

Diana and Gordon Bacon

**Role: Master Gardeners,
Canuck Place Children's Hospice**

By Sheri Eastman



PHOTO COURTESY
OF CANUCK PLACE
CHILDREN'S
HOSPICE

“Make it look pretty... with no money,” were the instructions given to Diana and Gordon Bacon when they undertook the renovation of the grounds around Canuck Place, BC's first children's hospice.

In the early 1990s, Gordon was contemplating

retirement and attended a lecture given by Brenda Eng, a registered nurse who was instrumental in founding Canuck Place. The Glen Brae house, a turn-of-the-century Shaughnessy estate, had recently been leased to the Society for fifty years by the City of Vancouver.

After three years of renovations, it was time to focus on the garden, which had been neglected for years. Gordon and Diana and their team of volunteers wanted the huge grounds (nearly an acre and a half) to create a soothing environment for the children and families who would be using it. “Hedges can be dark and brooding, and require too much work,” Gordon notes. So while keeping the originality of the garden, the team set about creating unique spaces, planting odd bulbs, and transplanting colourful plants for the kids to enjoy.

The garden is now home to several intimate sitting areas, each with their own sense of peace and serenity, a fully accessible playground, a whimsical house, fountains, and an herb garden. There are fritillaria bulbs that, when not emitting a child-friendly, skunky odor, look like they're blooming upside down. And there is an old Sequoia tree that the kids have

nicknamed Gandolf after the wizard in Lord of the Rings. Volunteers also take on the responsibility of decorating the gardens for the holidays. Christmas lights alone take from 800 to 1,000 hours to install.

Picking the flowers is permitted, if not encouraged. “The garden is an extension of the house,” says Leanne Freeman, Manager of Volunteer Services at Canuck Place. “It's comforting to families and it's also a fun place for the kids.” The Bacons and their team of fifteen or so workers, who meet every Saturday, are a dedicated bunch, with a variety of age groups and skills. “There's a lot of humour in our workday,” reports Diana. “Sometimes we're overworked,” she says, “but you get over being tired. It obviously satisfies something in us, because we keep coming back.

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