

Franklin walk visits large rock garden

BY MARTY FIGLEY
SPECIAL WRITER

A large hillside rock garden is tucked away behind her historic home, built in 1837, and what a garden it is!

Dr. Susan Williams has transformed a steep ravine from what was, for about 30 years, a dumping ground for Christmas trees and left to brambles and tall grasses.

"It was a pitiful disarray," she said.

In her 13 years of residence, Williams has done wonders. During her work she uncovered many large rocks and wonders if "Maybe sometime someone had a lovely garden."

Members of the Franklin Garden Club, a branch of Women's National Farm and Garden, invite you to view five gardens 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. Wednesday, June 12. Walk tickets are \$8. A scrumptious salad luncheon will be

available at the historic Franklin Community Church noon to 2 p.m. that day. Luncheon tickets are \$7. The gazebo on the Village Green will be filled with crafts and baked goods. For advance purchase tickets or information call Joyce at (810) 646-8033.

The gardens range from professionally designed landscapes to those created and maintained by their owners. Hostesses will be stationed at each location to provide information and answer questions.

Williams has designed and constructed her large rock garden on a steep bank that runs the length of the back yard down to the river. A sweep of grass leads to the wild area and the river. To supplement the rocks already there, which have been tucked artistically throughout the garden, sandstone was brought in and forms a series of steps and paths to facilitate ease of movement.

One area has been leveled and sandstone has been used for a patio area with a large barbecue pit where campfires are contained and, Williams said, "I feel like I'm up North." From this vantage point she enjoys the deer. Nearby a resident groundhog has a home.

Williams has concentrated on old-fashioned plants to augment the rustic

feel of the river, and to maintain the all-natural wildflowers that grow there. Native Michigan phlox, trillium and wild geranium are just a few. Reds, peaches, yellows and oranges are the chosen colors for the garden.

Bleeding hearts and columbine start the season, followed by peach-colored lilies, and poppies, daisies, hollyhocks, bergamot, old-fashioned buttercups, then "Black-eyed Susans galore," with pink cone flowers later in the season. Yellow-green sedum is interspersed throughout the garden and unifies it. Each year Williams adds a variety of annuals for additional color and interest.

Probably one of the oldest walnut trees "48 inches across" in the area grows on this property. She has found, after trial and error, that daylilies and hostas do well.

To maintain the fertility of the garden, Williams puts chopped leaves and grass clippings on the garden and it is dug into the gardens in the spring.

There are many surprises in this garden. A wild area also contains Japanese lanterns and wild raspberries, a corner is filled with wild geraniums and ferns, a home for Floyd the cat — who, sadly, is no longer living — is tucked under a magnolia tree. Perhaps his mate, Freda, will be seen frolicking during the tour.

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In the garden: Dr. Susan Williams enjoys her lovely garden.

MARTY FIGLEY

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