

# NORWELL MARINER

MONDAY, AUGUST 24, 2009

## Volunteers build garden for Norwell cancer patient



Taking a break in the garden are, from left, Scott Herzog, Deb Miles, Chris Kennedy, Roberta Hershon and Betty Greene.

By Dana Forsythe  
CORRESPONDENT

When Deb Miles was undergoing treatment for breast cancer, she would look out her window each morning, sipping her tea with ginger.

Now in remission, Miles was recently treated to the installation of a healing garden in the backyard of her Norwell residence, free of charge and with plants of her choosing, by a non-profit organization called Hope in Bloom.

According to Hope in Bloom founder Roberta Hershon, the non-profit began when Beverly Eisenberg, Hershon's friend for almost 50 years, learned she had breast cancer and died from the disease in August of 2005.

"Healing gardens have been proven to be therapeutic sanctuaries offering both comfort and hope to meet the emotional and psychological needs of patients and their families," Hershon said. "Beverly loved flowers and took pride in her garden. Together, we spent hours pouring over catalogs, visiting nurseries, selecting plants and digging in the dirt. When she was no longer able to garden, her friends kept her house filled with flowers. She, like so many of us, took pleasure in their quiet beauty."

With local volunteers, sponsors and community support, Hope in Bloom provides indoor and outdoor gardens at the homes of women and men who reside in Massachusetts and are being treated for breast cancer.

Their mission, Hershon said, is to offer people beautiful, tranquil places to sit, reflect and escape from the world of doctors, hospitals and illness.

Miles commented on the garden that was installed this month, the volunteers who helped out and others who've rallied around her.

"It's overwhelming to have so many people come out and support me," Miles said. "I've found, since my diagnosis that more and more people are coming out of the woodwork. I just don't have the words for it. I've been kind of weepy all day."

Since coming out of treatment, Miles said she's adapted to a slower lifestyle.

"I'm just enjoying time with my family," she said. "Something like this changes your perspective. I was a Type A personality, so I was able to slow down, reassess and discover what's important in life."

Miles said she's found that toiling over her vegetable garden and now the Hope in Bloom garden provides her with a great way to relieve stress.



Norwell resident Deb Miles poses for a photo in her new garden, which was built courtesy of the Hope in Bloom organization.

“I rediscovered how relaxing it was to pull weeds,” Miles laughed. “It’s far better than crunching numbers.”

Prior to the installation, Miles met with Betty Greene of Kennedy’s Country Gardens in Scituate, and she handpicked plants and at least one tree, a Japanese Red Leaf Maple for her garden.

“I just showed her a book of plants to get a feel for the colors and styles she liked,” Greene said.

The backyard area where Miles’ garden was created was filled with rocks and roots, so smaller, younger plants were chosen so that the garden would thrive with little work.

Chris Kennedy, the owner of Kennedy’s Country Gardens, said at least three landscapers had previously come to the site but decided Miles’ backyard was too rocky and a garden would be too difficult to plant there.

“It kind of made us want to do it that much more,” Kennedy said.

Scott Herzog, owner of Herzog Landscaping in Norwell, got involved with Hope in Bloom years ago and also donated his crew for the project, building a rock retaining wall, excavating the area and spreading around mulch.

“Chris [Kennedy] contacted me a few years ago and asked if I could help out,” he said. “I lost my grandfather to cancer and I really like doing something for people undergoing treatment, just to put a smile on their face.”

“When we got in contact with Scott, I was having doubts whether I could do these jobs, but with Scott’s help we’ve done about four gardens,” Kennedy said.

Hershon said each Hope in Bloom garden costs between \$1,000 and \$3,000 to complete.

“We don’t know what’s causing the cancer, so I think we’re really looking to do anything we can, like picking plants that don’t require chemicals to thrive, to prevent the disease,” Kennedy said.

“This is a special brand of medicine that doctors can’t give people,” Hershon said. “People are able to be peaceful, think and get through their treatment.”

“Our hope is to encourage people to be outdoors and take the time for their gardens,” Greene added. “All of us are pushing the envelope, one plant at a time.”

*To request a garden or to volunteer, visit [www.hopeinbloom.org](http://www.hopeinbloom.org) or call 781-381-3597.*