

PHOTOGRAPHY BY PARKER J. PHOTOGRAPHY

## [midday *escapes*]

WRITTEN BY CHRISTOPHER LANEY

ONLY HAVE TIME FOR A LUNCH BREAK?

SLIP AWAY TO ONE OF OUR SECRET-IN-THE-CITY SPOTS FOR A 30-MINUTE GETAWAY.

Sometimes we make commitments before we've really had the chance to ponder what we've promised. In my case, the task seemed simple: profile three North Carolina locales that offer tranquility within urban settings, spots where individuals can slip off the weight of the workday during midday breaks. But near my journey's end, I began to reconsider. After exploring each oasis in the midst of bustling cities, I wondered if I should expose these hidden gems. Do I really sling the doors open wide and wave the multitudes in? Or do I leave their treasures undisturbed, allowing fellow explorers to discover them on their own? Difficult decision.

Much of their allure springs from the sense that these places are undiscovered by the masses. Perhaps you have a favorite song, one unearthed by listening to the whole album, not just the tune that received the airplay. Would you cheer the director who uses it in a popular television show, creating a monster hit on the radio waves, or quietly seethe as the luster fades from your precious find?

After a few nights of fitful sleep, I eventually fell back on a basic journalism tenant for my answer: the public's right to know. That, and I try to keep my promises. So discover these well-kept North Carolina secrets for yourself. Just get there before everyone else does.

An elevated plank walkway leads visitors into a refuge of calm at Greensboro's Bog Garden.



## [midday *escapes*]

THE BOG GARDEN: GREENSBORO  
PHOTOGRAPHY BY PARKER J PHOTOGRAPHY

### *garden sanctuary*

Whenever a Greensboro resident or visitor needs to trade stress for serenity, a quick visit to the Bog Garden near the Shops at Friendly Center will provide relief.

Here, it's apparent that nature is on a different timeline. What we humans measure in minutes, nature measures in seasons, emphasizing how much is accomplished given enough time. It's a reminder to simply slow down. In spring, summer, and fall, thick foliage, lush ferns, and massive tree canopies wrap visitors in a living cocoon as they stroll along an elevated boardwalk above the bog.

Encountering a host of wildlife while visiting the garden is almost guaranteed. Ducks navigate the natural stream that parallels the elevated boardwalk. Squirrels and chipmunks scurry along the deck's rails, while rabbits peer out through the underbrush. A blue heron seems to have made a home of the adjacent lake, often standing on its shore as if posing for anyone who may want a photograph.

But the picture wasn't always so serene. "The land was swampy, with many dead trees, and the lake had silted in," says Dr. Joe Christian of Greensboro, a retired family physician and the driving force behind the creation and enhancement of the Bog Garden. In 1987, Christian had a vision of what the area could become. With the help of many volunteers and organizations including Greensboro Beautiful, an entity that helps conserve and enhance the beauty and ecology of the city's communities, Christian transformed the neglected landscape into the exquisite natural garden visitors see today.

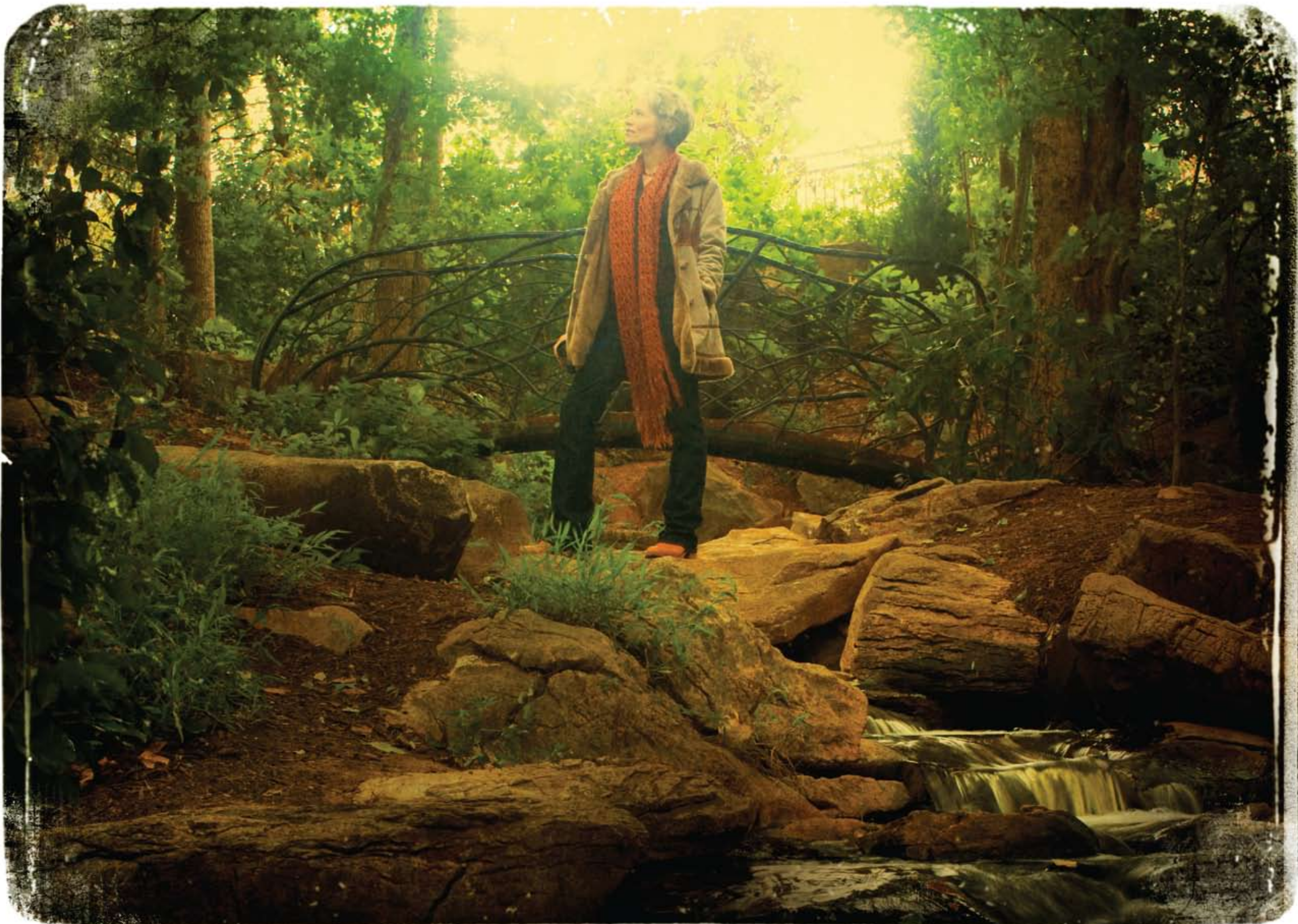
Positioned just off the path that winds through Greensboro's Bog Garden, benches supply a secluded place to escape for an afternoon break.

#### THE BOG GARDEN: GREENSBORO

In fact, Christian rescued many of the wide varieties of flora present in the garden — pitcher plants, irises, and lilies — by combing through low-lying areas that were scheduled for flooding by lake projects such as Macintosh Lake in Burlington and Randleman Lake. Christian and his volunteers — with permission from lake officials — transplanted scores of plants to the Bog Garden, where they've had the chance to thrive.

Although Christian spends less time rescuing plants these days, he's still passionate about the Bog Garden. Over the past couple of years, his latest vision has become reality. If you walk past the lake on the boardwalk, follow the sound of rushing water to view the garden's newest showpiece: a cascading waterfall named Serenity Falls. The flowing waters, re-circulated from the lake below, replaced an unsightly gully — washout from heavy rain runoff — that had always nagged Christian. Nearby benches offer prime spots to relax and enjoy the soothing effect of the water. But realize you may have company. The blue heron often ventures to the falls to enjoy them as well, claiming its own spot in the pool below. □

The din of Greensboro's Friendly Shopping Center is only a few steps from the Bog Garden's Serenity Falls, but for visitors who discover this place, it feels miles away.



The Bog Garden: Located across from the Bicentennial Gardens on Hobbs Road • [www.greensborobeautiful.org](http://www.greensborobeautiful.org)

## [midday *escapes*]

CAFFÈ DRIADE: CHAPEL HILL  
PHOTOGRAPHY BY WHITEBOX WEDDINGS

### *coffee shop cloister*

Don't let the modest roadside sign fool you. The unassuming Caffè Driade marker belies the wonderland that waits beyond the two massive pin oaks standing in front. Set back several hundred feet from the road, many drivers on Franklin Street in Chapel Hill seem to pass by unaware. Although I was equipped with the address, I still drove past it my first time there.

Caffè Driade — pronounced Dry-ah-day and is the Italian spelling for the Greek word dryad, a nymph or spirit who inhabits a forest or tree — lies in the midst of old growth woods and sculpted gardens that are permitted to be a bit unruly to impart the sense of seclusion the spot exhibits so well. Several outdoor seating areas encompass the cafe, including a lower patio positioned at the bottom of meandering, tiered steps. Past this last patio level, a wrought iron gate opens to a wooded path leading to the Bolin Creek Trail below, part of the Chapel Hill greenway system that connects portions of the city.

A mid-afternoon break, enjoyed with a cup of Columbia Supremo on Caffè Driade's secluded patio, can easily stretch into evening. At night, the cafe comes alive with live music and a great wine-and-beer selection.



**CAFFE DRIADE: CHAPEL HILL**

While the natural setting is enticing enough, the true lure of Caffè Driade is its exceptional coffee. Co-owner Scott Conary shares his passion for the beverage not only with Chapel Hill, but the planet as well. Conary is a certified judge for the World Barista Competition, and he's even used Caffè Driade as the training venue for the Honduran barista champion to prepare for the Barista World Championships in Denmark.

Conary used the knowledge acquired from his international jaunts to recreate the European cafe experience, one with a remote feel that remains accessible. Yet, he's often reminded of Caffè Driade's uniqueness.

"I travel the world for this kind of thing," Conary says. "And have yet to find anything close." □

With its mosaic counter, exposed ceiling beams, and rotating selection of local art, there's no mistaking the eclectic Caffè Driade for a corporate coffee house.



Caffè Driade: 1215-A East Franklin Street, Chapel Hill • (919) 942-2333 • [www.caffedriade.com](http://www.caffedriade.com)



Caffe Driade's intimate atmosphere is ideal for quiet conversation, reading, or studying.



Caffe Driade knows coffee: For its outstanding product, the Specialty Coffee Association of America awarded the cafe its highest honors four years in a row.

# [midday *escapes*]

ASHEVILLE ART MUSEUM: ASHEVILLE

## *smart art*

Some gems hide in plain sight. They often don't reveal themselves until the viewer knows what to look for. The Asheville Art Museum, in Asheville's historic Pack Square, is one such treasure, a concealed haven that offers quiet

respite from the busy streets outside. The museum resides in a portion of the former Pack Memorial Library, which is fitting as the museum's galleries possess the meditative quality often found in libraries.

Elements of the old library remain that contrast, yet enhance, the modern lines of the galleries. On the second floor exhibition rooms, wrought iron balconies provide perches that lend fresh perspectives to the artwork after visitors finish reflecting on them from below. For those who like to contemplate their art with a little guidance, they can join Nancy Sokolove, the museum's adult programs manager, or one of the museum's docents for Art Break. This guided, lunchtime tour typically occurs every other Friday and focuses on the different exhibits within the museum.

"We rotate through our permanent collection of over 2,000 pieces, with around 80 on display at any given time," Sokolove explains as she leads visitors through the latest exhibit, "Expectant Gaze — Art from the Eye and Mind." This showcase, designed by guest curator Roger Manley — a North Carolina-based author and filmmaker — utilizes pieces from the museum's permanent collection. In the third gallery of the "Expectant Gaze" display, a quote by writer Anaís Nin graces the wall above the artwork: "We don't see things as they are, we see them as we are." It's a wise reminder that art is more than just pretty pictures; it's a reflection of who we are. □

**Asheville Art Museum**  
2 South Pack Square, Asheville  
(828) 253-3227  
[www.ashevilleart.org](http://www.ashevilleart.org)