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GEDDY GARDEN NEWS

*"What dreadful hot weather we have!
It keeps me in a continual state of inelegance."*
Jane Austen

This summer we can all relate to Jane's comment. I have just returned from the west coast where I experienced a much cooler climate in Seattle, Washington. I was attending the annual symposium of the Garden Writers' of American Association and was forewarned that it would be raining there. I was prepared for rain, but it did not rain one day during my visit. It was cool, however. The average temperature was about 65°, a great contrast to the 90° weather we had here in Virginia when I left. Enough about the weather. Samuel Johnson once wrote, "When two Englishmen meet, their first talk is of the weather."

In Seattle I was introduced to different kinds of gardens that have been adapted to the Pacific Northwest climate.

Seattle was named in honor of an Indian chief and it is known as the city of the seven hills. The homes are built upon these hills, not just on top of the hills, but at all angles. Some seem to be hanging dangerously off the edges. The Seattle gardens have a style all their own; many seem to be literally supporting the houses on the hillsides.

I was immediately impressed by the trees of the area. The red cedar is the state tree and the Douglas fir tree, cedars, and hemlocks abound! I felt like I was in a Christmas tree wonderland!

We took a ferry boat ride on the Puget Sound to Bainbridge Island. There we visited some beautiful gardens. Some were private residential gardens, some botanical gardens, and commercial nurseries. The mild, moist climate of the Puget Sound is conducive to the growth of wonderful wildflowers. Wild sweet peas and Buddlea were everywhere, as well as native huckleberries.

I saw dazzling floral displays and some perennial borders that rivaled some I had seen in English gardens. Fuchsias grow hardily there and I have never seen such a range and display of them as I found in these Washington gardens.

Western Washington is an excellent location for growing fruit and one can find apple trees growing along the sidewalks and in front yards as well as in orchards. There is a great deal of research going on at Washington State University in regard to growing techniques, grafting, and organic gardening of fruit. The horticultural research is aimed not only at commercial nurseries, but also at small farmers and urban growers. I enjoyed being free to pick and eat a ripe apple from a tree growing along the city street. What a treat!

Another great experience was the visit to a rather small, but very unique, garden that displayed the sculpture of two artists. It was actually their studio where they created their stone sculptures. The combination of art and nature was whimsical and enchanting.

The most unforgettable dinner of the trip took place in the midst of fields of lavender at the Frog Rock Lavender Farm on Bainbridge Island. We dined on prime rib and salmon amid the rows of lavender, enjoying the food, color, fragrance, and the beauty of the land.

Of course, one can pick up a fair amount of trivia on a trip like this. I learned the origin of the term skid-row. It is said to have been given to the slippery hills of Seattle when the lumber industry began. As the oxen-driven logs were rolled down the hills to be transported by water, the slick slopes became known as skid rows.

I also saw the houseboat that Tom Hanks lived on in the movie *Sleepless in Seattle*.

I was most impressed with the creativity of the Northwestern gardeners in the manner in which they successfully married their landscaping styles with the lay of the land and their ability to adapt the gardens to the climate and the environment.

Janet Guthrie