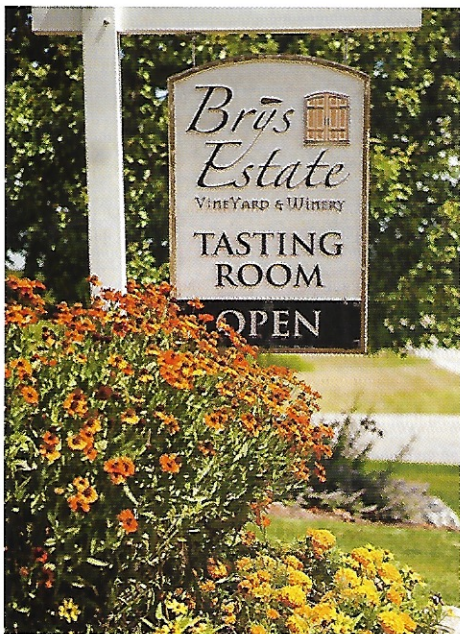




BY DIANNA STAMPFLER

Brys Estate's secret garden



TUCKED BACK IN off Blue Water and Center roads in the heart of Old Mission Peninsula, a lush 12-acre secret garden is waiting to be explored.

The new agricultural space in the far northeast corner of the Brys Estate Vineyard & Winery is the most recent addition to the property.

"We had a beautiful low-lying area near the winery that wasn't suitable for grapes," says Eileen Brys, who opened the winery in 2005 with her husband, Walter.

"This expansive valley really is such a unique spot, and it's hidden from road-view, so that's what makes it a 'secret garden.'"

More than 5,000 lavender plants, along with blueberries, strawberries, culinary herbs and a perennial flower garden, will welcome guests this summer.

Visitors will find both fresh and dried bunches of lavender, hand-made lavender



items for adults, kids and pets, and lavender-scented bath and body products in the 1,000-square-foot farmhouse-inspired garden shop. A picnic area and play space for kids make this a true family destination.

Over the past few years, the Brys have worked meticulously to create a truly unique venue.

Attached to the original winery building, an 1,800-square-foot, elevated upper deck

PHOTOGRAPHY COURTESY PATRICK BRY



“This expansive valley really is such a unique spot, and it’s hidden from road-view, so that’s what makes it a ‘secret garden.’”
— Eileen Brys

offers seating for up to 48 guests and provides unparalleled views of the vineyard and East Grand Traverse Bay. The deck also features a tasting room where visitors can purchase wine by the glass to pair with a selection of imported cheeses, cured meats, nuts, olives and hummus. It’s open from spring through fall, weather permitting.

Just three steps farther up, the Bridge Above the Vines is the only place in Michigan where you can literally walk over grapevines — six rows of chardonnay grapes, to be specific. The bridge, says Eileen, has become a popular place for “selfies” and for couples to become engaged.

Inside the main building, a brick and mahogany tasting room provides a warm and comforting space to sample the vast portfolio of Brys wines.

Before leaving, be sure to take a peek inside the vaulted barrel and cask rooms, where

award-winning red wines are aged to perfection under the watchful eye of master vintner, Coenraad Stassen.

Several years ago, Eileen and Walter also converted a former barn on the 91-acre property into an 1,100-square-foot storybook guesthouse, with two bedrooms, two baths, a fully equipped kitchen, a great room and a covered porch complete with wicker chairs. Guesthouse visitors are invited to stroll the grounds, where more than 40,000 grape vines provide the fruit for the winery’s estate wines. A short walk through the vines to the tasting room allows guests to totally immerse themselves in the elegant country experience.

For more information, visit brysestate.com.

Freelance writer Dianna Stampfler is president of Promote Michigan and resides in Peto-skey.

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