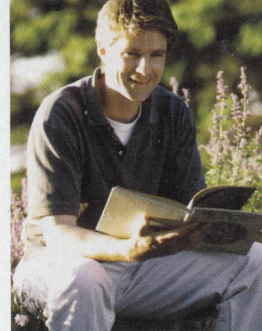


WE GET TO KNOW Canada's garden experts

This issue we speak with Alexander Reford of Quebec's Reford Gardens



Q: What is your position at Reford?

@: I'm the director of a series of gardens in Grand-Métis, Quebec, on the banks of the St. Lawrence River. I'm also the director of the International Garden Festival at Reford that runs from June 26 to October 3, and features innovative gardens by artists and architects from Canada and around the world.

Q: Who is Elsie Reford and what is the history of the gardens?

@: Elsie was my great-grandmother on my father's side. She was the daughter of Robert Meighen, part of a well-known Canadian political family. Her uncle, Lord Mount Stephen, bequeathed his fishing lodge and its estate on the St. Lawrence to Elsie in 1918. She began gardening in 1926 and her collections grew quickly over the next years. The property was purchased by the government of Quebec in 1961, opened to the public for the first time on June 24, 1962, and sold to the not-for-profit and charitable organization Les Amis des Jardins de Métis, on July 4, 1995.

Q: Why are the gardens important?

@: The gardens are part of Canada's horticultural heritage and one of the few surviving estate gardens from the early part of the 20th century. Like Butchart Gardens near Victoria and the Parkwood Estate in Oshawa, Ontario, they are living testimony to the taste and enthusiasm of early Canadian gardeners. But what makes these Zone 4b gardens different is where they're located—in a fairly distant and hostile environment next to a fishing lodge.

Q: The recent documentary film *Twice Upon a Garden* is about Reford Gardens. What can viewers expect to see?

@: I think everybody has marvelled at the extraordinary beauty of the film, not just the gardens but also the blooms, the insects, and the people who make this garden so special. This film has captured the garden over four seasons; it has unveiled the beauty of the winter and the work behind the scenes in preparing for visitors to the gardens.

Q: When is the best time to visit?

@: Elsie designed the garden so that it always has a main character on stage: from crabapples in mid-June to azaleas at the end, peonies at the beginning of July, then lilies and roses followed by a vast range of perennials and annuals in August and September, ending with gentian, those deep blue flowers that were one of Elsie's favourites.

Q: Anything new in store for the gardens this year?

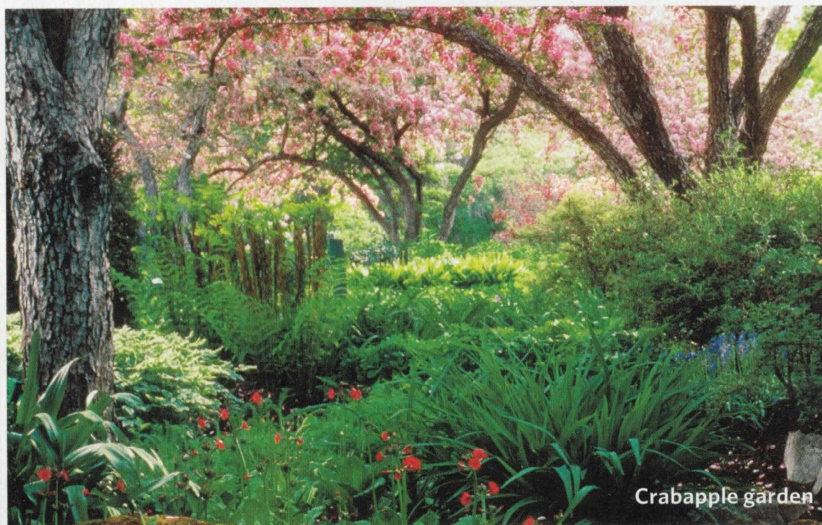
@: We are working on two major projects. First, the restoration of the vegetable and picking gardens, using Elsie's garden diaries and plant lists and incorporating the needs of our chef. These plants will offer new tastes in the dining room and contribute to the production of a new line of gourmet products. Second, we plan to transform our buildings, equipment and practices so we can legitimately be the "greenest garden" in North America, with 100 percent renewable energy for heating, 100 percent composting and recycling.



Elsie Reford, Alexander's great-grandmother



Himalayan blue poppy



Crabapple garden

Twice Upon a Garden was co-written by Donna Nebenzahl and is available at refordgardens.com

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