blaze" (a deep orange-red) were planted before the

house was completed 30 years ago. The others range from white to pink to deep lavender. The O'Keefe's prefer a natural look, so most of the azaleas are huge. Three light pink Yoshino cherries were in bloom and five Okame cherries bloomed last month. Fairly new features of the garden are several stacked stone walls which contain raised beds in sloping areas. The O'Keefe's' dedication to the environment is evidenced by their porous crushed brick driveway on one side of the house and their pine straw driveway on the other. Both allow rainfall to water their gardens rather than running off onto the road. Near the road is a meandering line of dark evergreen holly ferns which look beautiful in all seasons, but especially in summer when they are fronted by white caladiums.

After the tour, 17 members headed to the Country Club of the Crystal Coast to relax over lunch.

This year's annual picnic will be at Brock Basin at 11 a.m. May 14. We will also do a plant exchange at that meeting. We will install our new officers at a luncheon June 11 at the Coral Bay Club, beginning at 11:30 a.m. and will also celebrate the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the club.