

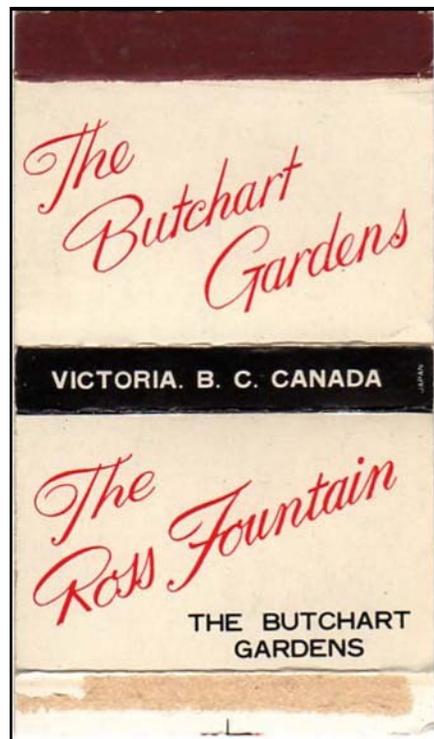
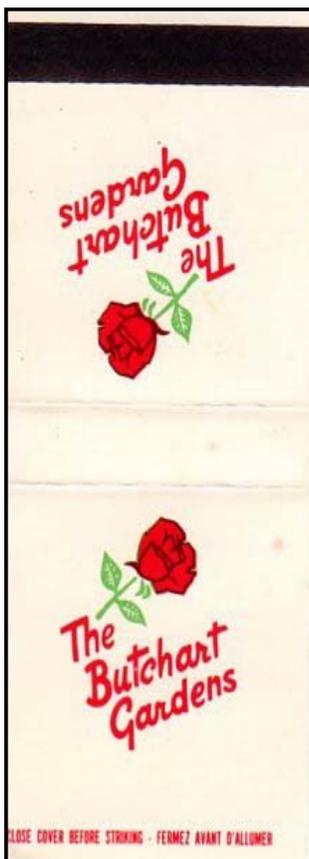
Canada's

In 1888, near his birthplace, Owen Sound, Ontario, a former dry goods merchant, Robert Pim Butchart, began manufacturing Portland cement. By the turn of the century, he had become a highly successful pioneer in this burgeoning North American industry. Attracted to the West Coast of Canada by rich limestone deposits vital for cement production, he built a new factory at Tod Inlet, on Vancouver Island. There, in 1904, he and his family established their home.

As Mr. Butchart exhausted the limestone in the quarry near their house, his enterprising wife, Jennie, conceived an unprecedented plan for refurbishing the bleak pit that resulted. From farmland nearby she requisitioned tons of top soil, had it brought to Tod Inlet by horse and cart, and used it to line the floor of the abandoned quarry. Little by little, under Jennie Butchart's personal supervision, the abandoned quarry bloomed as the spectacular Sunken Garden.

Mr. Butchart took much pride in his wife's remarkable work. A great hobbyist, he collected ornamental birds from all over the world. He kept ducks in the Star Pond, noisy peacocks on the front lawn, and a curmudgeon of a parrot in the main house. He enjoyed training pigeons at the site of the present Begonia Bower, and had many elaborate bird houses stationed throughout Jennie's beautiful gardens. By 1908, reflecting their world travels, the Butcharts had created a Japanese Garden on the sea-side of their home. Later, an Italian Garden was created on the site of their former tennis court, and a fine Rose Garden replaced a large kitchen vegetable patch in 1929.

The renown of Mrs. Butchart's gardening quickly spread. By the 1920s, more than fifty thousand people came each year to see her creation. In a gesture toward all their visitors, the hospitable Butcharts christened their estate "Benvenuto", the Italian word for "Welcome". To extend the welcome, flowering cherry trees along Benvenuto Avenue leading to The Gardens were purchased from Yokohama Nursery in.



Their house grew into a comfortable, luxurious showplace, with a bowling alley, indoor salt-water swimming pool, paneled billiard room and - wonder of its age! - a self-playing Aeolian pipe organ (still played on Firework Saturdays). Today, the residence contains the Dining Room Restaurant, offices, and rooms still used for family entertaining. From January 15 to March 15, a special re-creation of the family house is showcased.

The family tradition of acquiring objects when travelling has continued over the years. The Fountain of the Three Sturgeons and the bronze casting of the wild boar are both from Florence, Italy. They were purchased by Ian and Ann-Lee Ross in 1973. The fountain is a casting made from a much smaller fountain

Butchart Gardens

created by Professor Sirio Tofanari in 1958. Other works by him include the little donkey and the foal that stand close by the statue of the wild boar on the Piazza in front of the Butchart Residence. The boar is a rare bronze copy of a casting of the marble displayed in the Uffizi Gallery in Florence. This bronze known affectionately as "Tacca," in honor of Pietro Tacca, the artist who created the statue in 1620. His snout is finely burnished by thousands of visitors who give it an affectionate rub for good luck. Tacca is dedicated to all the children and animals who visit The Gardens.

The only surviving portion of Mr. Butchart's Tod Inlet cement factory is the tall chimney of a long vanished kiln. The plant stopped manufacturing cement in 1916, but continued to make tiles and flower pots as late as 1950. The single chimney now overlooks the quarry Mrs. Butchart so miraculously reclaimed.

The Butchart Gardens remains a family business and has grown to become a premier West Coast display garden, while maintaining the gracious traditions of the past. Today, the Gardens has established an international reputation for its year round display of flowering plants. Each year over 1,000,000 bedding plants in some 700 varieties are used throughout the Gardens to ensure uninterrupted bloom from March through October. Well over a million people visit each year, enjoying not only the floral beauty, but the entertainment and lighting displays presented each summer and Christmas.

Fifty-five acres of wonderful floral display are open to the public, offering spectacular views from the many paths that meander through the four main gardens. The family's commitment to horticulture and hospitality spans 100 years, and continues to delight visitors from all over the world. From the exquisite Sunken Garden to the charming Rose Garden, the gracious traditions of the past are still maintained in one of the loveliest corners in the world. [<http://www.butchartgardens.com/gardens/>]

I actually visited the Butchart Gardens in 1973 on my honeymoon. I wasn't into gardening yet, but I found it stunning nonetheless...although in retrospect I should have taken a much closer look at the thorns!

