

FALL 2022

Sunshine Coast Life

15
YEARS!

LABOUR OF LOVE

Roberts Creek
garden has
delighted for
decades

Marvelous Mushrooms: Two Sunshine Coast businesses are satisfying locals' appetites
Cultural Ambassador: kway?imin Andy Johnson shares language and songs
Wood Rush! Stories of a few real beachcombers of the Sunshine Coast

WHEN OLGA AND ANDY TOWERT FIRST came to the Sunshine Coast a few years after immigrating to Canada from South Africa in 1979, it was simply to “take a look” on the off chance they might like to settle here. They bought their first property in 1984 in Roberts Creek. At that time it was a humble lot and cottage on Lower Road. When the empty property next door became available, they were able to acquire it too.

And that’s when they began to really set their roots.

Today, the Towert residence is a gardener’s and artist’s dreamscape—with undulating blocks of colourful annual flowers, roses, perennials and bulbs, winding paths, a babbling creek at the base of a steep cultivated ravine, mature trees (including a 400-year-old fir) and flowering shrubs.

It’s a spellbinding sight with layers of colour and seasonal fragrances that regularly stop passersby in their tracks, inspiring neighbours, tourists and professional green thumbs alike.

While building the garden over nearly forty years, the Towerts have also run a bed and breakfast on the property, plus shared the space with their four sons and families. Olga, a retired nurse, has offered plants and flowers to neighbours and strangers, and provided tours and public access to the community. Andy, who is a retired teacher as well as a fine artist, also captured some wonderful landscape pastel works of the property. »



A Labour of Love

**The Towert garden in Roberts Creek
has been a delight for decades**

STORY AND PHOTOS BY
CHRISTINA SYMONS

THE LUSHLY LANDSCAPED
RAVINE IS A SPECTACULAR
SIGHT AND A KEY FEATURE
OF THE GARDEN.



Now in their elder years, the Towerts have a more private lifestyle and the garden is celebrated on a quieter scale, with much gratitude to all for help with the ongoing maintenance and the appreciations shown for the display.

The abundance of blooms is clearly Olga's passion and over the years, "the Flower Lady" as she's known locally, has spent at least three to four hours a day during growing seasons, attending to the inviting and lush landscape.

Olga's mother and family were avid farmers and gardeners, instilling in her an endless love for growing and cultivating. Her mom's passion was home-grown vegetables which she produced and sold well into her eighties.

"My grandparents had a farm in KZN (a province in South Africa) and my mother's cousin lived with them and loved gardening," says Olga. "Being on a farm, space was not an issue, so she kept pushing the fence outwards until she had acres under cultivation—it was magical!"

That same expansive spirit led Olga to work her way past the house and cottage, down into the steep ravine to the creek, building winding pathways of stone and brick while sculpting cascading swaths of flowering perennials and shrubs such as hosta, astilbe and hydrangea.

Over the last year or so, Olga has had less time to spend in the now mature garden and is very thankful for her adult children (sons David, John, Ed and Rich—plus their partners) who help her as they can with the upkeep of the flower beds, paths and green spaces.

While a few family members and folks have encouraged her to slow down and even consider letting the garden go wild, Olga is not quite ready to let nature take its course—yet.

"I say to them that I might let it go one day," notes Olga with a soft smile, "But I don't really believe it." >



TOP LEFT: OLGA TOWERT, "THE FLOWER LADY" OF ROBERTS CREEK.

TOP RIGHT: THE PERENNIAL FLOWER BED IS A FEAST FOR THE SENSES.

ABOVE, CLOCKWISE: ABUNDANT DAHLIAS, ROSES, AND LILIES GRACE THE PROPERTY.



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SAT & SUN 2 PM
James Campbell & the Lafayette String Quartet

NOVEMBER 13, 2022
SUNDAY 2 PM
Dawn Pemberton

DECEMBER 11, 2022
SUNDAY 2 PM
A Prairie Christmas with Janelle Nadeau



THE GARDENS AND OLGA, CAPTURED ELEGANTLY IN PASTEL BY ANDY TOWERT.

The garden has become a family and community legacy and sharing its beauty and bounty with her seven grandchildren is Olga's greatest joy.

"At first, when it was still a jungle, they climbed trees and played hide and seek and splashed in the creek. When they got older they worked for me when they needed money," she notes. "And they were good workers!"

The Towerts say the most memorable part of the garden's history was the Sunday Easter egg hunts. It was a tradition that lasted from when the grandchildren were toddlers, up until recently.

"We had up to 45 people for lunch, and after lunch while the kids were taken to the beach, the Easter bunny came to hide the eggs!" says Olga.

Her granddaughters also organized tea parties in the garden.

"I let them use my collection of antique tea cups and lace table cloths and we picked flowers and set the table and made the tea," she remembers. "It was such fun."

Her relationship with other gardeners and suppliers has also been a highlight.

"All these years the nursery I liked best and where I bought all my annuals is the Coastal Sun Greenhouse and farm nursery on Pell Road nearby," she notes. "John who owns it gives the best deals—I enjoy him so much!"

Collecting feedback from visitors, both locally in the neighbourhood and from all over the world through their B&B has been extremely gratifying. The joyful garden attracts and connects people of all ages, from all walks of life.

"It's been a lot of work, but I have really enjoyed the kindness and appreciation that people have shown us through sharing the garden," says Olga. "Sometimes, when I'm working, they don't see me as they walk by but I've heard them say, 'Wow! Look at that garden!'—and this makes me very happy." **CL**



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