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Perennial FAVORITES

*Cultivate an air of rest and relaxation
at three botanically beautiful bed and breakfasts.*

BY L.A. JACKSON

It isn't hard to find quality bed and breakfasts in our state that exude amicable ambiance. Plenty of inviting havens offer rest and relaxation as soon as a weary visitor comes in the door. There are special lodgings, however, that compel guests not only to enjoy the comfort

and hospitality of their rooms but also to step outside, where the spell of a peaceable place continues.

The owners of these inns exert as much effort in preparing their gardens and surrounding landscapes as their rooms, providing guests with a total sense of serenity and leisure. It is here that the

irresistible aroma of fresh-brewed coffee mixes with the sweet smells of roses, ginger lilies, and magnolias.

And just where are these green dreams? Although there are many in North Carolina, here are three special getaways where good times, gracious hosts, and inviting gardens await.

FUQUAY MINERAL SPRINGS INN AND GARDEN

Fuquay-Varina

When Dr. Wiley Cozart built his new Fuquay Springs home across from the town's popular mineral springs in 1927, it was the prime place to be. No expense was spared on the A.Y. Hairr-designed Colonial Revival structure. Cozart and his wife Pauline were very active in the community — Cozart was even the town's mayor for 10 years — and they used their home frequently for various functions.

An avid gardener and a caring hostess, Pauline Cozart made sure the landscape around her home had the same elegant effect outside as the craftsman features, custom woodworking, and decorative details had inside.

Almost 80 years later, the Cozarts' home is still the place to be. Now it is the Fuquay Mineral Springs Inn and Garden, a bed and breakfast owned by John and Patty Byrne. As an interesting coincidence, John Byrne is not only treading down Wiley Cozart's hallways but he also is following in



PHOTOS COURTESY OF FUQUAY
MINERAL SPRINGS INN AND GARDEN

The garden's original 1925 landscape plantings still dazzle guests with springtime displays.



his footsteps — Byrne is the current mayor of Fuquay-Varina. And if the name “Byrne” sounds familiar to New York Yankees fans, it should: John Byrne is the son of pitcher Tommy Byrne, the lefty who played with the Bronx Bombers in the 1940s and ’50s.

The Byrnes took 18 months to convert the spacious house into a bed and breakfast, opening it on November 1, 2001. Some changes were made, but most of the original design remained to reflect the house’s status on the National Register of Historic Places.

Much of the labor went into adding four-and-a-half bathrooms to the home, but extra effort was also exerted to preserve the integrity of the gardens surrounding the house. “The gardens began in 1925 — before the house — with plantings of deep purple double-bearded irises, white snowbells, tiger lilies, and nandinas, which were accompanied by several southern magnolias and dogwoods,” says Byrne.

Through the years, the gardens evolved, and Byrne notes that in the last 10 years, there have been some interesting, historically based additions added to Pauline Cozart’s original landscape. These include an Elizabethan lacecap hydrangea from

Manteo, a Lady Banks rose from Orton Plantation in Wilmington, and daylilies from Thomas Jefferson’s garden at Monticello.


Byrne says the double-bearded irises still dazzle guests with their springtime displays, although they now have beautiful competition for attention from a pink dogwood and azaleas planted throughout the property. In the summer, the venerable tiger lilies light up the planting beds, along with large butterfly bushes, coral trumpet vine, the daylilies, the lacecap hydrangea, and many colorful annuals.

Many of the plants at the inn have a dual purpose. Herbs can be found in a small bed as well as in pots, not only for their looks but also for use in cooking classes the Byrnes hold. Flowering plants are valuable for luring the kinetic color of butterflies and birds to the gardens. Four of the five rooms at the inn are named after birds and the fifth, the Carriage House Suite, is Byrne’s pick for the best room to enjoy the gardens and their winged visitors. It has, he notes, with pun intended, “a bird’s eye view of the gardens.”

The scenery alone makes spring mornings at the inn idyllic, but the Byrnes add to the enjoyment with breakfasts that usually consist of fresh

fruits, sweet bread, grits, baked apples, eggs, and bacon.

The third weekend of April typically finds the inn the center of horticultural activity. The inn’s pergola serves as headquarters for ticket sales for the town’s annual historic home and garden tour, while the main garden transforms into an outdoor gallery for displaying and selling art from the local artists’ guild.

Staying less than a block from the center of “ol’ town” Fuquay Springs, where shopping and dining opportunities await, guests may be tempted to wander off the inn’s property. The prevailing hospitality of the Byrnes and the all-natural allure of the inn’s gardens, however, make such excursions temporary at best. 

Fuquay Mineral Spring Inn and Garden
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*L.A. Jackson is the editor of Carolina Gardener magazine.**

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