

59 — Helen Stewart's Garden

Unlimited creativity

It's hard to put boundaries on creativity. Painters' and illustrators' ideas can easily exceed the size of their canvases. Writers are often restricted by word counts. Long-time Ten Mile Point resident Helen Stewart knows better than anyone that art should be unrestricted. She is an amazingly prolific artist, writer, teacher, and gardener. Her beautiful, sprawling, one-acre garden, with its rich fertile soil, is alive with the originality in her very special and unique artistic touch. She describes gardening as creating a painting outside.

Stewart was raised and educated in Berkeley, California and also studied at the San Francisco Art Institute and the Art Students League of New York before moving to a farm in Northern British Columbia in 1965. In 1980, the family moved to a large heritage home in Victoria, where she set up her studio and began cultivating and planting the garden that has gone on to become the inspiration for much of her artwork.

You may see the many books she has written and illustrated, along with cards, prints, and calendars inside her home, originally a large old dance hall. It is still used for community events and gatherings, and you can visit it after touring the garden. A lovely, hand-painted flower motif in the hallway leads you to a great room filled with Stewart's prints on the walls and a working press on a big table. A hand-painted sculpture of a life-size pony sits in a corner next to a stylish antique cabinet. The disparate objects in the elegant room all come together naturally, as does her garden outside.

Paul Destrooper, the artistic director of the Ballet Victoria, describes Stewart's imagination as "a magical garden where all plants and creatures find their Eden. Her stories, detailed images, and colours reveal a hidden depth, a reflection of a timeless soul, rich with experience, empathy, love and generosity."

Address 2875 Tudor Avenue, Victoria, BC V8N 1L6, +1 (250) 477-1034, www.hestewart.com, helen@hestewart.com | **Getting there** Bus 13 to Arbutus at Arbutus Place, then walk 6 minutes | **Hours** By appointment only | **Tip** Cadboro-Gyro Park is just down the street from Helen's place. It's a sandy shoreline with logs strewn all over it that also has a beach-themed playground featuring a unique giant octopus slide for the kids (Sinclair Road, www.saanich.ca/EN/main/parks-recreation-community).

