

Veradis' Garden - SENSORY WALK

A sensory walk encourages people to deliberately use all their senses to connect with their environment. It can help develop mindfulness, encourage creativity, and support self-regulation.

What are 5 things you see? (such as colours, shapes, plant names, animals, etc.)

Touch 4 things (fuzzy lambsears, prickly rattlesnake master, rough quinine, waxy bergenia, move the joint of an obedient plant flower, feel the cold rock under your bum, etc.)

Smell 3 things (strong Virginia mountain mint, earl-grey tea smell of Monarda, Lavender, willow bark, smell a flower, smell the wet ground, etc.)

Listen to 2 things (rustle of the tufted hair grasses in the wind, the sound of bees buzzing, rub a pigsqueek leaf between your finger and thumb, birds chirping, the sound of juncos opening the seedpods of sand dropseed like a zipper, etc.)

Tell 1 story (or Read a story)

- Willow contains salicylic acid under the bark which was used as an indigenous headache remedy
- It is rumoured that Alexander the Great died from Hellebore poisoning that was given to him as “medicine” by a magical healer.
- “Monkshood” was named for the flower's resemblance to the hoods worn by medieval monks, it is also associated with repelling werewolves, vampires, and witches

NOTE: please do not eat anything in this garden, many of the plants are toxic.

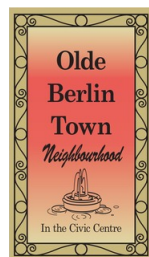


Agnes weaving the fence

Stay informed about upcoming activities in the garden:
<https://www.instagram.com/veradisgarden/>

If you are interested in taking a Weaving Workshop with Agnes go to: <https://www.mindfulmakers.ca>

Thanks to our sponsors:



About Veradis' Garden July 7, 2026



Veradis Summer 2023

Veradis' Garden was created in 2025 at the corner of Queen Street and Otto Street in Kitchener's Civic Centre neighbourhood. Built in memory of Veradis Romero Nielsen—a curious, creative young person who loved art, nature, swimming, and walked past this site every day on her way to school. It is a community-built sensory garden and living willow sculpture that offers a safe place for reflection, healing, and the expression of grief.

The project was spearheaded by Andrew and Jessica of the Olde Berlin Town Neighbourhood Association, with funding

from the City of Kitchener's Love My Hood program, support from the Kitchener-Waterloo Art Gallery, and the creative collaboration of willow artist Agnes Niewiadomski and landscape architect Michelle Purchase.

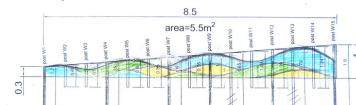
Community neighbours helped prepare the site, plant the gardens, weave the living willow arbor and fence panels, spread mulch, stain the fences, and care for the garden.

Community workshops—including willow weaving, lantern making, and garden art—have brought neighbours together to learn new skills, build relationships, and weave community spirit into every branch and braid.

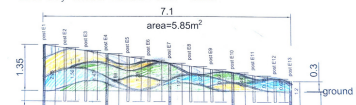


Community Planting May 2025

West Dry Willow Fence Panel - lower



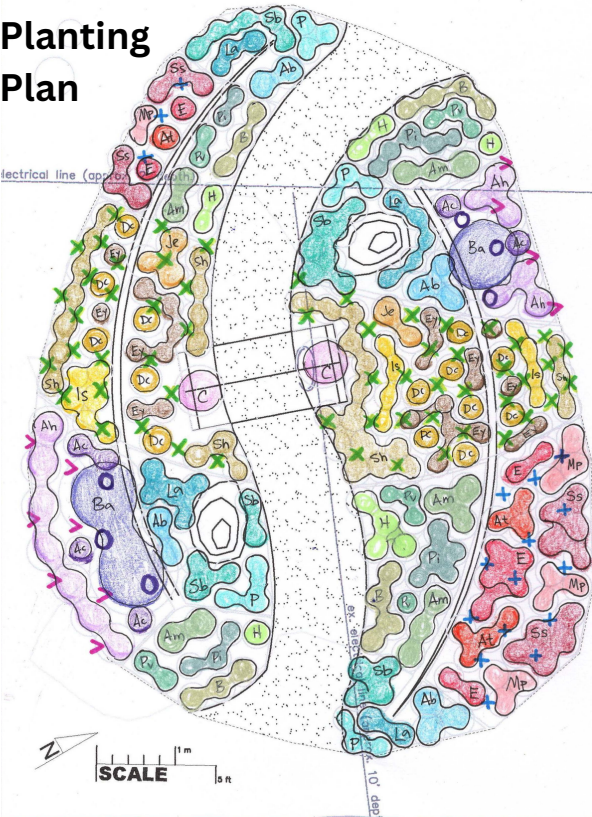
East Dry Willow Fence Panel - taller



Fence Weaving Plan - April 2025

Whether it's the rustle of leaves, the warmth of woven willow, or the hum of bees among the flowers, Veradis' Garden offers a peaceful, restorative place for everyone. It is a testament to what can grow when a community comes together with care, creativity, and a shared purpose.

Planting Plan



A Journey Through the Garden

Designing a circular garden island surrounded by lawn presented a unique challenge. The goal was to connect the garden to its surroundings and integrate it into the broader landscape. At the heart of the garden, a woven living willow arbor forms a symbolic portal of renewal, change, and transformation, while the curved willow fences gently embrace the pathway, creating a sense of support, comfort, and community. Entering from Queen Street, the arbor frames a view of Douglas Bentham's “Siren Song” (1982). As you continue walking along the path your perspective shifts to Alan Reynolds' “Untitled” (1991). Highly visible from both Queen and Otto Streets, the garden has become a popular backdrop for photographs by visitors attending events at Centre In the Square.

Veradis’ Garden Themes

- Favourite Plants – Vera's beloved plants, including lamb's ear, wild leek, trillium, lily-of-the-valley, snowdrops, catnip, monkshood, mushrooms, and fairy garden favourites.
- Sensory Garden – Plants chosen for their texture, fragrance, movement, and interest to touch, smell, hear, and see.
- Calming Colours – A soothing palette of purples, blues, whites, silvers, and soft pinks, reflecting Vera's favourite colours.
- Curious Blooms – Unusual, spiky, prickly, and whimsical flowers with distinctive shapes and character.
- Year-Round Interest – Flowers, seedheads, and living structures that continue to provide beauty into autumn and winter.
- Plants for Weaving – Willow, rushes, and iris grown for traditional basketry and fibre arts.
- Plants with Stories – Species rich in folklore, mythology, magic, and fascinating histories.

							SEASON						
							early spring (march-april)	spring (May, June)	summer (July)	late summer (Aug, Sept)	fall (Oct)	winter (nov,dec, jan,feb)	
GROUP		code	latin	common	cm ht	#/m2	spread	structure					
ZONE A: Central River/Wave-flowing/grass-like river through the centre. The arbor forms a tunnel crossing the river (like tunnels under the canal) – views of the sculptures are framed by the													
A		*grass	Dc	<i>Deschampsia cespitosa</i> 'Goldtau'	Tufted Hair grass	100	5	60	CESP				
A		*	Ey	<i>Eryngium yuccifolium</i>	rattlesnake master	120	9	75	EM			###	
			Is	<i>Iris sibirica</i> 'Silver Edge'	Siberian Iris	75	11	60	LI				
A	eph		x	<i>Narcissus</i>	Thalia Fragrant Daffodil	35							
	wet	*grass	Je	<i>Juncus effusus</i>	soft rush	120		80					
A		*grass	Sh	<i>Sporobolus heterolepis</i>	Prairie Dropseed	25	9	60	LI				
ZONE B: Entrances & Exits - low & blue/silver/sensory (right side + around rock) (blue star, lavender, lambs ears, blue primrose)													
B		^	Ab	<i>Amsonia x 'Blue Ice'</i> (sub <i>A. tabernaemontana</i>)	blue star	40	7	60	UP		^ vvvv		
B			P	<i>Primula vulgaris</i> 'Blue Ripples'	primrose	20	11	35	EM				
			La	<i>Lavandula angustifolia</i> 'Hidcote Blue'	English Lavender	45		60					
B			Sb	<i>Stachys byzantina</i> 'Helen Von Stein'	Lamb's Ear	25	11	60	LM				
Zone C1: medium-tall height (white-pink) - Mauve-Burgandy prickly edge – Sedum, Spotted Horsemint, Purple Coneflower – with orange Butterfly Milkweed for an contrast/accent/pollinat													
C1		*	At	<i>Asclepias tuberosa</i>	butterfly milkweed	60	9	50	UP			* vvvv	
C1		*	E	<i>Echinacea</i>	purple coneflower	60	9		EM			* ##	
C1	eph	*	+	<i>Mertensia virginica</i>	Virginia bluebells	45	9		LM	*			
C1		*	Mp	<i>Monarda punctata</i>	Spotted Horse Mint	45	9		UP		*	*	*
C1			Ss	<i>Sedum spectabile</i> 'Autumn Fire'	Showy Stonecrop	50	9		SM			###	
Zone C2: medium-low height full/leafy white flowers - bergenia, white obedient plant, pearly everlasting, wild quinine, hellebore													
C2		*	Am	<i>Anaphalis margaritacea</i>	Pearly Everlasting	80	7		SM			*	*
C2			B	<i>Bergenia x 'Eroica'</i>	Heartleaf Bergenia	45	9	50	BB				
C2	sh		H	<i>Helleborus</i> 'New York Night'	Lenten Rose	50	9	60	BB				
C2		*	Pi	<i>Parthenium integrifolium</i>	Wild Quinine	75	9		SM			vvv	*
C2		*	Pv	<i>Physostegia virginiana</i> 'Crown of Snow'	Obedient Plant	65	9	75				*	*
Zone D: Tall blue/purple beautiful and deadly – Monkshood (deadly), Arkansas Blue Star (latex sap mildly irritating), Baptisia (mild toxin), Giant Allium (mild toxin)													
D	tox		Ac	<i>Aconitum carmichaelii</i> 'Arendsii'	Monkshood	125	9		UP				*
D	eph		o	<i>Allium giganteum</i> 'Globemaster'	Ornamental Onion	100							
D	eph		>	<i>Allium christophii</i>	star of Persia	30							
D	iii	^	Ah	<i>Amsonia hubrichtii</i>	Arkansas blue star	100	5	90	SM		^		
D		^	Ba	<i>Baptisia australis</i>	blue false indigo	120	1	100	BR		^		
Zone E: climbing on arbor or fence													
E			C	<i>Clematis 'Frances Rivis'</i> or 'Pamela Jackman' (co.)	clematis Frances Rivis	300	3						
consider seeding annuals such as Nasturtium, Woodland Nicotiana, Zinnia, Love-in-a-mist													

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Willow Weaving

Willow weaving is a craft that has been practiced for thousands of years. It transforms flexible branches into baskets, structures, and sculptures. The living arbor was woven with fresh willow, which rooted and is now growing. It needs regular pruning and weaving. The fences used locally harvested willow that was dried for months, re-soaked for days, and then carefully woven before it dried again into its final form. Seasonal oil-stain has been applied to prolong it's life.

- LEGEND
- flowering colour
 - foliage interest (various colours and textures)
 - structural interest (seedheads, stems)
 - * native to Ontario
 - ^ native to North Eastern North America

- CODES
- LI linear leaves from base
 - BB broad basal leaves (i.e. hosta, hellebore, bergenia)
 - EM emergent (leafy base - shoots a tall stem)
 - LM leafy mound (i.e. Brunnera)
 - SM stem mound (i.e. Sedum spectabile)
 - UP upright (minimal base, tall stem, weight at top)
 - BR branching (vase shape)
 - CESP CESPILOSE (clump) grass
 - MAT MAT grass
 - xxx Coarse leaf texture
 - iii Fine leaf texture
 - eph ephemeral
 - sh prefers some shade

Weaving encourages mindfulness, patience, and focus. The slow, repetitive movements and natural materials help reduce stress, foster creativity, and create a sense of calm, while weaving together with others builds connection and community.