

A Flowering of Resistance

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GreenMap

opengreenmap.org/LESGardenTour1 (Green map view)

opengreenmap.org/LESGardenTour2 (Green map view)

opengreenmap.org/LESGardenTour3 (Green map view)

Garden Highlights (from selected gardens)

<http://tiny.cc/LESGardenHighlights> (Google slideshow)

<http://tiny.cc/map307> (Google map view)

All 50 Gardens

<http://tiny.cc/LESGardens> (Google slideshow)

<http://tiny.cc/map306> (Google map view)

On a lazy spring afternoon, I took a friend from Paris on a walk in my neighborhood, the Lower East Side. Some call it the East Village or *Loisaida*. I showed her the community gardens that I often show other neighborhood visitors. While the gardens are beautiful when looked at individually, their specialness also comes from the unlikely heroic story to which they stand as witness. They are a vibrant example of how a neighborhood that was burning down was saved by community gardeners amongst others, and how in turn, the neighborhood saved the gardens when they became endangered. My Parisian friend made me promise to document the story.

So welcome to the neighborhood. Herein lies the tale of the gardens that saved it.

The gardens are one of the treasures of the Lower East Side. They were also one of the main reasons that the Lower East Side revived in the 1970s and 1980s. Thanks to the practical support of Green Guerillas and other organizations, once dangerous empty lots became the neighborhood's parkland under the aegis of the city's GreenThumb program. Arguably the first and most beautiful garden was the Garden of Eden, created on Eldridge Street in the shape of a gigantic yin-yang symbol by Adam Purple and his consort Eve. Like its Biblical namesake, our downtown garden has long been lost but remains part of the story.

Usually these gardens were planted in burnt-out lots that the city inadvertently inherited in lieu of payment of taxes (in rem). Arson of old tenement buildings was all too common in the 1960s and 1970s. Devoid of buildings, these city-owned lots were used by drug users, dealers, and prostitutes, and became a source of danger to anyone who passed them by day or night. Neighborhood residents, including the remaining earlier ethnic communities (e.g., Latino, African American, Jewish, etc.), came together with neighborhood activists when people realized that the lots needed to be turned around in order for the neighborhood to literally stop burning down.

Slowly but surely, Green Guerillas and other organizations taught people from all walks of life how to create safe flower and vegetable gardens once the rubble was cleared from these lots. Putting up fences was a major part of being able to reclaim these areas. In many cases, people who came from rural areas were already accustomed to gardening and needed little encouragement to build casitas (small summer houses). Sometimes chickens and other poultry joined the vegetables and flowers. Some of the gardens were open to the neighborhood; others were run more like a summer club for those who lived on a block. What no one expected was that a program designed to help rebuild inner cities would end up inspiring gardeners to create works of horticultural art.

Green Guerillas was started by a Lower East Side artist, Liz Christy¹ in 1973. She worked with friends and neighbors together to clean and plant in a derelict lot on Bowery and Houston Streets. Today large trees, a pond replete with goldfish and turtles, and meandering sophisticated gardening paths with trellises grace the Liz Christy Garden. Yet the beginning was very rough – the City of New York initially did not want either gardens or gardeners. Impressed by the Green Guerillas’ initial success, by 1976 the Department of Agriculture started to provide technical assistance to green gardeners in a number of cities.

After five years of non-stop organizing, Green Guerillas and other gardening groups were able to turn the City around enough to help gardens take advantage of a new City program established in 1978. GreenThumb encouraged “greening” of blighted urban areas by allowing unused city-owned property to be leased by gardeners for a dollar a year. A number of gardens were off to a rocky but promising start.

Newcomers found their way into the life of the neighborhood by joining gardens.

It was a place for all people on our block to go and bond together,” recalls Sara Ferguson, who moved next door in 1994. “People had weddings there and birthdays there. People came and cooked meals there. On Friday and Saturday nights, people would all be out there eating together and playing drums. There was a huge Halloween party, when the casitas would become haunted houses.”

She got to know her neighbors as they dug together in the dirt. The elderly Don Garcia taught her how to mound a tomato plant, and which “weeds” were worth keeping for home remedies. Lydia Cortes, a mother of five, watched over the garden while her husband, Isais, fixed cars in the back.²

Success brought its own problems as well as rewards for the over sixty neighborhood gardens in the Lower East Side and the more than eight hundred elsewhere in poor city neighborhoods. Poverty-stricken areas that had been turned around due to the gardens were now seen as

¹ http://www.greenguerillas.org/GG_ourprograms.php#ourhistory
<http://www.ecotippingpoints.org/ETP-Stories/indepth/newyorkgarden.html>

² <http://www.ecotippingpoints.org/ETP-Stories/indepth/newyorkgarden.html#feedback>

The Little Puerto Rico Garden on East 10th and Avenue B was torn down in 1997 by the city.

containing lots with potentially valuable real estate. Some felt that city property should be used for affordable housing which resulted in gardens being lost from the 1980s onwards.

In the 1990s, punishing success, the Guiliani administration refused to renew the GreenThumb leases, transferred many of the properties to Housing rather than Parks, and began to auction gardens off. These actions were fought by protesters and were accompanied by intense grassroots lobbying of politicians in order to convince them that neighborhoods needed both community gardens and affordable housing. Eventually the battles were fought in the courts. Each garden that survived did so because of the intervention of a larger network of individuals who came together to lobby for that particular location, usually as part of what became the Garden Preservation Coalition. This helped further spur the unique identification of certain gardens with cultural programs such as music or theater, or with certain types of gardening, or with interethnic community building. The gardens were particularly important to the Lower East Side not only because of how they had turned the neighborhood around but because in doing so, they reinforced the importance of creating a model of neighborhood ethnic diversity.

The gardens fought back by not allowing themselves to be picked off individually and by engendering a huge amount of publicity about their sale. In the Lower East Side, the gardens came together by networking with the Sixth Street Community Center which housed the neighborhood groups. From the early 1980s on, one of the most important groups was the Lower East Side Gardeners Coalition which Kate Hogan helped pull together from the various local gardens as part of the city-wide Neighborhood Open Space Coalition. Their goal was to provide technical assistance to the gardeners as well as “to work together in the struggle to save community gardens so that open spaces will be available for all people in the neighborhood”³.

Critical to their success in 1999 was working with larger organizations such as the New York Restoration Project (NYRP was founded by Bette Midler) and the Trust for Public Land. They were able to harness the outrage felt by New Yorkers at community gardens being sold off into forcing the city to cut a last minute deal to allow them to jointly buy 114 of the auctioned gardens. The fifty-five gardens run by NYRP celebrated their tenth anniversary in 2009 – the New York Garden Trust was established as part of the purchase with the goal of keeping these gardens public in perpetuity.⁴ The Trust for Public Land which had started buying over 100 parcels of land in 1978 as part of their NYC Land Project was already a player in the LES gardens. The 69 gardens under their auspices (65 were bought at auction), were placed under the Manhattan Land Trust⁵ to guard them. Even so a number of gardens were lost to sales to developers.

An important part of this strategy was to use art to mobilize neighborhood residents to advocate saving gardens. Rites of Spring, a pageant run by EarthCelebrations (which was housed at the Sixth Street Community Center), became known throughout the city as an event where children and adults adorned in gorgeous costumes and accompanied by musicians would go from garden

³ Lower East Side Gardeners Statement of Purpose, 1982

⁴ *Good Dirt*, NY Restoration Project (NYRP), Summer 2009, newsletter, page 1. Two of their gardens are in the Lower East Side, The Toyota Garden on East 11th, and the Suffolk Street Garden.

⁵ http://www.tpl.org/tier3_cdl.cfm?content_item_id=18995&folder_id=2928 for The Trust for Public Land; <http://manhattanlandtrust.org/> The Manhattan Land Trust which has 5 LES gardens.

to garden to receive an offering to Gaia. At the end of the day, butterflies would be released at the last garden visited.

“For 15 years Felicia Young, founder and director of EarthCelebrations, organized the Rites of Spring and Rites of Winter pageants. Part parade, part performance art, the pageants highlighted the need to save the gardens of the East Village and Lower East Side and community gardens throughout New York... Young worked to save the gardens of the Lower East Side by bringing people together, by connecting the community to the gardens through celebration and art... “So that was the quest that got me into thinking that pageantry — which was to me a combination of all the arts, music, dance, sculpture, puppetry and painting — you know, all of that, could be brought together; and it could be professional artists, nonprofessionals, community, and then try to address issues and maybe even change things.” “It’s not just a performance, and then it’s over,” she stressed. “We build these alliances, and those alliances are real. The people who are connected stay connected and do things together, and that’s how we were able to save the gardens.”⁶

When Elliot Spitzer became Attorney General, he put an injunction in place to immediately stop the bulldozing and justified his actions by citing the New York State Constitution which guarantees a certain amount of green space for each New York State resident. Luckily for many residents, the gardens represented the only parkland or greenery within walking distance⁷. Spitzer eventually ended up working with the Bloomberg administration and most of the remaining gardens were saved and put under the auspices of the Parks Department, and almost all of the remaining Lower East Side gardens now have GreenThumb leases again. Fifty gardens have survived, a little more than half the original number.

Caveat to garden visitors: although these gardens are primarily owned by the NY Parks Department, the NY Restoration Project, and the Trust for Public Land, they are usually staffed by volunteer gardeners. This means as a practical matter that the gardens are open primarily during weekend afternoons when the weather is warm. The best way to experience these gardens’ delights is to go visit them when they are likely to be open (n.b., some gardens have websites that list their hours). The next best is to do a virtual tour using the View Map feature of the URL posted above. Either way, welcome.

⁶ *The Villager*, Volume 78 - Number 47 / April 29 - May 5 , 2009

⁷ In the Lower East Side, the ratio was only 0.6 acres of parkland per 1,000 people; in NYC in general, it is 4.5 acres of parkland for every 1000 residents

Zephyr – A Gentle Wind Blows from the South

The Lower East Side's historical boundaries extend from the Brooklyn Bridge up to 14th Street; it is bordered on the west by the Bowery (3rd Avenue) and in the east by the East River. Starting with the southwest side of the neighborhood, here is a journey that meanders across the gardens highlighting some of the main attractions. Remember, most of these gardens are open to the public primarily on summer weekend afternoons, with some providing access during the spring and fall, or occasionally on other days. Luckily, even seeing a garden through a fence can give the sense of beauty and uniqueness that it brings to the neighborhood. Also, some gardens have web sites which post hours.

South of Houston











M'finda Kalunga is located between Rivington and Delancey streets, two blocks south of Houston Street. Situated on the thoroughfare that connects Christie and Forsyth Streets, this corridor was created when the city knocked down rows of tenements as part of 'urban renewal', part of the WPA project during the Depression. As a result, it is not only long but wide. It is also unique in that it is almost completely shaded and immediately became an oasis for the housing projects and tenements within a block of the garden. Its name is a reference to an old African burial ground used from 1794 to 1853 which was situated within a few hundred yards of the garden. The name means "Garden at the edge of the other side of ...", and it is one of two African themed neighborhood gardens. Developed in 1983 explicitly to deal with neighborhood drug problems, it gradually expanded into an apprenticeship gardening program with twenty regular gardeners who have created a truly lovely deeply verdant, almost forested respite, replete with beds of flowers and shrubs and gravel-strewn paths.

A few blocks northeast, another series of gardens starts off of the Bowery. To get there from **M'finda Kalunga**, walk north on Christie to Houston Street and cross the street. The street name now changes to Second Avenue. Turn left immediately to follow the fence of the **Liz Christy Garden** which starts there and whose garden entrances can be found either in the middle of the block, between Second Avenue and the Bowery, or directly on the Bowery.

Public transportation is available here since it is the Second Avenue stop on the F and V subway lines and is also served by the M15 (First and Second Avenue) bus as well as by the Houston Street bus.

Noteworthy if walking directly south, down Chrystie Street

The **Wah Mei Bird Garden**, just south of Delancey by Chrystie and Broome streets Street, is where songbirds (and their owners!) compete to fill the city with a special music that can temporarily succeed in driving out the noise and bustle of this edge of Chinatown. It's part of Sara D. Roosevelt Park which also includes the Forsyth (east side of Christie Street) former community gardens now run by the Parks Department.

Houston going East (estimated time 1.5 – 2 hours)          

Shorter Loop - Alternative Starting Point

Start with the **Miracle Garden** (East 3rd between Avenues A and B, closer to B) and follow the route from there.

The **Liz Christy Garden** is on a strip of Houston Street bordered on the west by the Bowery, and on the east by Second Avenue which makes it is not only the oldest existing New York City garden, but one of the largest. With over thirty-five years of gardening embedded in its (horti)culture, its byways are full of surprises big and small with stunning contrasting herbs, flowering plants and trellises, providing shade, as well as a pond, vegetable and herb patches and cozy places to hideaway with a book. When the garden was founded by neighborhood artist Liz Christy and friends in 1973, the city tried to take back the land that was being cleared of debris and found itself in a full-fledged publicity battle which was won by a Daily News photography spread of the ‘before’ and ‘after’ state of affairs.

A feisty soul rather than a diplomat, Liz Christy went on to work for the Council on the Environment (Open Space Greening program) and for Green Guerillas, in effect founding the gardening movement in New York. The city owned over 15,000 empty lots by the 1970s; over 800 of these became community gardens. She was adept at convincing funders of the benefits the gardens brought to neighborhood residents and the city at large: fewer havens for drug addicts, fresh grown food and herbs, healthy air for children in poor neighborhoods to breathe along with a safe environment to play in. She became a mentor to many other gardens, supplying much needed soil, plants, knowledge and the knack of working around New York’s bureaucracies. The garden she founded was named after her when she died some years later of cancer. A few years ago, the garden had to again fight for its existence when an four building luxury rental development called Avalon was placed around the garden and a number of adjoining buildings were torn down. Due to a vigorous petition campaign, the neighborhood rallied to the gardener’s call to save the Liz Christy Garden and it remains one of the most beautiful sites in Lower Manhattan.

Continue walking on the Bowery to East 2nd Street and turn right to go east. **Albert's Garden** is located on East 2nd Street between the Bowery and Second Avenue. The pleasure of entering this understated shady quiet respite starts with viewing a large, beautiful painting of a bird on the wall of the adjoining tenement painted just to the right of the entrance. The back wall is original stone that predates the wall’s use by the adjoining New York Marble Cemetery, the City’s first secular, non-sectarian burial ground founded in 1831⁸. In between are shaded paths, little nooks to sit in, quietly planted trees, flowers and shrubs are tastefully designed to provide privacy for the different garden areas. The Manhattan Land Trust helps manage **Albert's Garden** along with local volunteers and it was one of the gardens saved from auction by the Trust for Public Land in 1999.

⁸ The novel premise being that prominent people were to have the option of marble vaults and could avoid being buried in hallowed ground associated with a church cemetery. The entrance to the cemetery is on Second Avenue, and it is open to the public once a year during the summer. See <http://www.marblecemetery.org/history/nymchist.htm>.

Due to 1930's urban renewal which eliminated many tenement blocks in order to widen Houston Street, Houston will eventually merge with East 1st (on Avenue A) and then East 2nd street (on Avenue C). This makes for different options for meandering east from the **Liz Christy Garden** or **Albert's Garden**. This guide suggests walking east from **Albert's Garden** on East 2nd Street in order to get the sense of the neighborhood's different historical layers while heading to the next area replete with gardens. In between Second and First Avenues at 74 East 2nd Street, pedestrians are rewarded with an open view of the very green New York City Marble Cemetery⁹ where the prominent merchant Preserved Fish was buried (and yes, there are two separate historic cemeteries around the corner from each other). Keep on going east til arriving at Avenue A, and then turn left to go one block north to East 3rd Street. Turn right to continue east again, this time going down East 3rd Street. On the north side of the block between Avenues A and B, many of the buildings have stunning tile murals created by Jim Powers, a homeless Vietnam vet who is often known by his sobriquet, Mosaic Man.

The next garden is the aptly named **Miracle Garden** (East 3rd between A and B, closer to B) which quietly provides a tranquil resting spot. Dominated by a weeping willow, it marks the transition of this part of the East Village/Lower East Side from bedrock into native swamp where weeping willows and other water-thirsty trees flourish in abundance despite the land having been filled-in during the 19th century.

Cross Avenue B and on the south side just past the corner is one of the loveliest sculpture gardens in New York City. The **Kenkeleba House Garden** on the East 3rd Street side has an extraordinary mix of large African sculptures as well as local sculptures made out of scrap, or bricolage, a specialty of the Lower East Side art scene since the 1970s. Situated in a large plot, the net effect is that of viewing an outdoor museum with both permanent and temporary pieces on exhibit. Some of the outdoor pieces on loan are from local artists who used to belong to the much beloved Rivington Street Sculpture Garden which had two incarnations in the neighborhood before it was pushed out by a new apartment building. Double back to Avenue B, continue south for one block, and turn left onto to East 2nd Street. Since the whole garden runs from East 3rd to East 2nd between Avenue B and Avenue C, closer to Avenue B, it needs to be approached from both sides. The separate planted garden area, can be accessed from the East 2nd Street side by entering during the designated posted hours when the garden gate is open. At other times, take a look around to see if anyone is in the gallery at 219 East 2nd Street who could open the garden for you. It is worth trying to gain entry to the planted garden, particularly since this also allows entry to the sculpture garden.

Continue down East 2nd to see three other gardens between Avenues B and C, that approach Avenue C (remember that Houston Street merges with East 2nd at Avenue C). **Peachtree Garden** which is slightly closer to Avenue B, is located on the north side of block and is a lush, well-planted welcoming garden on a block that burnt down badly. It has individual raised plots that grow vegetables and herbs as well as common areas such as a gazebo and is a well-utilized garden. Next is the **Jardin de Morphing Gallery** on the south side of the street closer to Avenue C. Houston Street acts as the south side of the garden; it has no plants to speak of other than weeds but has some very witty avant garde bricolage sculptures. Scrap-iron parodies of gendered

⁹ <http://www.nycmc.org/home.html>. The entrance to the cemetery is on East 2nd Street, and it is open to the public once a year during the summer.

sixties robots, are placed in interactive positions on what looks otherwise to be an empty lot. Last but hardly least, is **Le Petit Versailles** located in an odd triangular plot almost at Avenue C and it is announced so to speak by an associated mural on a nearby tenement. Like the **Jardin de Morphing Gallery**, **Le Petit Versailles** extends from East 2nd to Houston Street. It specializes in high end cultural programs that include sculpture, poetry, and other extremely interesting art events that are hosted in a somewhat French and Asian themed garden.

Take a left onto Avenue C and continue north to East 4th Street where another casita garden, this one called the **Secret Garden**, unpretentiously dominates the northwest corner with a pond in addition to trees and other plantings. Continue east and cross the street onto East 4th where three more treasures await between Avenues C and D. On the south side of East 4th street close to Avenue C is the award winning **Tranquilidad Garden** or **Parque de Tranquilidad** at the site of the former Chevra Bikur Cholim B'nai Israel Anshei Baranov Synagogue¹⁰. Small though located on three plots, it is a shady garden with flowers, shrubs, well paved paths made from the bricks of the former buildings and includes cornices and other architectural pieces to form borders and sitting areas. It is part of the Manhattan Land Trust (Trust for Public Lands) which helps manage the garden along with local volunteers and was one of the gardens saved from auction by the Trust for Public Land in 1999.

Marking the waves of immigration, the blocks between Avenues B and D on East 3rd and 4th street are scattered with Latino Pentecostal churches that were once synagogues. These buildings typically were sold in the 1960s and 70s as the Jewish community departed from those blocks. Look at these buildings closely and exterior synagogue architectural details become apparent such as a Decalogue or round windows with Jewish stars.¹¹ On the southwest corner of East 3rd and Avenue C, is a large brick Victorian Gothic building, now a condominium that was previously a yeshiva (Jewish seminary) and before that, part of an Anglican rectory.

The more expansive, light and less tightly laid out **El Jardin del Paraiso**, is just across the street on the north side and extends the full way to East 5th street where there is also an entrance. One of the earliest gardens in a particularly burnt down area, the large **El Jardin del Paraiso** is permanent Parks Department land. It includes a swampy area, a pond and a designer tree house in the large weeping willow (a must for climbing!).

Last but hardly least, **Orchard Alley**, is further down the block on the south side, close to Avenue D and city housing projects. As one of the last gardens created in an extremely large lot, there was not a lot of initial optimism that it would survive the onslaught of the city's bulldozers. Much to the delighted surprise of all those who labored to remove rocks and then create the garden, it not only has survived but has flourished as one of the premier horticultural gardens in the neighborhood replete with fruit trees, flowers such as alliums and tiger lilies, herbs, and winding paths. Its lot extends to East 3rd Street, but the entrance is only through East 4th.

Right across from **Orchard Alley** is the **Church of Saints Isidore and Leander**¹². The architecture dates from the turn of the century when it was a Slavic church. Today this Iberian

¹⁰ See photos at <http://tiny.cc/Baranov>. The synagogue dates from 1887.

¹¹ See photos at <http://tiny.cc/Formershuls>

¹² 345 East 4th Street, NY NY 10009, for photos see <http://tiny.cc/Mozarabic>

church is in communion with the Russian Eastern Orthodox Church and refers to itself as a Western Orthodox Catholic Church of the Hispanic Mozarabic Rite. It claims to use the 11th century ritual dating prior to the beginning of the Reconquista. This church is also a monastery. The local priest and monk has decorated the interior and the back exterior wall with exuberant mosaics that loosely draw on Byzantine art as well as other more popular influences (a la Watts wall). It also loosely functions as a barter house to raise money from used goods such as clothes.

Turn left to continue north up Avenue D where housing projects on the east side of the street contrast with new upscale construction on the west side of these blocks. Turn left onto East 6th Street, walk west towards Avenue C, cross the street on the south side and walk past murals by a local artist known to all as Chico. In the middle of the block, is the **Sixth Street Community Center**¹³ at 638 East 6th Street -- the former epicenter for EarthCelebrations and now for Community Supported Agriculture(CSA) . It is housed in the leftmost of two former synagogues that stand next to each other, Ahawath Yeshurun Shar'a Torah¹⁴. If it is open, it is well worth entering but not only because it has a café and is the local CSA site. The original memorial plaques have been lovingly restored and been cojoined with murals commemorating the neighborhood's labor history and resilient spirit. One mural's caption reads "this neighborhood ain't ready to give up the ghost" a reference to the Lower East Side being reclaimed through gardening, homesteading, squatting and other organizing efforts. Next door is a Pentecostal church housed in the other former synagogue (originally a twin building with brick gingerbread on top). The next building is a stunningly restored red brick Community Aid Society building built by Calvert Vaux, who designed Central and Prospect Parks and other well-known New York landmarks in conjunction with Frederick Olmsted. And yes, next to that building is a most beguiling landscaped garden.

6 BC Botanical Garden, on East 6th between Avenues B and C, a little closer to Avenue B, was one of the first gardens to promote a unified look and feel. By the 1990s, it moved from the more typical amalgam of individual plot beds into a planned effort that looked at the whole garden. It divided it into a series of follies, each more beautiful than the next, and placed much emphasis on using native plants where possible. Arguably the most lovely horticultural space in the Lower East Side, it is both shady and sunny but does not try to grow vegetables. It has large trees and shrubs, a Japanese style house where members can eat on tiny porches, a series of ponds and wells, and a back area made of stone where people can sit and eat as well. Its grape trellises provide needed shade in the summer. The brick pathways wind throughout the gardens and also draw attention to the occasional architectural detail such as a salvaged cornice that now serves as a bench. The garden is so verdant that it takes a leap of faith to imagine it as a burnt-down lot.

¹³ <http://www.sixthstreetcenter.org/>

¹⁴ See photos at <http://tiny.cc/AhawathYeshurun>. This building has the best neighborhood memorials to famous labor activists, Emma Goldman (anarchist and social critic) and Clara Lemlich (teen-age leader of the 1909 Strike of 20,000). The recently restored traditional marble memorial plaques have names from 3 languages, Yiddish, Hebrew and English and form the base for murals from which the activists spring to life. Goldman's caption reads: "She spoke wrote and conspired. Opposed the state, religion and capitalism. She fought for ... the 8 hour day. Worked as a seamstress and midwife, loved dancing and theater...". The muralists' work seems particularly fitting in a neighborhood where recycled memory and its associations have become a type of currency, a part of its evolution into the New, Old Country (in Yiddish, the Naye Alte Heym).

Keep on walking west to Avenue B, and then cross the street to enter another small piece of paradise, or rather a large piece since the **6th and B Garden** located on the corner of East 6th and Avenue B, is on a very large lot. Much of this garden is composed of individual plots including some from the school across the street, so vegetables and herbs are grown in beds filled with composted soil as well as flowers. Due to the dangers of lead from the Lower East Side's razed buildings, anything grown as food must use raised plots with soil from elsewhere. There are large communal areas including a stage, a barbecue area, a gazebo, a pond, a shady grape arbor next to a large playground area, etc.. Until recently the garden was also known for its large paper mache decorated sculpture created by the late Eddie Boros; it was not unusual to see busloads of Japanese tourists taking pictures of this piece of folk art that has subsequently been torn down by the city. Its extensive community programming reaps superlatives with typical events including day-time and night programs such as plays, Indian raga performances, movies, yoga classes, composting classes, cabarets, etc.¹⁵.

Continue up just a little while (heading west) on East 6th Street to see **The Creative Little Garden** which is quite close to Avenue B. This garden was also aided by Liz Christy (see Liz Christy Garden), but its main founder was a former French resistance fighter by the name of Françoise Cachelin who started it in order to deal with a dangerous burned out building plot. A shady and narrow garden that is most defined by its large weeping willow at the back of the garden. From the very start it incorporated an arts element including sculpture installations at the same time shrubbery was planted and garden paths created. The result is a charming respite from the clamor of city life; the view from the discretely placed benches allows for contemplative musings to take place in relative seclusion, a true luxury in a busy city. It is a place that neighborhood residents have quietly fallen in love with over the years and are grateful has been beautifully redone recently after having been threatened by the rebuilding on an adjoining lot.¹⁶

¹⁵ Schedule information can be obtained at <http://www.6bgarden.org>

¹⁶ Schedule information can be obtained at <http://www.creativelittlegarden.org>

Noteworthy if walking directly west, up East 6th Street

Two lovely historic synagogue buildings are on the north side of East 6th Street. First though, walk past the plain looking former **Proskurever**¹⁷ synagogue between Avenue A and First Avenue that is now a small apartment building. Proskurever's name was linked with the historic pogrom that took place there during the Bolshevik Revolution. Petluria, a local military leader or 'hetman', had his troops slaughter over 1,600 town residents in a few hours. Two well known Lower East Side political activists who were deported to Russia, Emma Goldman and Alexander Berkman, first reported the news to the world. As a result, Petluria was assassinated in Paris by someone seeking revenge who was subsequently vindicated by being acquitted by a French jury.

The next synagogue on that block is **Mezritch**¹⁸, right before arriving at First Avenue. A small neo-classical gem wedged into a tenement lot, it sports a somewhat neo-classical early twentieth century limestone façade with ornate lovely stained glass windows. Its three entrances hint at the former elegance of the building, lovingly built by immigrants from the town which was best known as the home of the Magid (itinerant preacher) of Mezritch, the first disciple of the founder of the Chasidic movement the B'aal Shem Tov.

Last but hardly least and listed on the national historic registry is the **Community Synagogue**¹⁹. The building was originally the Saint Mark's Evangelical Lutheran Church and dates from the time when the neighborhood was known as Kleine Deutchland, or Little Germany. The plaques outside the neo-classical 1850 building note that the original church moved out in 1904 after most of the women and children from the congregation drowned when their boat, the General Slocum, hired for a Sunday school picnic, caught fire. Although they were within 20 feet of North Brother Island, few survived other than the crew. The graft that allowed the boat to pass inspection was seen as scandalous and became the cause celebre that prompted the founding of the United States Coast Guard. The news of the tragedy reverberated around the world (and is referred to in Ulysses) and it retained the dubious distinction as being the worst disaster in New York State history until September 11, 2001. The building became a synagogue in 1941.

Noteworthy if walking directly east, down East 2nd Street

The small **Amigos Garden**, East 3rd between B and C, closer to C, and just further down the block, **Brisas del Caribe** (East 3rd between B and C, closer to C), both have casitas (little houses) that are typical of the Latino gardens in the neighborhood where people hang out in cool spots during the summer months.

Noteworthy if walking directly east, down Houston Street

Walk south on Houston Street up until Avenue A where a stunning, large Tom Otterness brass frog dominates the school playground on the corner of Essex (southern continuation of Avenue A) and Houston. The small *coqui* is the symbol of Puerto Rico. In the Lower East Side it became the symbol of the now demolished Esperanza garden on East 7th Street where protesters lived in the garden in a large paper mache coqui that was created in an attempt to prevent bulldozers from entering.

¹⁷ See photos at <http://tiny.cc/FormersHuls>

¹⁸ Officially known as **Congregation Edath Lei- Israel Anshei Meseritz**. See photos <http://tiny.cc/Mezritch>

¹⁹ See photos at <http://tiny.cc/CommunitySynagogue>

Where the Gardens Cluster           

Tompkins Square Park Walk on 8th - 9th Streets (1 hour)

Tompkins Square Park is at the heart of the neighborhood. Bounded on its western edge by Avenue A, its southern edge by East 7th Street, its western edge by East 10th Street, it is at the middle of its eastern edge of Avenue B and East 8th that another cluster of gardens abound. The park itself has parts that are beautifully planted with tiger lilies, roses and other flora; it also has two very moving historic monuments to the General Slocum tragedy, a water fountain under a cupola where the virtues of faith, hope, charity and tolerance are extolled, and a plaque in the children's pool area. Some of the park areas are dominated by punks, crusties, drunks and more old-fashioned drifters but there are also children's playgrounds and famous dog runs. Over the years, it has housed many concerts and festivals, including the thoroughly outrageous Wigstock.

In other words, the park is an accurate if fluid microcosm of the neighborhood itself and always feels like a work in progress. It was the site of major riots in 1988 which built up in the course of an uneasy summer when tensions simmered and then reached a boiling point between the police and neighborhood residents many of whom had mixed feelings about gentrification, along with squatters who were being evicted by the city, punks who were living in the park, and pretty much anyone else who spent time there.²⁰ While the bandshell where much of the action occurred was torn down as a result ostensibly as a part of park restoration, the park has never quite reached respectability as a fully public area.

But perhaps respectability has never been its strong suit. Across the street, when the area was home to the 'beats', the famous alto saxophonist jazz musician Charlie Parker (a.k.a., Bird) lived from 1950-1954 at 151 Avenue B. Prior to that, the park housed soldiers from the Spanish American War who were bivouacked there. At the time it still was near mosquito infested swampland which brought yellow fever.

Before crossing to the south side of the street, look at the buildings on the south and north east corners. The aging, elegant **Saint Bridget's** is called the Irish Famine church, testifying to its origins in the first half of the nineteenth century. Neighborhood Latino residents fought unsuccessfully with the archdiocese to prevent it from being sold as part of the larger reorganization of New York area churches. At the last minute, after the stained glass windows were wrecked and removed, an anonymous donor who wanted to honor the famine victims and Irish history came up with the many millions of dollars needed for the church's restoration and work is slated to begin in the fall of 2009. Across the street on the north side is an imposing Victorian Gothic red brick former synagogue and Talmud Torah (Jewish after-school for children) that was called Darchei Noam (Ways of Pleasantness) and more affectionately later known as ESHI's (East Side Torah Institute). The building is now a condo with large apartments overlooking the park but the original English and Hebrew portico has been kept intact.

Because so much of this block burned down (this is in inverse to the amount of garden space today), the block was featured in a Steven Spielberg movie called **batteries not included*. Wikipedia describes it as "a 1987 family-science fiction film directed by Matthew Robbins about small extraterrestrial living machines that save an apartment block under threat from property

²⁰ See video by Clayton Patterson, http://video.no-art.info/patterson/1988_tompkins.html

development” and goes on to note that “Many of the film's foreign releases (including at least French, German, Italian and Portuguese) used the title *Miracle on 8th Street*.”²¹

The first garden, **De Colores Community Yard and Cultural Garden** is reached by going east from Avenue B walking on the north side of East 8th Street. A lovingly planted cool oasis, it has hand made mosaic tiles to create pathways, vegetables, flowers, trees, and places to rest or barbecue, or to just hang out. It came into existence after the larger **ABC Garden** across the street was bulldozed to build senior housing; at that point much of the block had burned down and taking over a smaller empty lot made sense. It is very much a neighborhood resident’s garden. Two doors down from there, is a small former synagogue building that was known as the Eighth Street Shul, or more formally by its reference to the two towns in Poland for which it was named²². After a decade of legal contests regarding its sale, it was sold at the point that the block was seen as somewhat dangerous, and is now a renovated multi-million dollar private residence.

The return of the swampland is announced further down the street heading towards Avenue C at the **Earth People Garden** which has a large weeping willow, as do many of the gardens on East 8th and 9th Streets since they are located in the historical swampy marshland of the Lower East Side. Sporting elegant brick pathways and shaded glades, it also has a rather idiosyncratic display of rubber toys, e.g., crocodiles at the entranceway. It is almost immediately followed by an L shaped **Casita Garden** (a.k.a., **Zulma Garden**) which used to be known for its poultry (alas now departed), and which also has an entrance onto Avenue C where a large metal shark festoons the front yard there.

Cross Avenue C but this time go to the south side of the street. The first garden is the **Fireman’s Garden**, named for a firefighter Marty Celiac whose story is told on the garden wall plaques. Just a little further down the block is a double garden, **Gilbert’s Sculpture Garden** merged in the 1990s with its neighbor, **Green Oasis**²³ to create a large, leafy inviting space with a gazebo, an apiary, fruit trees, a koi pond, a children’s play area and garden, plenty of room to barbecue and picnic, inviting pathways, and amazing beds of flowers and large trees. A well run and utilized garden that was made out of five empty lots full of broken cars and other debris, **Green Oasis** in many ways sets the pace in defining what a community garden can be in terms of bringing people together across economic, ethnic and religious divides. **Green Oasis** is also one of the most child-friendly gardens. It had one of the hardest struggles to survive since the local Community Board did not back its application to be spared from development even though it is proximate to a large housing project from the 1950s. Luckily for all, the plucky organizers of this garden founded in 1981 (by ex-marine Normand Valle and his friend Reynaldo Arenas) prevailed with community support.

Go back up East 8th Street to the corner of Avenue C and this time turn right to go north one block on the west side of the street. After passing the other entrance to the L shaped **8th Street Casita Garden**, there is a very large corner garden whose fence announces it to the world at

²¹ http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/*batteries_not_included

²² Kehilas Bnei Moshe Yakov Anshei Zavichost veZosmer (Congregation Children of Moses and Jacob, People of Zavichost and Zosmer) was named for two Jewish communities in central Poland. See <http://picasaweb.google.com/ejswoo/8thStreetShulLowerEastSideBecameAPrivateResidenceIn2006#>

²³ greenoasisgarden.net/default.aspx

large. True to the Lower East Side ethos of bricolage, it is covered with large original whirligigs made out of the detritus of cans and plastic bottles such as detergent containers. As such, it is the one garden that looks like it comes alive in winter as the snow starts covering the moving whirligigs. It also is a standout due to its weeping willows which dominate the block. **La Plaza Cultural** describes itself as “Founded in 1976 ... Working with maverick architect Buckminster Fuller, they built a geodesic dome in the open “plaza” and began staging cultural events. Green Guerillas pioneer Liz Christy seeded the turf with “seed bombs” and planted what are now our towering weeping willows and linden trees. Artist Gordon Matta-Clark helped construct La Plaza’s amphitheater using railroad ties and materials reclaimed from abandoned buildings. Later, block residents tilled the western portion and planted vegetables, flowers and fruit trees. During the 1980s, the garden came under attack by developers seeking to build on the space. After numerous court battles, **La Plaza** was finally preserved in 2002 as part of a landmark legal settlement that saved scores of gardens across New York City.”²⁴ One of the more hair raising moments in the fight to save the gardens was the day that the Spitzer injunction came through since at that moment there was a bulldozer outside of **La Plaza** and its destruction seemed to be a foregone conclusion. The garden was renamed a few years ago **La Plaza Cultural de Armando Perez** in honor of a neighborhood organizer who had been murdered elsewhere in the city.

Today aside from its theater spectacles and older wall murals some of which are done in a Southwestern Native American style, it is also notable for the number of young children who play in its open spaces. The western side of the garden is full of vegetables, herbs and other plantings and has a pond which has been stocked with goldfish; the theater space is in the middle; and the eastern edge has become the children’s play area and a general lounging space. The western garden wall still has a fading part of the La Lucha Continua (the struggle continues) a community multi-part mural which decorated many garden and other neighborhood walls in the 1980s, but which has now mostly disappeared in the Lower East Side. The **La Plaza** mural was the first in the series and was done in part by Artmakers as well as by artists from Charas, a community center in a contested public school building on East 9th Street, across from Tompkins Square Park.²⁵

Catty-corner from **La Plaza** on the east side of Avenue C, is the **9th Street Community Garden and Park**. This garden was also created from multiple plots that cover much of its block. In the 1990’s the city tried to reduce the size of the garden. For those in the neighborhood who came to its defense, one of the most important reasons to keep it together was the dramatic visual and safety improvement from the prior devastation that had been wreaked on much of the surrounding block of East 9th Street between Avenues C and D. Also the garden was already proximate to housing projects as well as a Mitchell-Lama development so that those who fought for the garden remaining together felt that there were enough low-income units clustered in that area and that what was most needed was safe green space.

²⁴ http://laplazacultural.org/?page_id=15

²⁵ See http://www.artmakersnyc.org/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=53&Itemid=84, and <http://www.flickr.com/photos/cactusbones/sets/72157605002662741/>

One of the turning points in this struggle came when a local developer rehabilitated a tenement which overlooked the garden. The fire escapes were turned into small porches and the developer advertised that the building had “garden views”. Like **La Plaza**, it is dominated by weeping willows but has more in the way of greenery and flowers as well as having a number of individual plot beds where people grow their own vegetables and herbs. This is balanced out by extremely well planned communal space which includes ponds, a casita, an area with open grass, barbecues, covered arbors, barbecue space, clever grottoes, and secluded spots for sitting, etc.. It also has an area with a Puerto Rican and United States flag as part of a memorial to 9/11. This garden like a number of others is a well known venue for concerts, particularly Latino music and retains more of a Latino flavor than the other big gardens. Its gardeners are a representative mix of the neighborhood.

Heading Uptown! 11th Street and north (1.5 – 2 hours)

The **11th Street Community Garden**, located between First Avenue and Avenue A, on the south side of the middle of the block is a stunning garden wedged between two tenements. Primarily shady due to its location, it is well landscaped and incorporates many best practices in terms of composting, planting, watering, membership, etc., with the help of the Manhattan Land Trust which helps manage the garden along with its local volunteers and was one of the gardens saved from auction by the Trust for Public Land in 1999. Beautifully planted communal flower beds with hydrangeas and other flowers alternate with individual raised plots, pine and other trees, shrubs and a lovely wooden semi-circular benched patio to create an integrated and serene space. Rain barrels have just been installed to recycle rain water. The entrance way with a simple wooden trellis and vines is immediately inviting. Situated across from **Open Road Park Garden** which is designed primarily for the students of the neighboring school with its fantastic wall murals and a rambling look, the **11th Street Community Garden** is a much quieter and elegant affair.

Open Road which has greenhouses, roses, a pond and a solar panel is located on the north side of East 11th and the garden extends for the full width of the block to East 12th Street. Originally a bus depot, the park has a deep commitment to using composting for planting in its soil beds and has partnered with city departments such as Sanitation as well as Parks, as well as with private groups such as the Trust for Public Land. Neighborhood skateboarders fill the park and much of the programming takes this into account. A new mosaic is being put on the concrete curb underneath the fence.

Keep on going east on East 11th street and cross Avenue A and continue down to Avenue B and again cross to the east side of the Avenue. Very close to Avenue B on the north side of the street, is a narrow little gem of a garden called **The Toyota Children's Learning Garden**, which is another garden that was rescued in 1999, this one by the New York Restoration Project (NYRP was founded by Bette Midler) with the land being safeguarded in perpetuity through its New York Garden Trust. NYRP states on their website “Like other greening organizations, NYRP understands the important social, environmental, and even economic roles that community gardens play in New York City...Our goal is to help neighborhood residents develop these shared patches of green into beloved institutions that bring beauty, joy, health, and revitalization to struggling communities across the city.”²⁶ Nothing was spared when it came to creating the tasteful, understated elegant look of this green space. This is a designer garden done by landscape architect Michael Van Valkenburgh from the Harvard Graduate School of Design that can certainly be placed into any horticultural garden competition. Winding marble pathways, shaded arbors, benches, bamboo groves, are all designed to make it an inviting yet chic place for children. NYRP will be running science and other programs to serve the over 22,000 children in the immediate area, 26% of whose families according to 2000 census data fall below the poverty line. Children will be learning composting as well as other garden maintenance techniques.

Further down the block on the south side is the quiet **11BC Garden**, between Avenue B and Avenue C which has lovely, circling brick pathways and well-proportioned plantings. Situated between two tall tenements, some years it has had nesting falcons take advantage of its location

²⁶ <http://www.nyrp.org/gardens/index.php?sub=0>

(n.b., the Lower East Side has no lack of pigeons and even larger hawks have been spotted in the neighborhood). Continue down to Avenue C, and go north one block to East 12th Street where more treasures await. Turn right on Avenue C, and head down the southern portion of the block to see the **Campos Garden**, which in the last few years has worked hard to change into a volunteer based working garden. Located in an area in which many residents live in city projects, this lovely welcoming sun-filled garden fills many needs for the local population and grows a lively mix of vegetables (including corn), herbs and flowers and has expanded to what is now twelve raised plot beds. Like most of the gardens, **Campos** welcomes both volunteers and visitors. Continue westward on East 12th Street up on Avenue B and cross over to the west side of the street.

With four gardens proximate to East 12th Street and Avenue B, including a children's garden on the southwest corner that is next to the much larger, well-equipped **Sauer** landscaped city playground, this is one of the densest green areas in the city and a must-stop for both children and adults. The East 12th Street **Sauer** children's playground is the best in the neighborhood and its proximity to a variety of gardens encourages exploration. The **Sauer** playground is bounded to the east by the **Children's Garden** and to the west by **El Sol Brillante**, an even larger garden. The **Children's Garden** is located directly on the corner of Avenue B and sports a mural as well as play area for children.

Continuing on the south side of East 12th Street, just on the other side of the Sauer playground is a veritable garden of delights, **El Sol Brillante** (located closer to Avenue B than Avenue A). With its knock-out Julie Dermansky²⁷ wrought-iron fence of whimsical animals, its stunning garden is in a league of its own. Replete with fig, peach and kiwi trees, flowers such as oak hydrangeas and roses, vegetables, herbs, a solar powered pump, numerous shady spots to rest in, this garden which is under a Land Trust has been around for over thirty years and grows better and better each year as a horticultural favorite. It manages to provide a good balance between individual plot beds and communal areas that include comfortable spots to sit, eat, drink and admire the landscape which includes bees in the daytime and fireflies at night. Cobblestones have been cleverly used to create a quiet stepped pathway in the rear of the garden. Like many of the best gardens, **El Sol Brillante** is composed of multiple city plots that were combined together after adjacent buildings burnt or fell down. The very density of gardens in this area is a strong indication of just how badly this part of the neighborhood was affected when it was burning down. The longevity of the garden is attested to by the size of its trees, including one which is taller than the neighboring seven-story tenement.

El Sol Brillante Junior across the street, is smaller but also delightful since it is full of rose and other trellises. Going back to Avenue B, just around the corner between East 12th and East 13th Streets, on the west side of Avenue B there are two Latino mini gardens subdividing a tiny plot: the **Vamos Sembrar Garden** and the **200 Avenue B Association Garden** which are both GreenThumb gardens. Just one block away on the corner of East 13th and Avenue B, another garden beckons, this one used primarily by residents of the nearby housing projects. The **Relaxation Garden** on the east side of the street is so full of small and large decorative objects

²⁷ Red Square, an upscale rental on Houston Street between Avenues A and B, sports a Julie Dermansky lobby made of wrought iron fantastical sea creatures and other animals.

that it's hard to find any green space. It cheerfully graces the corner of Avenue B and East 13th Street without having any pretense to being other than a neighborhood place.

Turn left to go west on East 13th Street and on the south side of street between Avenues A and B there is yet another garden, this one unabashedly charming. **Dias y Flores** is one of the oldest and nicest gardens in the neighborhood with a mix of everything on its deep, somewhat narrow lot. The first surprise is the use to which glass bottle bottoms have been put; quite cleverly they have been inserted into geometric patterns to embellish its brick paths. Then there are wall mosaics, equally clever and beautiful. It has individual vegetable plots, herbs, and communal areas which include seating and trees, shrubs and flowers. In addition to composting, they have a pond and a rain-collection system. The garden also has a relatively diverse membership including founding Latino members as well as brand-new ones who just moved into the neighborhood. They sponsor a number of cultural events including urban edibles tours.

From here, convenient public transportation is available by way of buses on East 14th and Avenue B, or on Avenue A, or First Avenue. The L train is also located on East 14th and First Avenue. It is also a relatively easy walk to Union Square which has numerous bus and train lines.

Noteworthy if walking directly north, down Second Avenue and Fifteenth Street
Stuyvesant Park on the north side of Second Avenue has long worked with community gardeners to create a luxurious growth of flowers and shrubbery around the central fountain and other park features such as a statue of Peter Stuyvesant.

For those who want to see more gardens, the <http://tiny.cc/map306> (map view) lists all of the current neighborhood gardens, rather than just those highlighted in these walking tours. Use it to map your own tour that is off the beaten path, or at least the path beaten here!

And for the time being here our story ends, the tale of the gardens that saved a neighborhood and were saved by it in turn.

Legend



Community Garden

Composting Site

Historical Site

Diverse Neighborhood

Cleaned-Up/Rebuilt Site

Bike friendly

Pedestrian Friendly

Public Transportation

Cultural Performance

Community Center

Memorial/Site of Conscience

Local Business

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Epilogue

An epilogue clearly need not be an epitaph; nonetheless, although we celebrate the victory that each garden represents, the Lower East Side still mourns those gardens that were bulldozed and ripped out. Here is the updated list from 1997 when 85 neighborhood gardens were noted²⁸ including twelve listed below which had already been demolished. It also includes gardens that were noted then but cannot be found today:

1. Garden of Eden, Eldridge and Forsyth
2. Basketball Court Garden, East 2nd Street between Avenues B and C (85) (northside)
3. Sunrise Garden, north side of East 2nd Street, between Avenues B & C
4. El Pequeño Jardín, (Little Garden of John Baker), North side of East 3th Street between Bowery and Second Avenue
5. 3rd Street Block Association Garden, East 3rd Street between Avenues A and B in center of block (65?)
6. East Side Story, East 3rd Street between Avenues C and D, south side, closer to Avenue C (20)
7. 5th Street Garden, East 5th between Avenues A and B
8. Stannard Diggs Garden, north side East 6th Street between Avenues C and D (28)
9. Jardín del la Esperanza/Hope, East 7th between Avenues B and C
10. ABC Garden, East 8th between Avenues B and C
11. Avenue D Mini Garden, Avenue D between East 2nd and East 3rd
12. Bello Amanecer Boricano Garden, 119 Avenue C, west side between East 7th and East 8th
13. Holy Mary Mother of God Garden, East 9th between Avenues C and D
14. The Little Puerto Rico Garden on East 10th and Avenue B
15. CDC, CHP (CHD – Coalition for Housing Development) Environmental Garden, north side East 10th Street between Avenues B and C, closer to Avenue B (13)
16. El Jardín de la 10, East 10th and Avenue C
17. Chico Mendez Mural Garden, East 11th between Avenues A and B
18. Serenity Garden, South side of East 11th Street, between Avenues B & Avenues C
19. Coradan Evaeden Garden, a.k.a. Corada, East 11th or 12th Street between Avenues B and C, closer to Avenue B (15)
20. Rivington Sculpture Garden, demolished twice: East 6th between Avenues B and C, originally on Rivington Street between Forsyth and Eldridge Streets
21. Umbrella Garden, Avenue C, between East 2nd and East 3rd
22. Parker Forge/Sunnyside Garden, East 13th between Avenues A and B
23. 11th Street Casita, between Avenues B and C (66)
24. 11th Street Casita Garden, between Avenues A and B (67)
25. 12th Street Casita Garden, between Avenues B and C (68)
26. 12th Street Garden, between Avenues A and B (69)
27. 13th Street Block Association Garden, East 13th Street between Avenues A and B (71)
28. 12th Street Greenspace Garden, 12th Street between First Avenues & Avenue A

²⁸ Number scheme from Published EarthCelebrations 1997 map; <http://www.earthcelebrations.com/>

29. 12th Street Garden, between First Avenues and Avenue A (there were two 12th Street Gardens)
30. Ave B Block Association, Avenue B, between East 12th and East 13th Street (5) east side of street
31. Bimba Rivas, East 13th Street, between Avenues A and B, (8)
32. Grand Street Garden, junction of Grand and Suffolk Streets (31)
33. 5th Street Casita Garden, East 5th Street between Avenues C and D, on or near corner of Avenue D (58)
34. El Jardín de los Niños Garden, East 5th Street between Avenues C and D
35. Urban Botanical Garden, East 7th Street between Avenues C and D (51)
36. 9th Street Casita Garden, East 9th Street between Avenues C and D, closer to Avenue D (64)
37. Rodriguez Community Garden, between Suffolk and Clinton? and between Stanton and Rivington Streets (73)
38. 2nd Street Gardeners Garden, East 2nd Street between Avenues C and Avenues D (54), a.k.a., Las Sietas Potencias, north side of East 2nd Street between Avenues C and D
39. 3rd Street Community Residents Association Garden, East 3rd Street between Avenues B and C (56)
40. Toy Garden, East 11th between Avenues B and C, nearer Avenue B (79)
41. The Garden Group, Scott Flats Garden, East 6th Street between Avenues C and D
42. Avenue D Mini Garden, Avenue D between East 2nd and East 3rd Streets

Still green, but no longer a community garden

1. Our Lady of Sorrows Garden, Stanton Street between Ridge and Pitt Street (78)
2. Forsyth Garden Conservancy, Inc., between Forsyth and Chrystie Streets, Delancey and Broome Streets. Part of Sara D. Roosevelt Park. Plant-A-Lot, Council on the Environment (27)
3. Forsyth Garden, between Forsyth and Eldridge Streets, on Delancey North Side. Part of Sara D. Roosevelt Park
4. Baruch Houses, Houston and East 1st, flower gardens
5. St. Emeric, East 12th Street between C and D (close to D)

Here is the current list of gardens from South (west) to North (east):

1. **Lower East Side People Care Community Garden** (Rutgers Street between Henry and Madison) - Trust for Public Land, Greenthumb
2. **Children's Garden 134**, (East Broadway between Grand Street and Samuel Dickstein Place), - Greenthumb
3. **Martin Luther King Jr. Community Park**, (corner of Montgomery and Henry Streets), - Council on the Environment, Plant-A-Lot
4. **M'finda Kalunga Garden between Christie and Forsyth** (north of Delancey). Proximate to an original African Burial Ground, Greenthumb
5. **Poor People in Action of the LES** (Stanton and Clinton Streets, Southeast corner), Greenthumb
6. **Children's Magical Garden, primarily playground** (Stanton and Norfolk Street, Southwest Corner), Greenthumb
7. **Suffolk Street Community Garden** (Suffolk between Houston and Stanton Streets) – NY Restoration Project, Greenthumb
8. **Liz Christy Garden** (Houston and Bowery down to 2nd Avenue), - Greenthumb incorporated Rock & Rose Garden, East 1st Street between Bowery and Second Avenue (77)
9. **First Street Garden** (East 1st Street between 1st and 2nd Avenues), - Greenthumb
10. **Albert's Garden** (East 2nd Street between 2nd Avenue and the Bowery), - Greenthumb
11. **Hope Garden** (East 2nd between Avenues A and B, closer to B), - Greenthumb
12. **Jardin de Morphing Gallery** (East 2nd and Houston between Avenues B and C closer to C)
13. **Peachtree Garden** (East 2nd between Avenues B and C, closer to B, north side of block), - Greenthumb
14. **Le Petit Versailles** (fronts East 2nd and Houston, between Avenues B and C, closer to C), - Greenthumb
15. **Miracle Garden** (East 3rd between A and B, closer to B), - Greenthumb, Council on the Environment, Plant-A-Lot
16. **Kenkeleba House Garden 3rd Street side** (East 3rd and East 2nd between B and C, closer to B); sculptures East 3rd; separate garden area, East 2nd, - Greenthumb
17. **Amigos Garden** (East 3rd between B and C, closer to C), - Greenthumb
18. **Brisas del Caribe** (East 3rd between B and C, closer to C), - Greenthumb
19. **All People's Garden**, East 3rd Street between Avenues C and D, north side, closer to Avenue C (4) - Trust for Public Land, Greenthumb
20. **Generation X East 4th Street** (between B and C, a.k.a., Tu Pueblo Batay Garden, 270-271 East 4th Street, between Avenues B and C, south side middle of the block), - Greenthumb
21. **East 4th Street Rehab NYCHA** (between Avenues B and C, north side middle of block), - Greenthumb
22. **Secret Garden** (northwest corner of East 4th and C), – Greenthumb
23. **Tranquilidad Garden, Parque de Tranquilidad**, formerly Chevra Bikur Cholim B'nai Israel Anshei Baranov Synagogue 1887, (East 4th Street between Avenues C and D, closer to Avenue C, south side of street), – Council on the Environment, Plant-A-Lot, Manhattan Land Trust, as part of the Trust for Public Land Foundation,
24. **El Jardin del Paraiso**, East 4th between Avenues C and D (North side of street closer to C), – Greenthumb
25. **Orchard Alley**, (East 4th between Avenues C and D, close to Avenue D), – Greenthumb
26. **5th Street Slope Children's Garden**, (East 5th Street between Avenues B and C, approach only by way of Avenue C) (48)
27. **The Creative Little Garden** (East 6th between A & B, closer to B), – Greenthumb
28. **6th and B Garden** (corner of East 6th and Avenue B), – Greenthumb
29. **6 BC Botanical Garden** (East 6th between Avenues B and C, closer to Avenue B), – Greenthumb

30. **Lower East Side Ecology Center Garden** (East 7th Street between Avenues B and C, closer to C), – Greenthumb
31. **Sam and Sadie Koenig Garden** (East 7th Street between Avenues C and D, closer to C), – Greenthumb
32. **De Colores Garden Community Yard and Cultural Garden** (East 8th Street between Avenues B and C), – Greenthumb
33. **Earth People** (East 8th between Avenues B and C), – Greenthumb
34. **Casita Garden, a.k.a., Zulma Garden, L shaped Latino Garden** (East 8th between Avenues B and C; also entrance on Avenue C), – Greenthumb
35. **Firemen's Garden, in honor of Marty Celic** (East 8th Street between C and D, closer to C), – Greenthumb
36. **Green Oasis Gilbert's Garden** (East 8th Street between Avenues C and D, closer to Avenue D), – Greenthumb
37. **La Plaza Cultural** (East 9th and C, southwest corner), – Greenthumb
38. **9th Street Community Garden Park** (East 9th and C, Northeast corner) - Trust for Public Land, Greenthumb
39. **11th Street Community Garden** (East 11th Street between 1st Avenue and Avenue A, across from Open Road Park Garden), – Greenthumb
40. **Open Road Park Garden, a.k.a., LES Park** (next to school with vivid murals, East 11th and East 12th Streets between 1st Avenue and Avenue A, East 11 entrance across from 11th Street Community Garden), – Greenthumb
41. **Toyota Children's Learning Garden** (East 11th Street between Avenue B and Avenue C, very close to B) - NY Restoration Project, Greenthumb
42. **11BC Garden** (East 11th Street between Avenue B and Avenue C), – Greenthumb
43. **El Sol Brillante** (East 12th Street between Avenue B and A, east side of the street, next to Parks Department Sauer Park playground, closer to Avenue B. Julie Dermansky hand-wrought iron fence)
44. **Children's Garden** (East 12th Street, southeast corner of Avenue B, between B and C), – Greenthumb
45. **El Sol Brillante Junior Garden** (East 12th Street between Avenues A and B, closer to B, on the north side of the street), – Greenthumb
46. **Vamos Sembrar Garden** (west side of Avenue B, between East 12th and East 13th close to East 12th Street), – Greenthumb
47. **200 Avenue B Association Garden** (on west side of Avenue B, between East 12th and East 13th close to East 12th Street), – Greenthumb
48. **Campos Garden** (East 12th Street, between Avenues C and D, close to Avenue D, south side of the street), – Greenthumb
49. **Dias y Flores** (East 13th Street between 1st Ave and Avenue A), – Greenthumb
50. **Relaxation Garden**, (East 13th southeast corner of B), – Greenthumb

The name is different but it's still the same garden:

1. **Magical Children's Garden**, Stanton Street between Essex and Norfolk (74) is **Children's Magical Garden**, primarily playground (Stanton and Norfolk Street, Southwest Corner)
2. **Community of Poor People in Action**, Stanton Street between Clinton and Attorney (80) is **Poor People in Action of the LES** (Stanton and Clinton Streets, Southeast corner)
3. **Jardin Los Amigos**, East 3rd Street between Avenues B and C, close to Avenue C (36) is **Amigos Garden** (East 3rd between B and C, closer to C)
4. **2nd Street Garden**, East 2nd Street between Avenues B and C on the south side of the street, is probably **Le Petit Versailles** (fronts East 2nd and Houston, between Avenues B and C, closer to C)
5. **3rd Street Block Association Garden**, East 3rd Street between Avenues A and B in center of block (65?) is the **Miracle Garden** (East 3rd between A and B, closer to B)
6. **Generation X** East 4th Street (Between B and C), was called the **Tu Pueblo Batay Garden**, 270-271 East 4th Street between Avenues B and C, south side middle of block closer to Avenue B (49)
7. **8th Street Casita Garden**, used to be called the **Zulma Garden**, L shaped Latino Garden, (East 8th between Avenues B and C; also entrance on Avenue C)
8. **200 Avenue B**, Avenue B, between East 12th and East 13th Streets is the **200 Avenue B Association Garden**, and mistakenly identified on old maps as **70 Avenue B**
9. **11th St. Community Garden on** East 11th Street, south side between First Avenue and Avenue A (65) used to be called **11th Street Block**, or used to be called **11th Street Block Association Garden**
10. **Open Road Park Garden**, used to be called the **LES Park**, East 11th and East 12th Streets between 1st Avenue and Avenue A
11. **Vamos Sembrar Garden** (on west side of Avenue B, between East 12th and East 13th close to East 12th Street), and **200 Avenue B Association Garden** (on west side of Avenue B, between East 12th and East 13th close to East 12th Street) used to be called the **Grandma and Children Community Garden**
12. **The Relaxation Garden** used to be called the **Yu Suen Garden**, Southeast corner of Avenue B, and East 13th Streets

The name is different and hopefully will be mapped to the correct garden:

1. **Winners Circle, 270-71 East 4th Street between Avenues B and C** (52) on the north side of the block, could be the East 4th Street Rehab NYCHA between Avenues B and C, north side middle of block
2. **Interfaith Garden**, East 4th Street between Avenues B and C, on or near corner of Avenue C, (34) could be the Secret Garden, northwest corner of East 4th and C
3. **3rd Street Community Residents Association Garden**, East 3rd Street between Avenues B and C (56) could possibly be the Amigos Garden (East 3rd between B and C, closer to C) or **Brisas del Caribe** (East 3rd between B and C, closer to C)
4. **Serenity Garden**, East 11th between Avenues B and C (83) may be the **11th Street Casita**, between Avenues B and C (66) or the **Toy Garden**, East 11th between Avenues B and C, nearer Avenue B (79)

**Dedicated to the memory of Michelle Sampson,
Natura longa, vita brevis**