

Community VOICE

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Unique Community Gardens are Flourishing

BY KARL LINN



In the verdant Peralta, Northside, and Karl Linn community gardens, sustainable ecological innovations, outdoor meeting places and works of art intermingle with lush vegetation. The construction of these gardens was made possible through a creative partnership between community, the city and local businesses. The Karl Linn garden is on city-owned land, while Peralta and Northside gardens are on land leased to the city by BART. The city investment of \$25,000 for building materials, compost, and equipment for the three gardens has been matched so far by contributions of around \$150,000 in labor and materials.

Each garden is composed of individual plots as well as communal beds planted with herbs,

medicinal, and butterfly attracting plants, native California flowers, and a few plants threatened with extinction. The gardens also all function as neighborhood commons with small sitting areas, larger gathering places, and an extensive network of pedestrian and wheelchair pathways.

Colorful Tibetan prayer flags designed by Milo Clark hover over the Peralta Garden heralding its location. Passing through Amy Blackstone's Sunflower Gate, you enter a peaceful world of color and vitality. Approaching the round commons surrounded by circular raised beds, you can glimpse the undulating mosaic snake benches made by Dmitry Grudsky. Shade is provided by custom designed

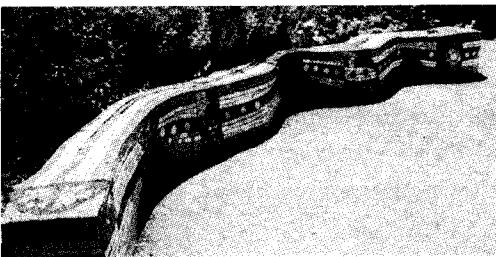
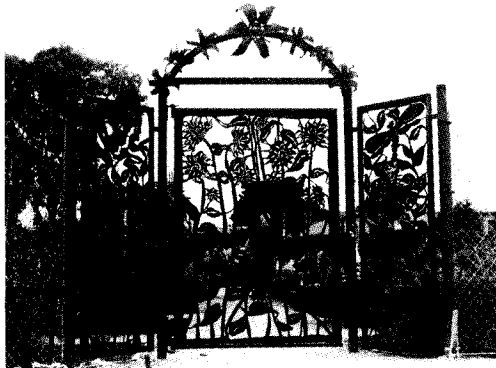
and dyed hemp umbrellas donated by Two Dog Star. From the commons, the colorful Fran Segal mural "In the Eyes of the Red-Tailed Hawk" forms an exciting backdrop to a performance space. Other delightful works of art are scattered throughout the garden.

In the space around the arts-and-crafts garden tool shed, Alan Leon involved young and old in the design and painting the colorful "the Garden is a Gateway" mural. An 18-foot wide access road reserved for BART's repair equipment provides space for ongoing temporary art exhibits.

All three community gardens also function as field stations demonstrating and testing sustainable ecological innovations. The innovative Flowform fountain at Peralta purifies water as it cascades through three sculptural basins into a pond. The pump is powered by a solar panel donated by Real Goods. A fast action, high temperature compost bin, invented by Reynaldo Cortez, creates usable compost within a few weeks. In the Northside Community Garden, a tool shed, designed by John Fordice, is being built with cob, an ancient technique using earth and hay.

Take a walk and come with your family and friends to visit these new and wonderful additions to the Berkeley landscape. For more information, please call Karl Linn (510) 527-7162.

Karl Linn is a retired university professor, landscape architect, and psychologist who founded pioneering community design centers. He is the cofounder, with Carl Anthony, of the Urban Habitat Program, and currently serves on the boards of Berkeley Design Advocates and Berkeley Community Gardening Collaborative.



(top) Sunflower Gate by Amy Blackstone, and (above) one section of the mosaic-covered Snake Benches by Dmitry Grudsky.

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