

HEALING GARDENS

Creating beautiful outdoor retreats for those in need of hope and comfort is down-to-earth philanthropy



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When flowers bloom so does hope.
~ Lady Bird Johnson

The fruits of the garden can fill our plates and vases, but for those in need of healing, comfort, and hope, a garden can fill the soul and lift the spirits. “Everybody feels better in a garden says Roberta Hershon, founder of Hope in Bloom, an all-volunteer non-profit organization that installs gardens for patients undergoing breast cancer treatment. “Whoever encouraged us to stop and smell the roses knew what they were talking about.”

Hershon is just one of many whose philanthropy has been funneled through horticulture as a way of giving to those facing stressful times.

“This has been a way for my wife and I to heal,” says Tim Dolan, who helped create gardens on a terrace outside the Neonatal Intensive Care Unit (NICU) at Boston’s Brigham and Women’s Hospital in 2005. That year, in the 26th week of Amy Dolan’s pregnancy, the Dolans

A LUSH GARDEN path links the two roof-gardens created by Tim Dolan and his wife, Amy, at the Neonatal Intensive Care Unit at Brigham and Women’s Hospital in Boston. Their goal was to give back to the hospital by providing a place of respite for other families with infants in the NICU.

learned that one of the triplets she was carrying would be stillborn. Two weeks later, Amy gave birth to Charlie and Johannah at the Brigham, where the infants were in the NICU for two months.

“It’s an emotional roller-coaster ride,” Tim Dolan recalls. “You don’t know if your children will survive, and you don’t know what their futures will be.” He and Amy spent every possible moment at the hospital. For a reprieve, they would escape to the NICU’s sixth-floor solarium and patio — a covered terrace where some arborvitae and ground cover had been planted.

When the children, today both healthy and active, were ready to go home Amy suggested creating a garden as a way to give back to the hospital. As the horticulture director for Chestnut Hill Realty, Tim had the design skills. Ed Zuker, owner of Chestnut Hill Realty, donated materials and ongoing maintenance for the gardens.

One, the Children’s Fairy Garden is a place of whimsy, with each plant named for a fairy-tale character, such as ‘Little Lamb’ hydrangea and ‘Prince Charming’ lilac. The other, Linnea’s Serenity Garden, is named after the Dolan’s lost child. In



LINNEA’S SERENITY GARDEN at Brigham and Women’s is named for the Dolans’ child. In addition to the native ground cover *Linnaea borealis*, plants with names like ‘Innocence and’Angel’ fill the space.

addition to the native ground cover *Linnaea borealis*, or twinflower, plants with names like ‘Innocence’ and ‘Angel’ fill the space.

“It was our intent to create a place of solace and reflection,” says Dolan, “where people could just get their minds off the intensive care unit for a few minutes.”

WHEN ROBERTA HERSHON’S LIFELONG friend developed cancer in the fall of 2004, she made sure that fresh

flowers — a love they shared — filled Beverly Eisenberg’s home through the winter. When spring arrived, “I suggested to friends we whip her garden into shape,” Hershon says. I knew how much pleasure plants brought her and how it improved her outlook to be someplace pretty.” After Eisenberg passed away in 2005, Hershon founded Hope in Bloom in her memory. With the help of fund-raising events, donations, contributing companies, and a network of volunteers, Hope in Bloom has installed 55 outdoor, indoor, and patio gardens.

Last spring, Dorothy Underwood’s radiation treatments prevented her from tending the garden at her home in Oak Bluffs, Massachusetts. With generous donations of materials, labor, and time from Donaroma’s Nursery in Edgartown, Massachusetts, Hope in Bloom was able to give Underwood a garden to enjoy. “It’s so soothing and calming talking to my flowers,” Underwood says of her garden. “The colors are so uplifting.” The garden has blossomed with friendships as well. “The day the volunteers came, it was as if you were with family,” says Underwood. “I didn’t know any of these people, but it was like we’d all known each other forever.”



CHARLIE AND JOHANNAH DOLAN head down the connecting path to the Children’s Fairy Garden, where (RIGHT) Johannah stops to pet Peter Cottontail. The plants such as ‘Little Lamb’ hydrangea all have fairy-tale names.

WITH THE FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE OF supporter and volunteer Jutta Hicks, On the Rise, a center that works with women living in crisis or homelessness, recently installed a memorial garden on its Cambridge, Massachusetts property. Designed by Cambridge landscape architect Marc Mazzarelli, it is meant to be an oasis from the streets. "We wanted it to be a place of remembrance of the women we've lost," says Gillian Grossman, director of development and communications at On the Rise, "but also where women who are still struggling could find hope for themselves looking forward."

As a volunteer gardener, Jutta Hicks has interacted with the women at On the Rise, talking about gardening and their lilacs. "By helping to create this Remembrance Garden," says Hicks, "I hope to honor those brave women who did their best to

beat the terrible odds and for whom I have the deepest admiration."

Donations to support these gardens can be made to Brigham and Women's Hospital, NICU Gardens, c/o Genevieve Laird, Development Office, 116 Huntington Ave., Boston, MA 02116, 617-424-4223; Hope in Bloom, 202 Bussey Street, Dedham, MA 02026, 781-381-3597, hopeinbloom.org, On the Rise, Marisa Curran, 617-497-7968, otherwise.org



THE MARTHAS VINEYARD GARDEN planted by Hope in Bloom with the help of Donaroma's Nursery in Edgartown is a tranquil place where cancer patient Dorothy Underwood can retreat.