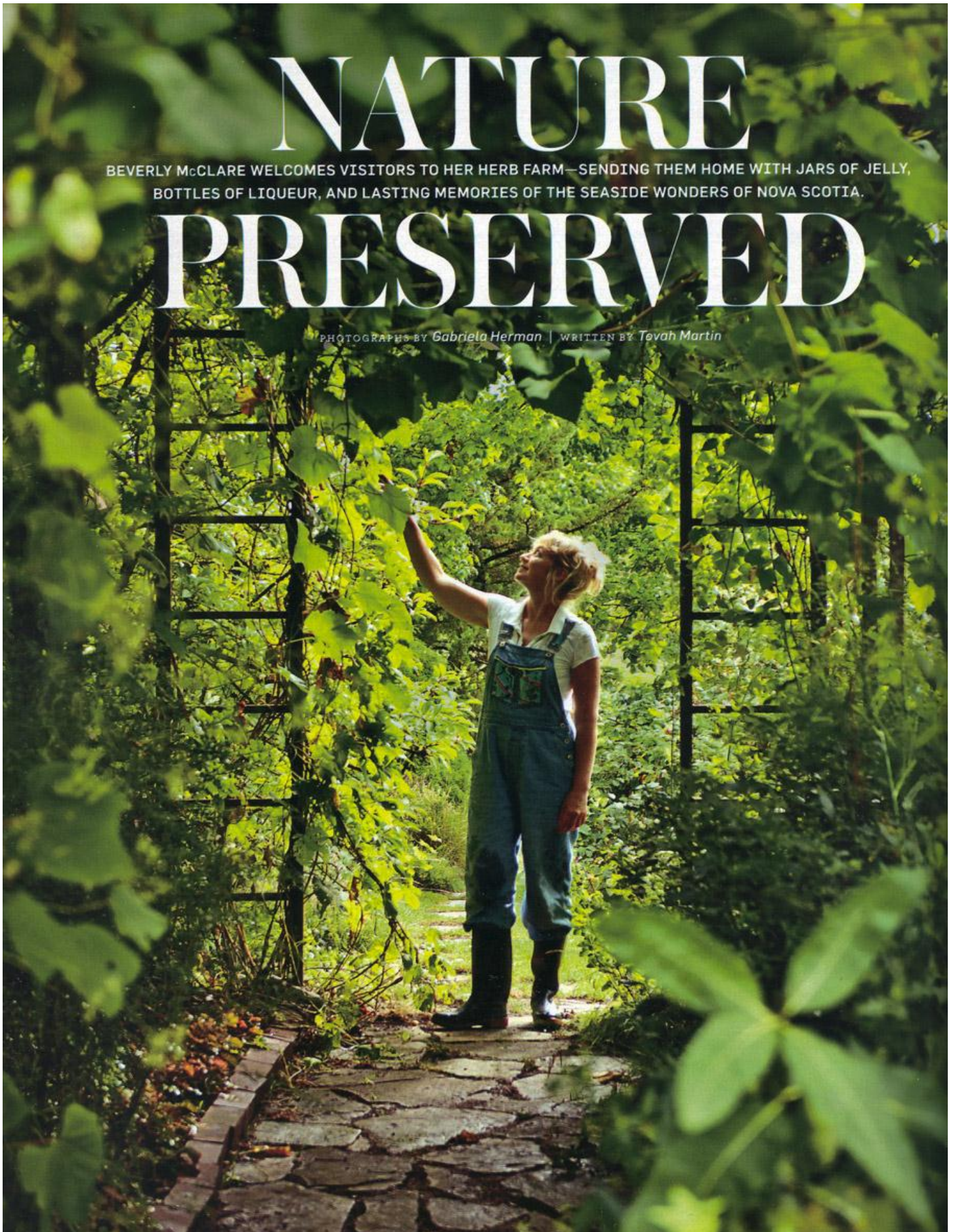


# NATURE

BEVERLY McCLARE WELCOMES VISITORS TO HER HERB FARM—SENDING THEM HOME WITH JARS OF JELLY, BOTTLES OF LIQUEUR, AND LASTING MEMORIES OF THE SEASIDE WONDERS OF NOVA SCOTIA.

# PRESERVED

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**SUNNY DELIGHTS**  
Beverly McClare's homemade jellies are filled with the flavors of Mediterranean herbs such as thyme, fennel, and rosemary. *Opposite* She checks the grapes climbing the farm's arbor for ripeness.

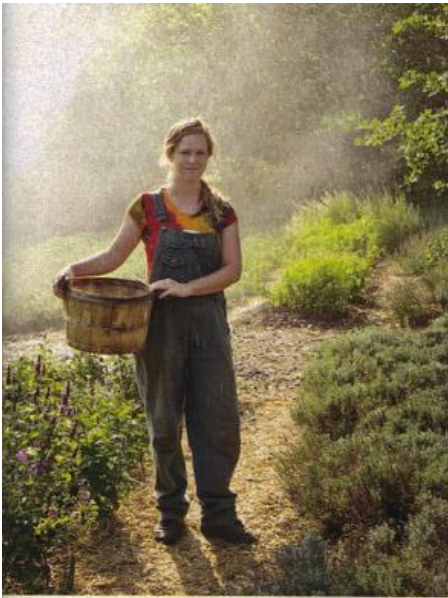


**NOVA SCOTIA, ONE OF** Canada's easternmost provinces, offers an abundance of relaxing solitude and epic scenery. Driving around the Atlantic-wrapped peninsula, you see a mix of craggy landscapes as well as lush expanses. One such patch of land, near the Bay of Fundy, is the Tangled Garden, Beverly McClare's farm, garden, and fine-food business. McClare's little company started out in 1986 as a four-square-foot patch of herbs that McClare had relocated via a pickup truck from the shuttered restaurant she had owned after college. Back when she transferred those plants, she didn't realize that they were essentially the only things that could thrive on the sun-parched shale ledge where her little house stood.

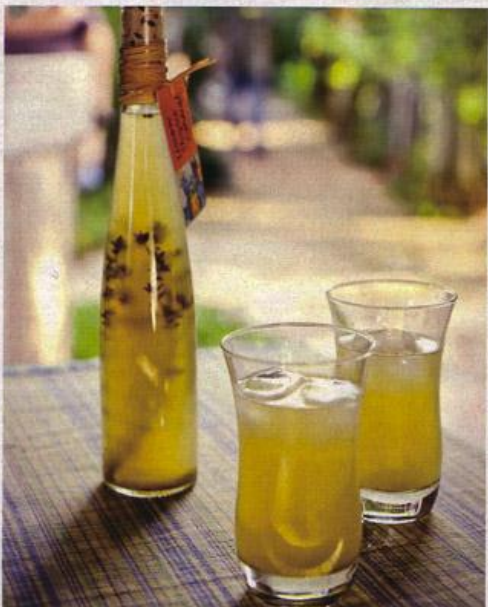
McClare first saw herb vinegar in a cooking magazine, and the jewel-like image of a cut herb suspended in liquid struck a chord. She could harvest her herbs to create similar savory art, she figured. Once they were made, the only space to store the bottles was on the windowsill, where they became their own advertisement: Soon, drawn by the colorful products, people were knocking on the door. She expanded her repertoire to include jellies, jams, chutneys, salsas, and liqueurs, experimenting with unexpected flavor pairings (orange-rosemary sauce, say, or rhubarb-angelica conserve).

McClare has expanded her operation to four acres of farmland—building a landscape that has become a destination for people who stop in to buy vinegar and then long to explore. On the grounds, she interplants ornamentals and herbs—grasses (fescue with sage), perennials (helenium with oregano), and annuals (sunflower with borage)—to give the 6,000 annual visitors a full and sensual experience.

The herbs that go into Tangled Garden's goods come directly from the beds and rows mere steps from the kitchen. To quench her thirst for pioneering products, McClare is adding her own currants (for black currant-thyme jelly), cherries (for cherry-anise hyssop jam), honeyberries (for liqueur), and thornless blackberries (for blackberry-mint cordial). "Thank goodness for horseradish and apples, so we can make horseradish jelly during the off-season," she says. To keep up standards, Tangled Garden's crew of three cooks makes very small batches—"just six jars at a time." But when they're working eight-plus hours a day, that still adds up to about 30,000 jars a year. As if the recipe-tweaking, taste-testing, and farmers'-market-vending didn't keep her busy enough, McClare is forever tilling new ground and putting in more gardens, creating edible landscapes on the forefront of design. And happily, she has no plans to extricate herself from the tangle: "I'm just following my passion."



**FARM DAYS**  
Scenes from around Tangled Garden: Frequent harvesting keeps the plants compact. Organic herbs and peppers flavor vinegars. Fennel flowers are snipped for jelly. Crab apples steep in preserving jars. One of McClare's metal sculptures hangs from a branch. A quiet water feature sits under an arbor. This liqueur is infused with thyme. Fennel flowers await processing into jellies. *Opposite* Everyone pitches in to start the jelly-making process.



## secrets for growing flavorful herbs

These useful plants couldn't be easier to cultivate—especially with these simple tips.

**1. Keep it lean.** It's helpful to learn where your species of herbs are from, so you can mimic the conditions of their homelands. For example, most Mediterranean herbs, including lavender, rosemary, thyme, savory, and sage, like sun-drenched, well-draining soil on the sandy side (think of a cliff overlooking the Aegean). Many herb growers keep the water, soil amendments, and organic fertilizers to a minimum so their plants stay compact and the flavors remain concentrated in the leaves.

**2. Watch your watering.** With the previously mentioned woody species, it always pays to stay on the dry side, but certain soft-stemmed herbs, such as mint, basil, and subtropical species, like lemon verbena, prefer greater amounts of water and enjoy soil rich with compost.

**3. Snip a tip.** New leaves tend to pack the most flavorful oils. Seek out tender new shoots, as opposed to older parts of the plant (which are found near the base).

**4. Rise and shine.** Some herbalists feel that their plants are at their most powerful when harvested in the morning, once the early rays of the sun have dried any dew but before the sun starts to bake the leaves and dissipate the leaf oils. This theory may be hard to prove, but anyone who's walked through an herb garden at this time of day can attest to the strong scents that the plants emit. And of course, fragrance is the greater part of flavor.

### PLAYING THE FIELD

McClare trained pliable willow branches to grow around a whimsical metal hoop folly standing amid a labyrinth of meadow plants.



**GARDEN OF THE SENSES**

By using raised beds in her garden, McClare can control the soil and drainage conditions to benefit her herbs and make them their most pungent. Hedges provide shelter from the drying winds at the seaside site.

**DIG DEEPER** Go to [marthastewart.com/tangled-garden](http://marthastewart.com/tangled-garden) to get more ideas for using herbs