

## In the Garden...

**Bryan's Garden District offers services and settings designed to induce a sense of peace and relaxation**

By ANNE HOAR  
The Battalion

Nestled within a Bryan neighborhood is a sanctuary of greenery that provides a retreat from the dry grass and uniform architecture of daily life.

The Bryan Garden District, located on North Avenue between Texas Avenue and South College Drive, is an area that incorporates services, dining and shopping into one place with a single goal of providing relaxation.

Marilyn Ferguson, owner of The Gift Shop, founded the district in 1983 when the nursery she opened did not get the crowds she expected.

"I wanted to do something to attract more people to the area, as well as attract more business," Ferguson said.

Ferguson teamed up with three business partners and built the large main building, a two-story, Victorian-style house.

### Gardening in the Garden District

The nursery that started the Garden District is not currently on the property. Ferguson said the nursery will return, and there are plans to make the entrance to the district more like a display of different plants that flourish in the Bryan-College Station weather.

"Summers are getting hotter, so it is important to plant things that are drought-tolerant," Ferguson said. "There are lots of options for the garden, such as verbenas, ornamental grasses and purple cone flowers."

Gardening in the Garden District is currently done by the Landscape Development Group on South College. At 25-years-old, it is the oldest residential landscape company in the area.

### A Personal Wellness Experience

The Garden District Salon is a mini-spa experience in the middle of Bryan. In addition to a full-scale hair salon, the salon offers massages, facials, manicures, pedicures and enough pampering to last an entire afternoon.

Gail Emerson, owner of the salon, said the environment makes the whole experience more relaxing.

"It's a great way to de-stress at exam time," Emerson said.

The Fitness Quest Studio in the main building offers classes in the stretching exercise Pilates. Pilates exercises increase flexibility and endurance while improving posture and building strength.

### A Unique Dining Experience

Live Oak Restaurant, in the main building, has three separate eating areas, each offering different dining experiences.

On the veranda, a cool breeze and a sun partially obscured by large shade trees provide a relaxed atmosphere for loud laughter and casual chatter.

In the country kitchen, one can munch on cookies and sip raspberry iced tea perhaps while reminiscing with a childhood friend.

In the tea room, one can enjoy a more intimate setting and enjoy a slice of cheesecake with whispered conversation.

Jennifer Warren, a kitchen manager, said the menu changes daily, but it usually includes soups, salads, casareles, chicken and crab dishes.

Warren said the restaurant is a popular place for a variety of gatherings for friends — from baby showers to bridal luncheons to birthdays and anniversaries.

### A Step Away from the Mall

The Garden District is a frequent stop for tour buses.

"Twenty-five percent of our business comes from out-of-towners," Ferguson said. "People often drive over 100 miles to visit our store."

The gift shop features many things made by American artisans, such as glass crosses and jewelry, wire and glass wall hangings and handmade beaded jewelry. Lamps unique to the gift shop are created on-site.

Heartworks, located in the main building of the Garden District, features decorative items for the home, including a wide variety of candles and collectible figurines.

Kay Youngblood, a 10-year employee of Heartworks, said people enjoy shopping there because of the customer service and the friendly atmosphere of the store.

"I like to try to help people find the best gift," Youngblood said. "I think that one of the neat things about the store is that customers will help each other pick out things and give each other suggestions."

Ann Brower, owner of Heartworks, said the store features gifts tailored to men's interests, including gifts with golf, hunting, Texas and Texas A&M themes.

Young Hearts is a clothing shop for children, located in a building behind the main house.

The store has clothing and accessories for girls' sizes infant through preteen and boys' sizes infant through size seven.

Owner Pam Schultz said the store is special because it has unique items.

"We have special outfits for special occasions," Schultz said. "We also feature custom baby bedding."

Pygmalion, a jewelry store located in the main building, has many one-of-a-kind pieces and offers custom jewelry design and repair.

The store has a variety of gemstone, gold and sterling silver jewelry.



BERNIE GARZA/THE BATTALION

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