

## A MODERN DAY EDEN

**A Healing Haven Where Preservation is Paramount**  
**Hollyhock Retreat Centre Redefining Value on a Global Scale**

By Laurel House

Before discovering Hollyhock, my definition of luxury was that which could be contrived simply by combing the perfect purchased accoutrements - frette sheets, designer bath products, butler serviced suites, a jetted Jacuzzi built for two, four-diamond dining, and an elaborate spa replete with treatments designed to pamper royalty around the globe.

My two-week stint at Hollyhock's 44 acre healing haven, situated on Cortes Island cozied up between the glaciers of Vancouver Island and the Coast Mountain range on mainland British Columbia, proved to redefine my diamond-encrusted concept of luxury. It is a luxury filled with the natural beauty of the old-growth forests where bald eagles, black tailed deer and barred owls dwell. Where meandering trails that lead through the trees to the gaggles of geese at the water's edge is more tempting than attempting internet access and communication with the outside world. Hollyhock, it seems, is a world unto itself. And that is plenty luxurious for me.

Rex Weyler, co-founder of Hollyhock and a co-founder of Greenpeace International always intended Hollyhock to be more than just a luxurious ocean front location. You can find that anywhere in the world. Hollyhock is unique.

"Hollyhock was founded on the principal that preservation of the place itself comes first." Weyler



explains, "that human comfort and human life are gifts from nature, and that our ultimate pleasure and comfort exists in creating a community that might endure for many lifetimes in a benign and respectful relationship with the earth."

When my water taxi first pulled up to the dock on Cortes Island, another visitor who I rode over with whispered to me, "Once you experience the magic of Hollyhock, you will fall in love and you will come back. You can't help but come back." Though I dismissed it at first, literally within minutes I was already in need of the place. It was as though some piece of me had been missing all my life, and suddenly

I found it. And though I hadn't before realized it was lacking, now I was finally at peace.

Hollyhock is where guests of all races, beliefs, and backgrounds realize that they belong. The island is a haven for creatives. It can't help but inspire. Between the verdant land and potent teachers, every guest experience is different, yet equally transformational.



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Guests who visit Hollyhock have a greater take away than merely unmangled muscles and a calm mind. In fact, Weyler hopes the experience resonates long term, inspiring peace, well-being and a relationship with nature.

Hollyhock's vision was established by pathfinders, including Greenpeace founders, and leaders in the humanistic psychology field. Joel Solomon, Hollyhock Board Chair, was intrigued by their vision of the world, and felt compelled

It's amazing to think that 26 years ago, when Hollyhock founders came upon the place, it was scattered with old wooden structures with leaky roofs - many of which were being reclaimed by the forest. The slogan "The holiday that heals" was coined and workshops, seminars and holidays were offered in order to use what existed - bedrooms, a kitchen, and open space - to survive and pay the bills. Guests who couldn't get enough became partners or collaborated in other related projects, linking the retreat to new resources. A garden was planted with organic herbs,



to join in. "They saw the world differently than what I was familiar and dissatisfied with. They saw a holistic vision of interconnectedness, the necessity to create business models that are about supporting ecology and community, and they understood that personal development and societal leadership were intimately part of the whole. I found the basis for my emerging vision of positive solutions, trust, wisdom, and peace, being the principle guideposts of life purpose."

Today, world renowned lecturers like Andrew Weil MD - integrative medicine expert and author, and Robert Gass EdD - spiritual musician, descend for the purpose of sharing insight that can be the impetus for change.

fruits and vegetables, lending itself to the perfect chef's garden that was beautiful too.

Before my trip to the secluded island, I was a bit of a resort snob with a 5-star requirement. Hollyhock may not be festooned with such star status, but somehow it was on a plane elevated moons above any 5-star resort.

Hollyhock truly is, as Solomon sees it "a practical version of modern Eden." It is luxury for the soul. And nothing can be more sumptuous than that. ■