

Festival's gardens are a gift to all

BY SUSAN B. TAUBER
SPECIAL WRITER

Looking for a new spot to take a quiet walk or have a family picnic? Consider the award-winning gardens at Oakland University's Meadow Brook Music Festival.

Since the gardens on the festival grounds became a reality two years ago, they have twice received the Michigan Division of National Farm and Garden Association's award for excellence in gardening.

"The grounds and gardens are open daily from noon to 5 p.m. for people to come and visit," said Jay Cooper, gardens coordinator.

"People enjoy strolling through the gardens. They find them so relaxing. There is a swinging chair where visitors can rest, tables for picnicking, even a waterfall to see," Cooper added. "The main attraction is the gazebo, where entertainers perform prior to the regular concerts."

The gardens consist of more than twelve individually-designed gardens created and planted by many nurseries, landscape companies and benefactors.

Each spring the gardens' creators prepare their grounds for summer. They also give Cooper instructions for his staff on how to care for the flowers and plants.

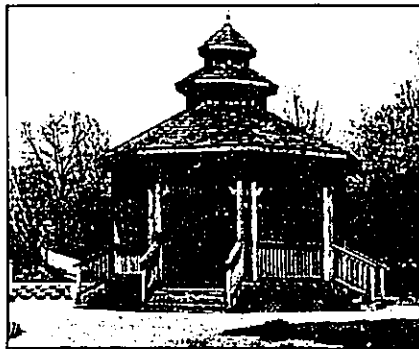
"We have about 20 dedicated volunteers who are master gardeners," Cooper said. "They visit the gardens regularly to prune, weed and tend to them."

It was at the request of Mary Bonnell, the original gardens coordinator, who now works for the University's Meadow Brook Hall, that Mark Juett, owner of Juett Associates in Walled Lake, became involved in the project.

"I liked the concept," Juett said. "I was glad to help beautify the grounds and to give something to Meadow Brook which has brought so much in the way of entertainment to this area."

"It took five of us five days to set up our garden at Meadow Brook Music Festival," he said. The result was a natural-style garden in a boulder setting with a pond and waterfalls.

Terry Newman, owner of Superior



The gazebo, where entertainers perform prior to the main event, is a favorite attraction to visitors.

PHOTO BY
BRENDA PERCIA

Scape Inc. of Shelby Township, said he remembers how Bonnell explained to him the plan for a meandering walkway through the unique gardens on the festival grounds.

"I was so glad to get involved," he said. "I've always been involved with Meadow Brook Music Festival. My parents took us there all the time when I was younger."

Newman and three of his workers spent three days developing a garden of old favorites, as he described it.

"We put in lots of color with annuals. We planted spreading junipers, yews, accent plants, a Red Jade flowering crab tree, and Purple Leaf Cherry tree," Newman said.

Cooper said the festival takes great pride and pleasure in its volunteers' work.

"When strolling through the gardens," he said, "visitors might want to pay attention to the hand-crafted signs, telling who did the work for each garden."




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