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## The Gardener's Corner

# Paradise found

By Judith Rogers

The Toronto chapter of Landscape Ontario recently presented a pictorial lecture from the Paradise Found series as a benefit for the Toronto Botanical Garden. 'Virginia, Vita and Sissinghurst' is an historical account, a story really that interweaves the lives of author Virginia Woolf and poet, novelist and gardener Vita Sackville-West and her magnificent gardens of Sissinghurst in England.

Born to money and nobility, Sackville-West enjoyed a life of luxuries, married and had two sons. Woolf, with a less than luxurious life, endured a childless marriage and severe bouts of depression.

The two women met as adults kindling a close relationship that lasted nearly 20 years. Virginia's social circle included many notable writers of the 1920s and 30s and she herself had quite a number of books published.

Unfortunately, the mental illness she suffered with from childhood resulted in a failed suicide attempt at an early age and upon completion of each book the illness would escalate for a time.

At the age of 59, after her last book and anticipating the oncoming depression, she left an endearing letter to her husband, weighted her pockets with rocks and walked into the nearby river.

Vita and her husband acquired the rundown castle of Sissinghurst in the thirties but it did not evolve to its grand splendor until the 50s. With her weekly gardening column in The Observer, Vita was able to write about her gardens which gained them notable interest. The Sissinghurst gardens were designed as a series of rooms, each with a different colour or theme and surrounded by high walls of well manicured hedges. The layout and many plants were strongly influenced by the gardens of Gertrude Jekyll, who was a revered British garden designer, writer and artist.

In 1938 the gardens were opened to the public with

the monochromatic white garden a new experience to behold.

During the Victorian era, white was the traditional mourning colour and therefore to build an entire garden of this colour was unheard of.

One of Vita's gardening columns described many of the silver and white flowers, gray and green foliage that were part of this extraordinary white garden that was at its best in July and contained an outdoor living room.

A partial list of plants includes: Artemesias, gray santolina, white Regale lilies, white Pacific delphiniums, white eremus, foxgloves, gypsophila,

hydrangea grandiflora, tree peonies, butterfly bush, campanulas, bellflower, climbing roses, Japanese anemones, dahlias, the tall silver Arabian thistle and a gray lead statue of the Vestal Virgin.

Since discovering the effect of a monochromatic garden many gardeners enjoy using different shades of one colour to achieve this.

My own white garden or 'moon garden' as I like to refer to it as, lives up to the expectations of a garden of white, silver and gray lit by moonlight in the summer which adds the dimension of intrigue to the bold statement it makes.

During the war, the

gardening staff went elsewhere to help with the efforts and the gardens fell into a state of disrepair with only Vita and her husband maintaining them but when the war was over, most returned and had them looking pristine in no time.

Vita passed away at the age of 70 in 1962 and by 1967 the National Trust became the new owners of this estate which is a favourite for gardeners touring England.

We owe a great deal to the ingenuity of Vita Sackville-West; for one thing, the garden rooms we are constructing today are not a new idea but an old one that is plausible enough to repeat.

# Healthy eating for the holidays

While you're busy making a list and checking it twice, don't forget that this holiday season presents the perfect opportunity to give your loved ones gifts that will help them stay healthy and active.

Help your loved ones eat well by trying some nutritious and delicious ideas.

Wrap up a healthy cookbook.

Credible sources of information include registered dietitians or organizations such as the Heart and Stroke Foundation, Canadian Cancer Society or the Canadian Diabetes Association.

A fruit basket is an attractive way to inspire nutritious eating.

Fill a basket with fresh apples, grapefruit, pineapple, and kiwi. Or introduce less common choices such as papaya or pomegranates.

Choose an attractive salad bowl and fill it with ingredients and accessories needed to create a tasty salad.

Include new kitchen utensils and flavoured vinegars or low-fat salad dressings.

How about a gift to encourage your loved ones to be more physically active?

Give a gift certificate for a healthy-living class.

Our region offers many classes introducing aqua-aerobics, yoga or Tai Chi.

For those who prefer to

work out at home, pair a yoga mat with an instructional video or DVD.

Find out if there are maps of local trails in your area and tuck them into a stocking.

Give gifts that encourage active play like skipping ropes, balls and sports equipment, or passes for recreation centres, rinks, swimming pools or the bowling alley.

Another creative gift idea is to offer to drive friends' kids to their karate, dance or swimming lessons.

This gives the gift of time to the parent as well as supporting the children in learning new skills and being active.

For more information on making your holiday season a healthy one, call Your

Health Connection at 721-7520 or at 1-877-721-7520 Monday to Friday, 8:30 a.m. to 6 p.m. and talk with a

public health nurse. Residents can also visit [www.simcoemuskokahealth.org](http://www.simcoemuskokahealth.org).

*What's On @*

The **GIBSON** Centre for Community, Arts & Culture

**705-435-2828**  
[www.gibsoncentre.com](http://www.gibsoncentre.com)

**Songwriter's Showcase:**  
First Sunday of each month  
Inaugural Performance: **Sunday January 6**  
2pm - 4pm \$5.00  
Guest Artists: Don Bray & Rich Burnett

**Elvis Lives!** A Tribute to the King  
**Friday January 18** at 8pm \$25.00\*

**Friends of Theatre at The Gibson**  
Playreading of *Origin of the Species* & open discussion of future programming.  
**Thursday January 10** at 7pm \$5.00

\*plus applicable taxes

The Gibson Centre is an 1889 heritage building that began its life as a factory. Located at 63 Tupper St. W., Alliston, it has been transformed into a Centre for community, arts & culture and offers a performance hall, banquet facilities, art gallery, cafe, studio spaces, Seniors centre and much, much more. Come and experience the transformation. From Factory...to Fabulous!!

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**NOTICE TO ALL TOWN OF INNISFIL RESIDENTS**

Please take note of the following changes to the Council & Committee of the Whole Schedule for **JANUARY, 2008**

<b>Wed. January 2, 2008</b>	No Council or Committee of Whole meetings
<b>Wed. January 9, 2008</b>	Special Committee of the Whole "Budget" meeting, commencing at 4:00 p.m.
<b>Wed. January 16, 2008</b>	Public Meeting along with the Regular Council & Committee of the Whole meeting to commence at 7:00 p.m.
<b>Wed. January 23, 2008</b>	Regular Council and Committee of the Whole meeting, commencing at 7:15 p.m.
<b>Wed. January 30, 2008</b>	No meetings anticipated at this time.

Paul G. Landry, A.M.C.T.  
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