



Two Must-See
Gardens

story and photos by Derek Doeffinger



Iris and Peonies for May and June

If you love flowers and enjoy exploring back roads, then you're in for a real treat this May and June. Hidden in the farmlands between Seneca and Canandaigua Lakes is a nationally renowned garden that is celebrated by the plein air painters who flock there to capture its beauty.

A drive to the iris and peony gardens created by Dana and Sylvia Borglum will deliver you to what may be the best parking spot in the Finger Lakes. It's surrounded by gardens bursting with flowers, awash with fragrance-filled breezes, and bordered by dapper red barns and a potting shed.

Clockwise from Top:

This dig-your-own iris farm offers you dozens of varieties to choose from.

Her wagon filled, Renee is ready to call it a day.

Dana Borglum deftly wields a long-bladed spade like a scalpel in digging up Iris rhizomes.

New owner Reba Martin stands ready to assist as a customer digs out her chosen iris.

As you wander on its paths, keep an eye out for the Irisarian, a fanciful creature that bustles from flower to flower with a ball cap skewed on its head, a grin creasing its face. You'll recognize him by the clump of irises he clutches in one hand and the shining saber-like spade he grips in the other.

Don't be alarmed; it's only Dana Borglum. For the past 20 years or so, he and his wife Sylvia have been transforming three acres of former farmland outside of Hall into stunning live masterpieces.

As you read this, the results of their work may already be presenting their annual explosion of color. Glorious irises stand tall and wave their resplendent banners to display colors that could only come from nature. In

addition to the variety of bearded irises, you'll also see lots of Siberians and other non-bearded varieties including Versicolor, Spuria, Louisiana, and Japanese. Most are the Borglums' unique creations.

Creating new irises – hybridization – is Dana's passion. To do it, he "simply" takes the place of a bee to transfer



Iris

pollen from one plant to another to create seeds for a new plant. He's a self-taught hybridizer, he says, but as he starts to explain, he pauses. A grin appears and his eyes shine brighter. "I think it's in my blood – I used to be an artificial inseminator of cows."

He lets that sink in and then continues: "I like to try and make things better."

He has succeeded. Dana's hybridized irises have been honored by the American Iris Society, winning the prestigious Morgan-Wood and Randolph Perry awards.

But more than irises abound here. In an adjacent field, more than 200 named peonies bounce their boisterous pom-poms in an effort to draw you



Peonies



Not only will you get to see irises but a bountiful collection of peony blooms at the same time.

to their beds. You'll also find daylilies (in July) and hostas. The lupines, bleeding hearts, coral bells, clematis and other flowers planted among mature trees may convince you that you've stepped into a Beatrix Potter storybook.

Enhancing that feeling is the frequent presence of artists. You'll find yourself dodging one artist's easel while glancing at another's to notice that you've been immortalized in their work.

Borglum Iris Gardens was recently purchased by longtime neighbors, sisters Reba and Sara Ann Martin, who named them Iris Country Garden. Sara Ann has worked alongside Dana for many years, and has learned the ways of the iris. Excited to be taking over such an esteemed enterprise, the Martin sisters plan to continue Dana's breeding program.

For another year or two, Dana and Sylvia will continue living on the grounds in the Borglum family home and assisting at the gardens.

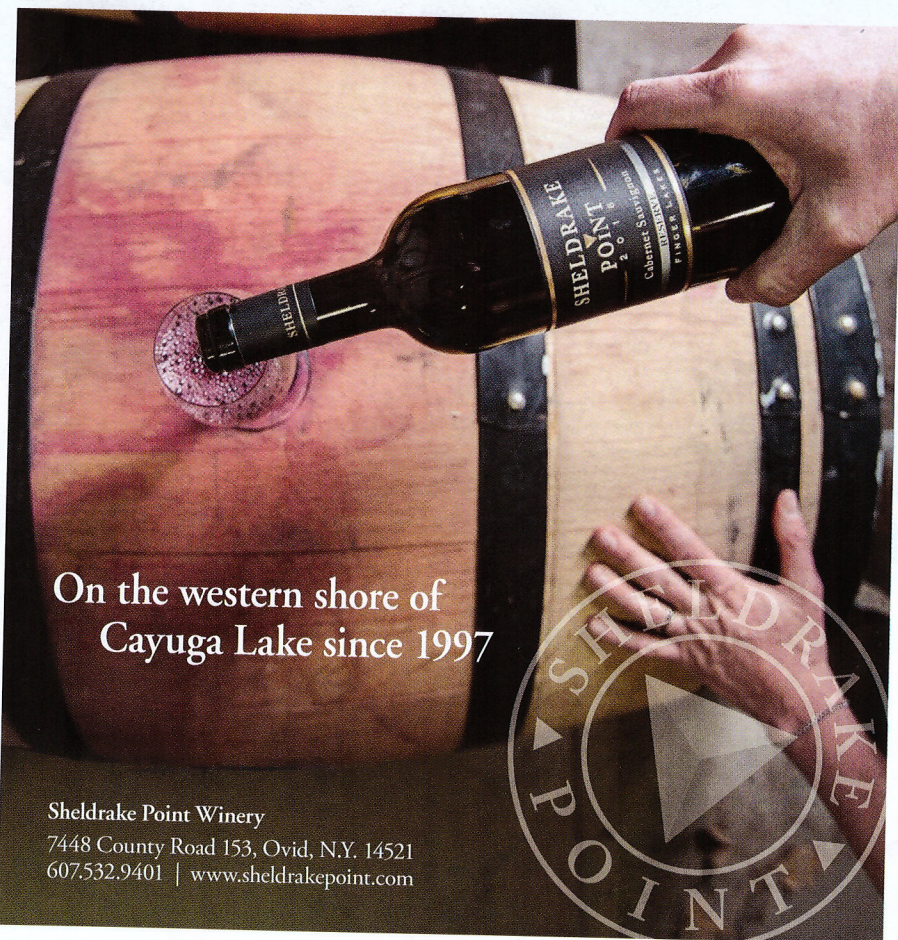
Visiting Information

Iris Country Garden
(formerly Borglum Iris Gardens)

Open mid-May to October
Monday through Saturday
(now closed Sunday)

202 Austin Road
Geneva, New York 14456-9118
5-526-6729

g artists at work makes you pause
like a moment to enjoy the beauty
anding you.



On the western shore of
Cayuga Lake since 1997

Sheldrake Point Winery
7448 County Road 153, Ovid, N.Y. 14521
607.532.9401 | www.sheldrakepoint.com

FOUR-TIME
GRAMMY AWARD-WINNER

ESPERANZA SPALDING

JUNE 10, 2018
THE FORUM THEATRE
IN BINGHAMTON, NY

BROUGHT TO YOU BY THE
BINGHAMTON PHILHARMONIC

CALL THE BOX OFFICE AT **607-723-3931**
OR GO TO **TICKETMASTER.COM**
FOR TICKET INFORMATION

