



Jeannette Ross photos

Healing beauty

by Jeannette Ross

Some people talk to their plants, but Mary Larkin communes with hers. As the gardener in charge of a 12-acre private estate in Katonah, N.Y., Mary has ample opportunity to contemplate the formal and informal beds and plantings that run the gamut from stand-up-and-salute formality to frog-inspired whimsy. It is a place of beauty, yes, but also a place that promotes inner healing and well-being.

Visitors may see for themselves when the garden opens on Sunday, July 22, from 10 to 4, rain or shine, as part of the Garden Conservancy Open Days program. This is the third year the garden will be part of the program, although Mary has been participating as a visitor herself since 1995.

"Public gardens are not lived in, and they don't help me fix my house and my problems," Mary said, when asked why she was such an Open Days booster. She continues to visit other gardens, Stonecrop in Cold Spring, N.Y., being one of her favorites. "If I stay inbred in my own head, I'm not getting any oxygen," she said.

In her communion with her plants, Mary is very much aware of the history of the property where she works. The

A 12-acre estate, once part of a farm owned by the Van Cortlandt family, runs the gamut from stand-up-and-salute formality to frog-inspired whimsy. The garden will be open to the public on July 22 from 10 to 4.



