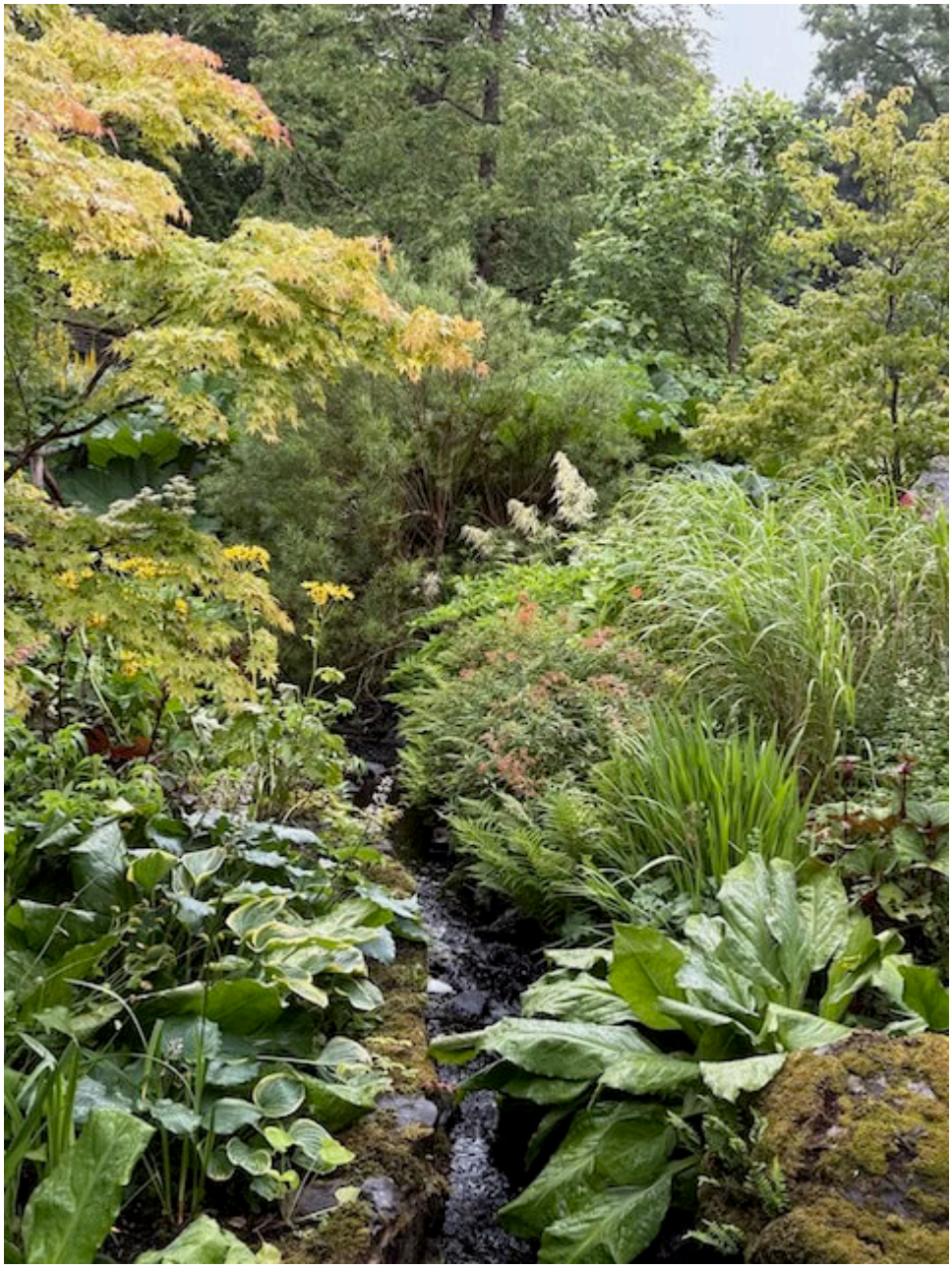
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by Holly Larisch

What do gardeners like to do when they are on vacation? Visit gardens, of course! I had the opportunity to explore several gardens while traveling overseas this summer.

While attending a friend's wedding in Scotland and traveling to Morteau, France (near the Swiss border), where my daughter taught during the pandemic, I explored gardens on the Isle of Skye, Scotland; in Neuchatel, Switzerland; and in Paris, France. I was struck by several similarities between these gardens and the gardens around the Close, which is not surprising as Florence Bratenahl, All Hallows Guild's Garden Committee Chair for so many years, envisioned invoking "the spirit of old-world gardens" while she designed "a garden for all ages".

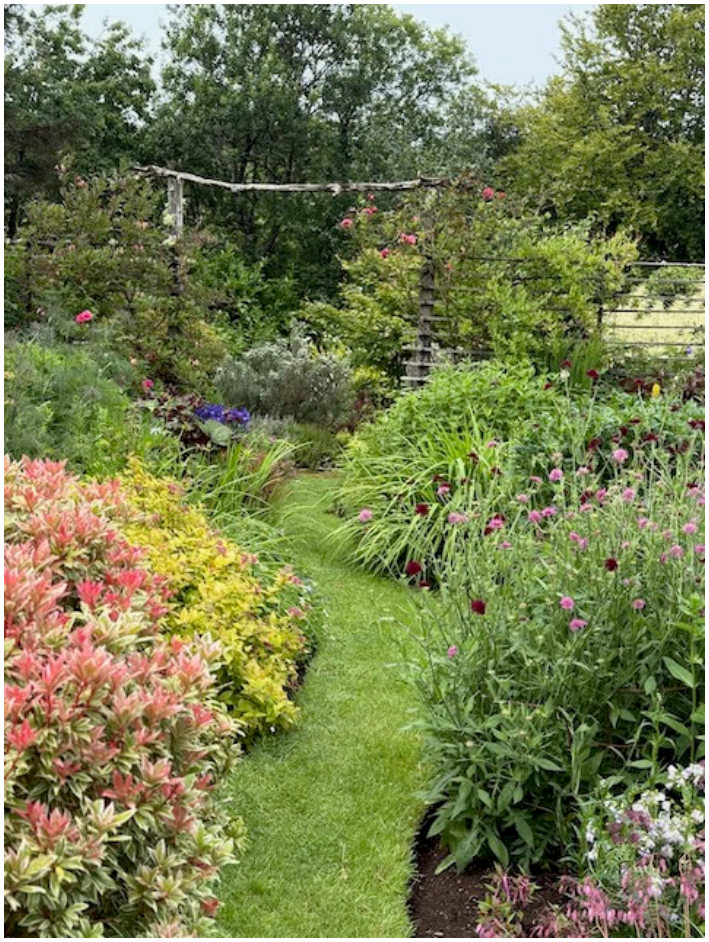
The Isle of Skye is famous for its natural beauty, rugged landscapes, and an often windy and inhospitable climate. Not always the right ingredients for a garden to survive! **Dunvegan Castle**, perched on a massive rock overlooking Loch Dunvegan on Skye for over 800 years, is surrounded by a five-acre formal garden, created in the 18th century. The garden has managed not only to survive but to thrive. Like the Bishop's Garden, the Dunvegan Garden features several "rooms" such as a Water Garden with ornate bridges and islands, a Round Garden that recently replaced its boxwood parterre with *ilex crenata* (Japanese Holly) because of the boxwood blight, a rose garden, a Woodland Garden, and a Walled Garden. The Walled Garden was formerly the castle's vegetable garden and now consists of a diverse range of plants and flowers as well as a water lily pond, gazebo, and sundial. The Woodland Garden consists of woodland trails and a specimen rhododendron garden.



Water Garden at Dunvegan


Walled Garden at Dunvegan

An unexpected delight was the opportunity to tour a private garden in western Skye that featured a wildflower garden, a vegetable garden, and a flower garden. The octogenarian owner opens the garden to the public to support a local charity.



Our journey then took us to the Jura Mountains in eastern France, about 15 minutes from the Swiss border, where my daughter taught English during the pandemic years of 2020-21. In addition to showing us around Morteau, France, she planned a wonderful jaunt to Neuchatel in Switzerland with a stop at the whimsical and educational **Botanical Garden**. I was unable to truly appreciate the educational component as I don't speak French but I enjoyed its slightly offbeat exhibits. It has eight botanical collections with over 3000 species of plants. Collections include a Mediterranean garden, a garden showing the medicinal uses of herbs, a spice greenhouse, and an evolutionary garden that explains plant classification, history of plants, and the coevolutionary bonds that unite all living things.



Like the Cathedral Close, the Neuchatel garden provides habitat for the pollinator bee population. Here is their very active pollinator bee hotel.

The end of our journey brought us to Paris, home to many famous gardens such as the Tuileries and Jardin du Luxembourg. I bypassed those gardens for the Alpine Garden hidden within the Jardin des Plantes. The Jardin des Plantes, in addition to being the site of the zoo, Natural History Museum, and antique carousel, is France’s first botanical garden, open to the public for over 400 years. The garden features long promenades, wide lawns, and flower beds featuring colorful and changing blooms but the Alpine Garden, accessible only through a hidden passageway within the School of Botany, caught my attention.





Much to my delight, I found that both the Jardin des Plantes and the Bishop’s Garden feature old cedar trees. Even their origin stories are similar! Botanist Bernard de Jussieu brought the Cedar of Lebanon sapling to the Jardin des Plantes from Kew Gardens in London in his hat in 1734. Bishop Henry Yates Satterlee supposedly brought the two Blue Atlas seedlings to the Cathedral Close in his suitcase after a trip to Palestine in 1902, fulfilling Frederick Law Olmsted’s and

Florence Bratenahl’s vision to have plants referenced in the Bible in the Bishop’s Garden.

As we were leaving the Jardin, I heard the familiar sounds of a carousel caliola, reminding me of the joyous sounds heard on the Cathedral Close every year at Flower Mart. What a lovely way to end our vacation!



Jardin des Plantes Carousel