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## In the garden with Shobha Vanchiswar



Monday, May 14, 2012

### Welcome, Visitors!

I'm in the thick of getting my garden ready for it's Open Day this Saturday May 19.

I find it kind of exciting as I anticipate the pleasure of talking to other gardeners and garden lovers. In fact, that's exactly what drives me to get on with chores post haste. But just as one prepares to welcome people to a big, special party, there's much to do—a good deal of which will go unnoticed by most.

Inviting anybody into one's private space be it home or garden, is serious and personal. I'm exposing myself for scrutiny, flaws and all. But that would be far more panic creating if I expected everybody coming to see my garden to act like the proverbial mother-in-law. Someone who might take immense pleasure in giving the white glove test fully expecting you to fail. Instead, what Open Days of past years has revealed to me is that people visit gardens because they love to do so. They come to enjoy the flowers and plantings and are more than tolerant with the presence of stray weeds and slightly shabby areas. The gardener's work is appreciated and visitors are always grateful for the opportunity to see a private garden.

Thus, when I go about making my little Eden as lovely as she can be, I think about what and how I want the visitor to experience the garden. The flowers in bloom are the bait. I rely on them to catch the viewer's attention and to detract from any unsightly weed or the leaves of lilies so riddled with holes by the red beetle. The visitors will notice general designs, sculptures, inviting terrace, charming meadow and the very cool tree house. But those are the obvious. My real excitement lies in the hope that the details will get picked up.

Will the eyes delight in the careful editing of color in the perennial beds? Or the use of chartreuse to naturally light up the way as one walks along the side path? I picture a hand brushing against the rose-geranium and being surprised by the perfume released. Or the juxtaposition of slate and brick to give a hard and soft effect. The wisteria making its way over the gazebo is poised to bloom in abundance and by itself should be an arresting sight. But will anyone know to sit under that fragrant canopy and study

the patterns thrown by the interplay of sunlight and shade? Who will appreciate the sense of seclusion provided by the gentle tinkle of the fountain. The sound blocks out the invading noise of passing traffic and its possible to mentally transport oneself to a corner of Provence.

I hope to hear a chuckle as a keen eye reads the titles of books made of stone. Or a sigh of nostalgic pleasure as the scent of peonies and roses guide their walk. I want to see the visitor who discovers the subtle use of grape vine prunings to mask the mechanics that hold up the peonies. Which brilliant individual will deduce that my wild looking meadow is really an area of very controlled chaos? It is my fervent wish to have all the senses be engaged in my garden. I'd like visitors to leave reluctantly and with a feeling of energy and joy.

Footnote: There is a big project underway in the garden and it's been exhausting work. We're toiling really hard to get it completed in time for Open Day. Just so I can share it with all. I will not say more as I truly want it to be a surprise. Please do come and see.

### ***Lunch in town afterward!***

The garden is open 10 am to 4 pm and Rocky Hills is open from 2 to 6 pm. Le Jardin du Roi and Susan Lawrence are offering special deals to all garden visitors. So plan on having lunch in town!

For details and directions, click [HERE](#).

### **And an art exhibit too...**

Monday May 14 to Saturday May 19, from 10:00 am to 4:30 pm every day, you can see paintings by Shobha Vanchiswar and Murali Mani in the Beaux Arts exhibit at the Katonah Library's Garden Room Gallery.