HARVARD SQUARED

and chose to settle on 800 acres he had inherited in Wellfleet. Even though Provincetown already had an art colony, much of the outer Cape “was wilderness, a no-man’s land,” at the time, McMahon says—and Phillips built the first modernist house there in 1938. Known as “The Paper Palace,” it was made of pressed-paper wallboard.

“He was the paterfamilias,” McMahon adds, for what soon became a close-knit communal blend of the European architects and academics and another group of self-taught builders and artistic experimenters, such as Princeton graduate John “Jack” Hughes Hall and Hayden Walling, who tended toward radical philosophies. In 1944, architect Serge Chermayeff, who was friends with Gropius and Breuer and led the architecture department at Harvard in the 1950s and early 1960s, bought the cabin he had rented from Phillips; it became an informal think tank for the bohemian enclave. Chermayeff eventually turned the cabin into a connected series of right-angled structures painted in primary colors. His son, Cambridge architect Peter Chermayeff ’57, M.Arch. ’62, now summer there; he has been an active supporter of the trust and will host part of the May symposium.

“The Cape Cod land was this blank slate and in the early days they all built stuff out there, mostly of found materials,” notes McMahon. With no commercial pressures, they “designed homes to suit themselves and their friends, often incorporating old shacks and a prefab army barracks. You

ALL IN A DAY:
The Fruit of Others’ Labor

Sue Greene, coordinator of The West Springfield Community Garden in Boston’s South End, has a few simple rules. Don’t plant trees and shrubs that will someday cast unwanted shade. Grow what you want. Have fun. “I’ve tried to cultivate the idea that everyone’s garden is unique,” she says, laughing at her word choice. Creativity rules in these 35 (mostly) vegetable plots, as it does in the dozens of other urban green spaces that are also open to the public during the annual South End Garden Tour on June 20.

The self-guided tours run from 10 A.M. to 4 P.M.; all proceeds benefit the volunteer-run South End & Lower Roxbury Community Gardens. (The $20 ticket also includes a post-tour reception where paintings by professional local artists, created during the day in some of the gardens on view, are displayed for sale.) Visitors can explore upward of 30 private oases, besides the West Springfield plots: shaded sunken patios; lush flower beds; rooftop container gardens; and compactly built havens that may feature fountains, vine-covered walls, stonework, murals, and al fresco dining spots. Also on tap are the neighborhood’s parks and community-planted greenways. The variety of styles, growers, and multitude of community gardens (16 in all, but only a few are on this year’s tour) reflect the South End’s historic diversity. These open spaces “are where residents come together to cultivate food and flowers, create beautiful green places for everyone to enjoy, and grow friendships that make neighborhoods strong,” notes tour chair Maryellen Hassell.

Many West Springfield gardeners have grown food there since the first plots were established in 1976; others are energetic newcomers. Most of the gardens are tended together by families or friends. This year, Greene reports, a young Jamaican couple will attempt to grow greens to make callaloo, a traditional island dish. Others will pursue an okra that offers a pinwheel-shaped white flower with a crimson center, even if harvesting the vegetable proves tricky. Greene’s husband, Michael F. Greene, A.M. ’12, and a friend grow hops to make beer, while she has had remarkable luck with tomatillos: green bulbs covered in papery husks native to Mexico and Central America. “It’s like they’re on steroids, the way they take over,” she reports. “We only put in four plants and we get bushels of them in September and October.” Luckily, salsa freezes—and goes especially well with chips and a tall glass of her husband’s home brew.

~N.P.B.