

Garden expert/author Pam Duthie cultivates perennial bloom with ease

BY SHEILA GARRETT
Special to the Record-Eagle

Garden expert and author Pam Duthie was very pleased with the warm reception she received at the recent Habitat for Humanity Flower and Garden Show in Acme.

Duthie lectured and presented slides of perennials to area gardeners after traveling from Chicago during the early April snow and ice storm that swept much of the country.

"Talk about enthusiastic," she commented. "The crowd included all who had reserved, despite the weather."

Duthie was the guest of Bellwether Gardens of Suttons Bay. She has known Bellwether owners Gail and Bart Ingraham for many years, through the Perennial Plant Association.

Duthie's book, "Continuous Bloom," is arranged in a month-to-month format and is color coded for easy use. It is arranged so that gardeners can choose from plants that bloom in early spring, and go step-by-step throughout the growing season.

Readers may buy the hardcover 320-page version that sells for \$39.95, or the spiral-bound laminated book at \$50, that is meant to be taken into the garden. Full color photos are featured, and 272 plants included.

Duthie is presently working on her second book, "Shrubs and Small Trees for the Continuous Bloom Garden."

"I am fascinated by the progression of color change and bloom," said Duthie, "So that's the kind of books I like to write."

She is hoping to return to Traverse City this summer, and is looking forward to visiting the gardens of people she met at the Flower and Garden Show.

"I'll be bringing my camera," said Duthie. "I do wish

I had had my digital to record the trees I saw covered in ice."

Duthie's lectures are not intended for experienced gardeners alone. She has advised a wide spectrum of people from beginners to landscape architects. She said she hopes her book does not intimidate novices, but shows them an easy way to plan a garden.

The best way to start, she believes, is to find some plants to try out and to learn from them. Books and magazines are very helpful, she said, particularly those with lots of pictures.

"Just dig in and do it," she advised.

Duthie believes perennials have enormous appeal for the gardener.

Once you get over the "annual mentality," she said, you want to have garden plants that come back every year — the ones that really please you.

She explains how gardeners can plant for non-stop color from March through the beginning of December, and even into winter with certain foliage.

Catalogs are especially helpful to gardeners. She suggests that people take some time in the winter to plan their gardens. Catalogs can inform the reader about the popular new plants. They are a source of good, current cultural information and can help locate plants that are not grown locally.

"The only way to garden in winter is by sitting in your armchair right next to a toasty fire, dreaming," she said.

Duthie, who now lives in Chicago, was born in Pittsburgh, where she learned to garden with her grandfather. He used to make her pick the tomato worms off his tomato plants, she said.

She found she loved playing in the dirt and watching the progression of change on a daily basis.

A gardener herself since she was 8, Duthie believes even young children can learn to enjoy gardening, because "we're all still kids in the garden."

She suggests that children be allowed to get their hands in the dirt, and smell the flowers.

"Point out how every day there is something new going on in nature," she advised. "You can never start too early."

Duthie explained that her career has taken many paths: first as gardener, then as landscape designer, photographer, lecturer/instructor and finally as author. She said she loves absorbing information from everyone she meets.

"Whenever I lecture I always learn something too," she explained. In Traverse City, her audience had questions on slugs and discussed how to encourage toads.

"One lady shared her recipe for a spray that discourages 'deer browse' that had castor oil in it," said Duthie.

The idea-sharing is as much fun for her as it is for the crowd, she said.

Pam Duthie is owner and president of the Gifted Gardener, a landscape design and consulting firm. She has lectured about perennials for more than 25 years. She also teaches at the Chicago Botanic Garden and is a volunteer in the Plant Evaluation Program there.

A founding member and past president of the Landscape Design Association, she has led garden tours to England and Scotland, and has photographed gardens in England, Wales, Scotland, Spain, France and Italy.

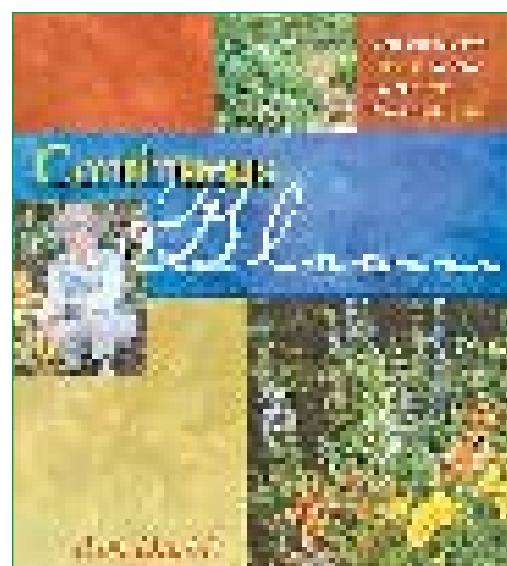
One of her favorite gardens is in located in Scotland, just outside Edinburgh, "a difficult climate for gardening," she said.

It is a tiny private garden called Shepherd House, belonging to an artist, Lady Anne Fraser. She and her husband have turned it into a well-designed plant haven with incredible discoveries throughout, Duthie said.

To learn more about Pam Duthie, visit her Web site at www.pamthegiftedgardener.com

To order her book, "Continuous Bloom," call Ball Publishing at (888) -888-0013 or visit www.ballbookshelf.com

Sheila Garrett is a local freelance writer.



Pam Duthie's current book is "Continuous Bloom," which offers suggestions for planting various perennials that will offer ongoing interest in the garden.

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