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Lori Darling

OWNER, THE GARDEN GODDESS

*By Suzanne D'Amato
NH Mirror Contributor*

Lori Darling's idea of a perfect day is to spend it doing her favorite things – primping, pruning and puttering – in her garden.

"It feels good to have my hands in the dirt and be around plants. I have an enormous perennial garden. Many of the plants I grew from seed. They're my babies," said Darling, a Montréal native who has lived with her family in Manchester for the past 20 years. "My husband, Lee, even installed speakers in our yard, so I can listen to music as I work."

Not surprisingly, Darling's friends years ago nicknamed her "The Garden Goddess." The name later became the obvious choice to call her Manchester-based landscape and garden-design business, which is approaching its first anniversary this spring.

Her business consists of consulting with clients about plant choices, designing new or rejuvenating existing gardens and landscapes, and maintaining gardens for clients who don't want to do it themselves.

"Gardening has always been my passion," Darling said. "Years before starting my business, I worked as a licensed manicurist. My nail clients would ask me their gardening questions while I did their nails. I'd sketch designs and do consultations for them. They christened me 'The Garden Goddess,' and that's when the idea for my own design business 'blossomed.'"



NH Mirror/Suzanne D'Amato

Before opening The Garden Goddess, Darling designed landscapes for and managed a Hooksett garden center for four years.

A devoted mother – her daughter and son are in their 20s – Darling recalled, "I used to love talking to the children who came with their parents to the garden center – hoping to spark the children's interest in planting flowers."

She added, "The most common mistake homeowners make is choosing the wrong plants for the wrong locations. I've learned a lot through trial and error. After 20 years, my planting knowledge is extensive."

For more information, call 491-2761 or visit www.gardengoddessnh.com.

Where is the perfect climate for you?

Although the four seasons are not conducive to gardening all year long, I look forward to the change of seasons. All of

them are beautiful as they come and go. However, I would love to have more opportunity to grow tropical plants, such as palm and agave.

What is your favorite flower or plant?

I don't really have any favorites. I probably am most drawn to striking, bold and dramatic plants.

Who has been inspirational to you?

There really hasn't been anyone who set me on my path. Although I used to help my mother plant flowers when I was little, gardening really is my own interest that developed when my husband and I bought our first house 25 years ago. At that time, we didn't have the money to hire someone to landscape our yard, so I did it myself.

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