

# Making progress on life's list of things yet to do

Every hobbyist has his Mecca. A place, maybe written down on a list of lifetime "must-sees," that will somehow complete a missing piece of the individual on whose list the special place is written. There's probably a small check-box right next to it.

For golfers, it's St. Andrew's Golf Links in Scotland, or Pebble Beach in California. For the faithful, it might be Lourdes or Oberammergau. Foodies go to restaurants with Michelin stars, take cooking classes in Italy, or venture to wine destinations like Napa Valley.

My husband is a lifelong fisherman. A few years back, he was able to check off the box next to "Catch a tarpon off Key West," in his book of things yet to do.

Of the adventure, he said it far exceeded his expectation of the experience. Catching a 125-pound tarpon takes quite a long time. The fish – five feet of gleaming steely scales – came straight out of the water to walk on his tail. He thrashed his head violently back and forth in an attempt to throw the hook. But, my husband won that battle and can recount virtually every second of the fight to anyone who's interested.



**Flotsam and Jetsam**

By Donna Drago

Last weekend, I checked off a box of my own.

A gardener for more than 25 years, and lover of all things in the world of flora, one of my ambitions has been to visit the Chelsea Flower Show in London. For the uninitiated, the CFS is recognized worldwide as THE flower show for garden designers, plant breeders, flower arrangers and spectators. It's a place to see and be seen. A place where Queen Elizabeth herself and many other members of British aristocracy make appearances. It's where garden designers work for a year to come up with a striking display, where breeders introduce the newest flowers and where shoppers can buy virtually any gardening-related item imaginable.

The show grounds cover some 11 acres in the chic Chelsea neighborhood, on the grounds

of the venerable Royal Hospital – a building designed by architect Christopher Wren.

Over the course of four days, 157,000 people will visit the show. It's quite the spectacle!

We had tickets for an evening entrance and queued up half an hour before the time on our entry ticket. In line were at least 5,000 other flower devotees, but instead of the large-hatted garden club ladies, who come in the daytime, the after-work crowd sported some very handsome Brooks Brothers suits and sophisticated work attire.

Almost through the gates, we stopped to hand over our tickets, stopped again for a search of our bags and then the group finally pushed en masse, like a school of sardines, onto the show grounds. I was finally there.

I did what many people probably do when they are overwhelmed and over stimulated – I had a panic attack. There were too many people. I couldn't get my bearings. I'm too short to see over the crowds, so I couldn't tell what I was looking at. My husband – he's such a good sport – and my daughter, who works in London, were with me and all I could think

about was how I was going to find them if we became separated.

The crowd moved as one through the maze of streets, until the group was diluted enough among the many acres that I finally began to be able to see what was going on.

One of the first things I spotted was the queue for the Pimms tent. We had tall refreshing libations – filled with sliced lemons and cucumbers – the color came back to my face and I felt much better.

From there I was able to witness the phenomenon that is Chelsea.

In the Grand Pavilion, nurseries and breeders had displays of their finest blooms. Nothing was missing, from tiny alpine rock gardens to incredible tropical floral displays—every imaginable color and shape of flower was represented.

Outside, the show gardens were tightly designed with the most cutting-edge water features, sculptures, and outdoor furniture. To design a garden at Chelsea is a great honor and the design teams try to out-do each other with innovative, edgy ideas. Many of the gardens were based on the use of

only foliage plants. Many of the flowers were white. Much of the garden designers' craft seemed to be taken up with sculptural metal backdrops, hard-scaping and tall, knock-your-socks-off linear elements.

When I think about the English garden, I picture billowy, colorful borders filled with tall hollyhocks, delphiniums and foxgloves, but the Chelsea designers ventured as far away from that notion as they possibly could. A recent issue of Garden Design magazine showed off gardens where much of the focus was on hard lines and minimalist plantings.

Gardens, it seems, are not about being pretty and restful anymore. They are not spaces where one can sit in the sun with a lemonade, or play with dogs.

A few days after the experience, I'd say that being part of the scene at Chelsea was a worthwhile and educational experience. Still, as I checked off the box on my life list of things to accomplish, I felt something was missing. The problem being that in an effort to create something that no garden designer has done before, some designers are missing the point of what gardens are for.

## Ali's Run

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charge for the Kid's Run.

"We hope it encourages a love of sports and a healthy lifestyle for the kids," Maureen Dunn Packer said. "We have children who ran in the fun run for a few years who are now over 10 and back running in the 5K." For the 5K, the Packers are expecting about 300 runners and walkers on race day.

In addition to the 5K race, the memorial endowment fund was established at LaSalle Academy. This perpetual fund has accumulated over \$40,000. The intention of the endowment is to "provide tuition assistance for deserving students," so they would not have to withdraw from LaSalle Academy due to any sudden change in family circumstances.

The Ali Dunn Packer Memorial Fund was established to celebrate the life and memory of Ali. The fund promotes teen awareness of the responsibilities that accompany growing up in today's society. The funds raised benefit youths

wishing to pursue their interests in education, athletics and fine arts. With the support from sponsors and race participants Ali's Fund has awarded over \$60,000 to Rhode Island teens.

The Ali Dunn Packer Memorial Fund was awarded the "Rhode Island Foundations 2003 Most Inspiring Partners Award." This award was established to recognize a donor who has inspired the Rhode Island Foundation with the impact of their grants and a thoughtful approach to grant making.

The long list of 2007 beneficiaries of Ali's Fund include the Rhode Island Food Bank, Kid's Café, North Kingstown Boys Track Program, North Kingstown Girls Track Program, Conanicut Island Sailing Foundation; Jamestown School music department, Rocky Hill School Library, Jamestown library RI Teen Award Books, Jamestown Soccer Association, North Kingstown Soccer Association, Jamestown Police Department, Providence Children's Museum, Jamestown Baseball Association, Empty Bowls, RI

Community Food Bank, Jamestown middle school scholarships, the Tomorrow Fund, Soccer Kick Start – South Providence, Jamestown Boy Scouts, and the Newport Babe Ruth Baseball League.

Their solace comes in knowing the funds from the race do so much good in the community, and it is amazing how their acts of kindness have made others want to give back.

In the past, Ali's Fund provided the funds for the North Kingstown cross country team to travel to the Great American Race in Alabama and has also given money to the teams to purchase new uniforms.

According to the treasurer of the Jamestown Soccer Association, Chris Small, the competitive soccer players benefited from the fund, which donated 125 jackets to wear in the chilly spring season.

Two Lawn Avenue School stu-

dents, who are strong academically and athletically, receive scholarships annually. "The only stipulation is that the students use the money for something academic or sports related," Maureen said.

The number of sponsors is upwards of 500 individuals, families and businesses, all listed on the Ali's Run website.

The 5K USATF-certified 5K

race/walk scheduled for 1 p.m. on Sunday will start and finish at Fort Getty Park. Music, food, prizes and activities for the entire family begin at noon. Race registration opens at 10 a.m. and the race will be held rain or shine. Sponsors of the race provide a complimentary lunch for all walkers and runners. See [www.alisrun.com](http://www.alisrun.com) for more information.

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