

*no
place
like*
GNOME

Woodland sprites have been popping into flower beds, perching on fire hydrants and posting up on telephone poles on London Drive and Eton Road in Raleigh’s Budleigh neighborhood since the beginning of the pandemic. In fact, almost every yard on these two streets has been graced by a cute garden gnome over the past few months.

Dubbed the “Gnomes of London & Eton,” the dozens of tiny elves are overseen by Momma and Papa Gnome, also known as Gnomeo and Juliet. Generally perceived as good luck and protectors over evil, the gnomes secretly travel from home to home, moving throughout the streets to spread cheer—and neighborhood residents have been pleased to “hang with the gnomies.”

Gnomeo and Juliet are said to be super-shy, but authorized gnome Clarence to speak on their behalf. According to Clarence, the gnomes are made in a small underground workshop, and each of the four-inch protectors represents a relative, sibling or favorite person in their Gnome World. (Gnomeo and Juliet are the only height exceptions, at about eight inches tall.)

“As I understand it, Juliet and Gnomeo thought the young people—and their parents—on London Drive and Eton Road needed a bit of hopeful fun during this time of great uncertainty and stress,” says Clarence. “So, at the suggestion of a wise school teacher, they asked some of the gnomes in the area to add a little magic to everyday life.”

— *Melissa Howsam*



Courtesy Gnome Clarence