



## PLACE

## a great escape

**the spot** SpindleTree Gardens

**why we love it** Tucked off the roadside, just south of Tamworth, is an 80-acre parcel of imagination and marvel known as SpindleTree Gardens, owned by retired Toronto architect Tom Brown and his wife, Susie Meisner, who works as a publicist. After substantial renovations to the property, you can now tour a series of gardens and water features and enjoy a light lunch in the Garden Café.

**how to get there** *From Napanee:* Highway 41 north to Erinsville, west on Highway 4 to Tamworth (35.3 km/32 mins)

*From Kingston:* (Highway 401 west to Highway 41 at Napanee, north and follow the same (73.0 km/55 minutes) or Highway 38 north through Stone Mills (65.0 km/74 minutes)



While 12 acres have been transformed by gardens, ponds, waterfalls, bridges and a natural amphitheatre, the interior has also undergone a unique metamorphosis. The ugly box-like farmhouse on the property, bought in 1988, was almost uninhabitable and hadn't been altered since the flower-power days of the 1960s. Now, the interior space belies its pastoral setting. From the cubed shell of the old main house rose a second storey with a kitchen, dining room, library and guest suite. Opening onto the new addition is a great room with a 30-foot vaulted ceiling and fanned staircase that feel like the interior of a squire's manor or French château. Statues, architectural elements and early farm implements mix well in the large, airy space. Reclaimed gothic windows and stained glass frame an unexpectedly elegant potting shed and greenhouse. This room, which is painted in Susie's pink and Tom's shade of green, has more custom trim than most other houses. The salon is also a functional room where the retired architect still works, formulating designs to implement both inside and out.

The main floor bathroom takes a page from the past with its burnished board trim and century details. The halls that lead from the new addition to the library are covered with Tom and Susie's eclectic art tastes and Tom's own paintings. As one would expect, the fuchsia-coloured library shelves books on gardening, art and history. Leading from here is the galley kitchen and dining room wallpapered in a rich William Morris design, where Susie scores points with her outstanding cuisine. She offers light lunches in the dining room and in the screened porch during the summer season.

SpindleTree is a gem in the rocky hills of Stone Mills Township. Other attractions in nearby Tamworth, Yarker and Camden East make this an enjoyable day trip from Kingston and area.

— CHARLES BEALE