

MAYOR MARVIN'S COLUMN

Even though spring seemed to turn into summer so quickly this year, the Village plantings still managed to look beautiful thanks to the volunteer efforts of our residents.

Chief among the groups helping to improve our streetscape is one of our most long standing garden groups, the Bronxville Beautification Committee (BBC).

Members of the BBC care so deeply about the Village that they worked tirelessly all last week so that our triangles and planting beds would look beautiful for our Memorial Day Parade and weekend festivities.

The genesis of the BBC is a wonderful story of the will of the human spirit to accomplish a goal. As Margaret Mead said, "Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world. Indeed, it is the only thing that ever has."

Over the years, our Village has been changed into a garden paradise thanks in no small part to the vision of one couple who formed the genesis of the BBC.

In 1982, a pair of Village apartment dwellers, Dr. Burton and Alice Pollin, looked out their windows and were disappointed at the lack of greenery, flowers and pretty open spaces in the downtown Village. Properties including Leonard Morange Park, adjacent to the train station, were overgrown with weeds and benches were non-existent. The Pollins decided to act and they committed their hearts, minds and lower backs to digging, weeding, planting and ultimately raising funds to beautify our public spaces.

As time passed, Leonard Morange Square would be transformed into a bucolic park replete with benches, shrubs, trees and a new sidewalk. The traffic circle in front of the hospital was graced with a tasteful fountain and fresh landscaping and the macadam traffic triangles were replaced with flowering shrubs and bulbs.

The Pollins and their group of dedicated gardeners formally incorporated into the Bronxville Beautification Council in 1993 and embarked on many larger scale Village projects. The vision of the BBC, combined with the dedication of the Village's Department of Public Works, became a reality. As the story goes, Dr. Pollin worked so closely with the Department of Public Works and was so exacting in his suggestions, that his calls to Village Hall were eventually carefully screened by the Mayor's Office.

In recent history, an active BBC member, Cathy Rodriguez, suggested to BBC President, George McKinnis, that the group take on an additional role and sponsor an annual garden tour. The idea was not only to raise the profile of the BBC and highlight their work but also to raise the kinds of funds needed for large scale Village improvements. Chief among those projects is the continued renovation of the west banks of the Bronxville train station. This will be a three year effort to remove choking vines and free signature plantings and allow the station's historical Moorish architecture to shine while enhancing the west side entrance to our Village.

Saturday, June 11th will mark the fourth anniversary of the Garden Tour which commences, rain or shine, at 10AM at Village Hall. Despite the challenges of a seemingly

endless winter, event chair Meg Sunier and her committee will open the doors to an all new array of “green rooms”. Gardens will range from natural woodland styles to stately, manicured spaces.

Gardeners, by nature, are external optimists and this year’s group of Garden Tour homeowners are exceptionally so. One of the gardens featured in this year’s tour is on the grounds of a 1905 home that had to be moved to accommodate construction of the Bronx River Parkway. Today it is one of three adjacent homes on Gard Avenue that had to carve their green oases literally out from under the ravages of government bulldozers. That intrepid spirit continues with the current homeowners who defy the limits of suburban gardening. And you thought installing that sprinkler was a hassle!

This unique garden as well as many others may be visited from 10AM to 4PM on June 11th with the tour concluding with a wine and cheese reception in one of the featured gardens. Tickets may be purchased (\$20 each) at participating Bronxville retailers and will also be available at Village Hall on the day of the tour.

Maps and parking instructions will be provided and tour guides will be present at each of the homes.

So come celebrate the conclusion of the endless winter and the dawn of good weather. You will be supporting the BBC and future landscape projects as you enjoy the unique beauty of our special Village.