

Streissguth Gardens - Love in a Hillside Garden



Bird's of Streissguth Gardens, February 2024 - drone photo by Henry Hayes



Streissguth Gardens in the fall

About

Located on the northwest side of Seattle's Capitol Hill neighborhood, Streissguth Gardens is an urban oasis. A small, mostly family-maintained garden on a steep hillside, this little-known gem in the middle of bustling Seattle offers amazing views of Lake Union, downtown Seattle, and the Olympic Mountains. This secret garden developed gradually over the course of 50 plus years, and has grown from a tangled hillside to approximately one acre of cultivated woodland and perennial beds. Plantings have been selected to offer flowers every day of the year. Along with the beautiful vegetation and views, visitors enjoy winding trails, ponds, and birdsong.



Primulas on the Slide Path



View west over Lake Union, Queen Anne, and the Olympics



The garden at sunset



The Rust Garden



The marriage of Ann and Dan, 1968



Fall in the garden



Background

In 1962, Dan Streissguth completed building his house on the lot he had purchased north of the Blaine Street stairs. He immediately commenced work on the garden surrounding his new home. In 1965 Ann moved into the adjacent house at 1806 Broadway East and began at once working on her hillside garden. They say they fell in love gardening their steep hillside gardens together. In 1968 they were married, and the couple settled into what had been Dan's house, leasing out Ann's house in the years since, while continuing to care for their combined gardens. 1970 welcomed the birth of Ann and Dan's son, Benjamin.



Streissguth House seen from the garden

In 1972 the family purchased the hillside lots south of the Blaine Street stairway and began nurturing them into a cultivated green space. After twenty-four years of growth and development, the family's 1996 gift of the land to the city led to the garden becoming a public space. With the gift of the garden came the promise to care for it through the last of their lives. That same year, as the Streissguth land was transferred to public ownership, the city purchased (from a third party) the larger hillside tract abutting the existing garden to the south. The gifted garden and the adjacent heavily wooded purchased land were incorporated into the city's existing St. Mark's greenbelt. This extended the older 1/4 mile long green space a full city block further north, connecting it to the well used public stairway along East Blaine Street.



Ben, Ann, & Dan at 20th anniversary of garden donation

The Second Love Story

In early 2018, a chance visit to the garden by Jade changed the course of the garden. While Ben was giving Jade a tour, they discovered they shared a mutual love of plants, gardening, and garden management. They soon realized that they had missed each other by a year while getting landscape architecture degrees at the UW. Soon a 42-year-old missing friendship developed into more. In June of 2018 Jade joined the Streissguth Garden team as a gardener, and in early 2019 was promoted to assistant director. The timing couldn't have been better as Dan and Ann had recently hung up their gardening hats. In the summer of 2021, on the oval lawn behind the family house, Ben and Jade were married.



Jade and Ben, married by Jade's mom Janice, 2021



Blackcap raspberries



Crocus tommasinianus



View through the Veggie Garden arch



Money plant blooming



Money plant in the fall

Help the gardens grow!

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The Future

Together Ben and Jade are now tackling not only the complex task of managing and renovating the gardens. They will be ensuring that the gardens survive long after they do. In 2007 Dan and Ann started a fund for the garden with the Seattle Parks Foundation. To better serve the future needs of the garden, the family transitioned the fund to the Streissguth Gardens Conservancy in 2021. The goal of the Conservancy is to eventually fully fund the garden, and provide management, gardening, and upkeep when Ben and Jade are no longer able to. In the meantime, they will be gardening happily ever after.



Leopard's bane



Sunflower



Trillium ovatum



Martagon lily



View south along Broadway East

Poster by Ben Streissguth and Jade Takashima, May 2024