

Journeys into the open wild

A good friend of mine, less than five feet tall but with a big sense of humor, plans to write a murder mystery about her family, many of them living nearby. She's waiting till they're all dead.

According to her it won't be long. Then they can't sue her, and she's running out of money. Writing is a tough job, for somewhere between fiction and fact you have to toss in some funny to balance out the misery if you want to survive in print.

Next year this column will celebrate its tenth anniversary. Thanks to everyone who has been following it, for without readers it's not worth a dime and since the cost of publishing keeps increasing, freelancers like me must do it for love not money. Sixteen years ago I was working from 9 to 5 and beginning to dream of adventure and even though it was risky I was making plans. I'm a late bloomer and I had some catching up to do!

Before I was old enough to recognize the alphabet or words on a page, I could hold a bunch of crayons. By then I was big enough to get up close and personal with a daffodil and proudly wear its bright yellow powder on the tip of my nose. I couldn't figure out why purple pansies didn't have purple pollen. It would be a long, long time before I knew what to do with all of this "wondering."

Lucky for me some forty years later I landed in a big local garden filled with flowers. When not behind the counter of the tiny fledgling gift shop, hidden among the hemlocks I looked out the big glass door studying the long fragrant borders overflowing with foxgloves and tulips. If Beatrix Potter had let "Jemima Puddleduck" lay her eggs here the duck would have become a great grandmother in no time. Every spring baby ducks fill the ponds and wander about, and foxes must be on a leash.

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1417 ACADIA STREET

Tudor Revivalist charm can be found in Duke Park

BY REBECCA R. NEWSOME, MIRM

For those with an appreciation for classic historical architecture, The James A. Smith House at 1417 Acadia Street in Durham is an absolute must see! Designed by Rose and Rose Architects for James and Irene Smith in 1930, it was one of the first homes to be built on Acadia Street in the heart of Duke Park, while also one of the last homes built before the Great Depression brought home construction to a standstill. Still today, much of Duke Park features Tudor and Colonial Revival home styles, with The Smith House a shining example of Tudor Revivalist charm.

Enchanting gardens greet residents and guests to The Smith House, with cathedral-canopied 80-plus year old oak and pecan trees standing guard along the front of the property. (These magnificent trees have not and will not be cut back by utility companies, as power lines run through the alley, not the street.) The yard is surrounded with decorative black aluminum fencing, adding even more allure to the lovely home, stone walkways, and verdant landscaping enclosed within.

Clinker brick and inlaid stone were combined at The Smith House to create a dramatic exterior, inviting guests to enter and enjoy. Inside, The Smith House is adorned with 2,508 square feet of luminous hardwoods; extensive crown molding and baseboards;

the original balsawood blinds, still in excellent condition; vintage cathedral-style registers; the original plaster walls (with the exception of the kitchen); and a not-to-be missed period plaster fireplace with a vented arch reminiscent of Durham's Trinity Avenue Presbyterian Church, also designed by Rose and Rose Architects.

Not surprisingly, the kitchen is the heart of The Smith House. It is completely remodeled to include all stainless appliances, a gas cooktop, and custom cabinets with roll-out drawers, as well as window seats with storage, a wine bar, recessed lighting, and authentic slate backsplash. A large island with blue pearl granite is the centerpiece of the kitchen, equipped with seating, pendant lights, a bar sink, bookshelves, and power. An arch cut-through from the kitchen that looks toward the front door completes this fabulous room.

The main floor master suite of The Smith House is also newly renovated to include built-ins, a custom closet with cubbies, and surround sound. Its adjoining master bath features a double vanity with black pearl granite, stainless fixtures, quartzite stone floors, and a fantastic high-end shower system with a bench.

Upstairs is home to two additional bedrooms, both with hardwood floors, new windows, and attic storage, while the unfinished yet heated and cooled basement features a sealed crawlspace and an ideal doggie den with access

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to the garden. New stone stairs and walls in the rear yard also allow appealing access to the basement.

Full surround sound throughout the den, keeping room, and library, a charming telephone niche, a tankless hot water heater, and numerous other delightful and functional features abound throughout The Smith House... And lest we forget

the new 2-car garage with an electric car power station, the detached tool shed, or the soaker hose sprinkler system!

"The Smith House is a treasure," says Broker René Hendrickson of Berkshire Hathaway Home Services York Simpson Underwood Realty. "In fact, it was featured in the Durham Historic Preservation Society's Home Tour of Duke Park in 2011. It's fresh and updated, while offering fascinating nuances of days gone by. I'm excited for its next owners."

Contact René at 919-923-1377 or renehendrickson.com for a private showing. The opportunity to purchase this Tudor Revivalist jewel won't last long!

Mystery plant: 'Foamflower,' Tiarella cordifolia



'FOAMFLOWER'

Photo by Linda Lee.

BY JOHN NELSON

The Queen is the only person who can put on a tiara with one hand, while walking down stairs.
— Princess Margaret

Sometimes when you go into a forest, you see flowers. Sometimes you see snakes. Sometimes you see both, if you're lucky.

Not too long ago during a fieldtrip in Lancaster County, here in the upper part of South Carolina, I saw a canebrake rattlesnake — a big one, about four feet long. He (she?) was a beautiful animal, very impressive, all stretched out quietly in the sun. It ignored us for as long as possible, and eventually started rattling, the sound like a high-pitched buzz, something like cicadas very close up, even after it crawled off into the woods and disappeared, allowing us

to drive past. Unforgettable! (To see an image on-line, go to <http://www.flickr.com/photos/32998163@N00/83118951/>). Now, a number of snake species are declining in the Southeast, due in part to indiscriminate killing. Of course, some species are venomous and therefore dangerous, but all snakes should be respected as natural parts of our landscape, and left alone in the wild.

The rest of the field trip was basically snake-less, and was devoted to an incredible display of native plant species, all at a place called Flat Creek Heritage Preserve. The Mystery Plant featured this week is a resident of shady, cool, damp slopes, often in rocky woods near creeks. The plants commonly form clumps, and sometimes they produce runners. All the leaves are basal, and coarsely toothed, resembling those of a

maple. Flower stalks arise about a foot or so, forming prominent wand-like racemes with star-like white blooms, each with five showy sepals and petals. Ten stamens will be found in each flower. After blooming, each flower will form an asymmetric capsule. Being a capsule, it will break open, of course. After it does a somewhat circular portion remains on the stem, and this portion strikes some people as a little tiara. (I'm not making this up.) This plant occurs from eastern Canada to Wisconsin, and then down the Appalachians into the Deep South, in the piedmont as well as the mountains. (It has several close relatives in the western USA, and one or two in Asia.) Our Mystery Plant is a big hit with gardeners, because it does well in shady, damp situations. Gardeners

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