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Spencertown Academy Celebrates the Art of the Garden

Spencertown, New York—Spencertown Academy Arts Center’s 17th annual Hidden Gardens is scheduled for Saturday, August 28, with a self-guided garden tour, outdoor market, and botanical-themed art exhibition. This beloved Columbia County summer event is designed to inform, inspire, and intrigue garden enthusiasts.

“The 16th Annual Hidden Gardens Tour and Market on the Green had to be canceled for 2020 because of the pandemic. Not knowing exactly how opening up would evolve, we passed up the month of June this year and opted to schedule the event for later in the summer for the first time,” says Madaline Sparks, who co-chairs the event along with Vivian Wachsberger. “This later timing for the tour gives garden voyeurs a rare opportunity to view these beautiful private landscapes in the waning days of summer, rather than the burgeoning of late spring. The light is different, the color palette is bolder and richer, and it affords us a chance to see how these avid gardeners keep their landscapes interesting and fresh in the dog days of August.”

Wachsberger adds, “Several of the gardens have been on the tour before, but not for many years and never before offered for late season viewing. They have matured and evolved over those years and will offer a totally different perspective in August of 2021.”

The Hidden Gardens Tour showcases five private gardens in Austerlitz, Chatham, Ghent, and Spencertown. From a ca. 1790’s Federal-style home nestled in a bucolic country landscape to a contemporary Asian-inspired abode featuring massive native plantings, there will be a broad spectrum of garden designs to inspire visitors. Most of the sites this

year also feature vegetable gardens that will be abundant with produce in August. All of the gardens boast one or more water features: farm ponds, koi ponds, waterfalls, and fountains. For those curious about what can grow in shade, woodland gardens abound. It will be peak time for dahlias, coneflowers, black-eyed Susans, and many other flowering plants that make the late summer garden an explosion of color and form. One location is a sculpture garden with installations of the work of the artist who lives there and some of his colleagues. In another, formal elements of garden design are juxtaposed with natural features of the landscape and combined brilliantly to great effect. Outdoor gathering options became very important in 2020, due to the pandemic, and all of these properties offer many great ideas for “outdoor rooms”: fire pits, dining spaces, and conversation areas.

The gardens will be open, rain or shine, from 10:00am to 4:00pm. Advance tickets are \$35 and day-of tickets are \$40. Advance tickets may be purchased via spencertownacademy.org. Day-of tickets will be sold at the Academy and at The Market on The Green from 9:00 to 2:30 pm. Tickets and the program guide, with maps and descriptions, will be available to be picked up on the morning of the tour at the Academy or the Market starting at 9:00am.

The Market on The Green will take place from 9:00am to 2:30pm at the Spencertown Village Green, which is located at the intersection of Rte 203 and Rte 7. It will showcase vendors offering plants, home and garden furnishings, birdhouses, antiques, and garden books, plus shoppers will find bargains on choice garden items and accessories at the Academy’s White Elephant Booth. A percentage of all sales benefit the Academy. Admission is free.

This year’s botanical art show, “Still Life: Flowers, Fruits & Foods in Repose,” features scenes of tabletops and other settings where flowers, fruits, and food items provide glimpses into daily life that can be restful, playful, or downright intriguing. Seven artists with distinct styles will present their visions of peaceful—and sometimes challenging—still-life renderings. The Spencertown Academy Arts Center Gallery will be open from

9:00am to 5:00pm during Hidden Gardens.

Founded in 1972, Spencertown Academy Arts Center is a cultural center and community resource serving Columbia County, the Berkshires, and the Capital region. Housed in a landmark 1847 Greek Revival schoolhouse, the Academy is located at 790 State Route 203 in Spencertown, New York. For more information, please contact info@spencertownacademy.org.

Photo captions:

Hidden Gardens.1.jpeg

A lily pond and waterfall, surrounded by specimen evergreens and boulders excavated on the property, is one just one of the many focal points of this Spencertown garden that will be featured in Spencertown Academy Arts Center's 17th annual Hidden Gardens Self-Guided Tour on Saturday, August 28 from 10:00am to 4:00pm. Photo by Madaline Sparks.

Hidden Gardens.2.jpeg

In a garden carved out of the surrounding woodland, bermed island beds "float" in swaths of grass paths offering a 3-D view of mixed plantings of annuals and perennials providing all-season interest. This beguiling property is one of five that will be featured in Spencertown Academy Arts Center's 17th annual Hidden Gardens Self-Guided Tour on Saturday, August 28 from 10:00am to 4:00pm. Photo by Madaline Sparks.