

# Invitation to Healing Gardens: A Special Place for Contemplation in St. Charles

by Deborah Marqui / Originally published in *Spirit Journal*, June 2015

St. Bernard de Clairvaux said, “Believe one who knows; you will find something greater in woods than in books. Trees, and stones will teach you that which you can never learn in books.” I credit two activities that helped me heal body, mind and spirit from cancer: becoming attentive to Nature and practicing Centering Prayer.

I “happened” to begin Centering Prayer in a room that overlooked a wooded area. After Centering I often sat in silence, journaling and observing Nature. I began to see metaphors in Nature that taught me about God, life and myself. After treatment was over I wanted to be outside in Nature and so I started to create different perennial gardens around my home at Stone Hill Farm in St. Charles, Illinois.

What I quickly realized is that being intentional and attentive in Nature takes you back to your senses. When you are fully engaged using your senses, time stands still and a miracle occurs – you find yourself in the present moment – not doing but being. I found myself immersed in what the Greeks call “Kairos time” or “God’s time,” a sacred time filled with a sense of wonder.



Cancer-free from non-Hodgkin’s lymphoma since 1996 and in remission from breast cancer since 2002, I created Healing Gardens on the land where we have lived and raised four children since 1972, so that my husband Buzz and I could connect others to the restorative power of Nature. We’ve opened to the public the two acre expanse of woodland and perennial gardens that surround our home. Visiting individuals or small groups are welcome to do as they please. No activity is required or requested. People are welcome to read, nap, draw, meditate, journal, swing or walk or simply do nothing.

The gardens are open to the public on the second Sunday of each month from April through October. The admission fee is \$5 per person and \$10 per family. Cancer survivors are free, although donations of time or money for upkeep are appreciated. Groups are welcome to schedule and reserve special days to visit the gardens. (Call for lower group rates.)

I also lead day retreats, host Silent Saturday Mornings, and I'm a commissioned presenter of Centering Prayer.

Healing Gardens is located at 37W249 Dean Street, St. Charles, IL. For more information visit the [Healing Gardens](#) website or call 630-377-1846