

Garden of delight

Vermont's Woodstock Inn & Resort offers way to behold nature's bounty

By MOIRA MCCARTHY

It's garden time in the Northeast: Everything is blooming, ripening, hanging on the vine and so ready to be picked, eaten or displayed. And what better way to get into that lush bounty than getting away to a beautiful oasis that's ready for exploring?

The Woodstock Inn & Resort in Vermont created its breathtaking Kelly Way Gardens four years ago, and it's become a destination in its own right.

The two-and-a-half-acre garden is tucked into the hillside of Kedron Valley, about one mile south of the resort itself. It looks out over the golf club and



SIGHT TO SEE: Viewing the Kelly Way Gardens, top, in full bloom is just one of the reasons to visit Vermont's Woodstock Inn & Resort, above. The breathtaking garden boasts more than 200 varieties of produce.

is surrounded by the soaring Green Mountains. Envisioned and created by master gardener Ben Pauly, the garden boasts more than 200 varieties of produce, including spinach grown from heirloom seeds passed down by Pauly's mother, more than 65 varieties of tomatoes, 75 berries and orchard plantings, 50 herbs and edible flowers, a mushroom glen, annual and perennial flowers, and honeybees.

And while the resort's culinary staff uses that bounty to create fresh dishes all winter long, during this time of year and into fall, the garden offers much more.

First, the setting. The view is remarkable from and of the garden. Light shifts as the day goes on, changing both the look of the garden and the landscape and mountain line beyond it.

"The morning is really beautiful," Pauly said. "We are in a valley, so the sun does not come over the ridge until 7 or 8, and often there's a fog that just makes it so pretty. But my favorite? The evening. We're on the east side (of the valley) so in the afternoon we can see the west side light up with this bright beautiful light (known as alpenglow). In the shade of the garden, looking up at that — it's just amazing."

Guests at the Woodstock Inn & Resort are welcome to meander the garden during the day. The garden staff are willing to chat, explain or help Tuesdays-Saturdays from 7:30 a.m. to 4 p.m. During operating hours, a smoothie bike roams around, offering up the freshest that can be had (pick it there, have it made, drink it up).

While walking and exploring on your own is fun (and no one is going to scold you for grabbing a snap pea or raspberry or whatever catches your fancy to sample), the resort also offers tours and classes. You can learn how to run an organic garden, how to plant from seed, flower arranging and even specialty cooking classes, such as how to make pesto.

Some days you can go into the



PHOTO BY MOIRA MCCARTHY

hills to forage for mushrooms, learn all about the fungi, pick some and then enjoy them at dinner in the inn.

This year, the garden has



PHOTO BY STEPHANIE STROMMER

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COMFORTABLE SETTINGS: The Woodstock Inn & Resort features well-appointed sitting areas, left, for quiet reading, and a cozy library, above, filled with books and board games.



PHOTOS BY STEPHANIE STROMMER

FARM TO TABLE: Produce, inset, from the Kelly Way Gardens, above, is used on the menu at the two restaurants at Woodstock Inn & Resort in Vermont.

So much to see — and savor — at Woodstock Inn

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become fully integrated into the resort's new dining and culinary program. Pauly and the culinary team led by executive chef Rhys Lewis work closely on the planning and cultivation of the garden for menus as well as guest enrichment, including a brand-new on-site event barn that hosts cooking demonstrations, dining events and more.

The Inn, just up the road, is classic yet updated. The lobby and hallways have plenty of spots to tuck yourself away and read a book (Vermont-made flannel blankets are everywhere for use), as well as to gather and meet other guests. The library is cozy and filled with books and board games, and the game room (with bar service) has classic games and TVs.

There's a daily offering of

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coffee and tea in the morning and fresh cookies in the afternoon. And the two dining spots on site, The Red Rooster, for breakfast through dinner with AAA Four Diamond Award winning fare, and Richardson's Tavern, both draw from that special garden.

This fall, the resort will offer cooking classes in a newly renovated barn, and special events such as the Heirloom Tomato Tasting on Sept. 2. Set up like a wine tasting, the event lets guests sample all kinds of tomatoes and see how they pair with other foods and drinks.

This not-so-secret garden is as lovely, welcoming and worth visiting as the resort itself. For more details, go to woodstockinn.com.