

The back garden of
Marie-Louise and David
Smith at 904 E. 1st St.

the glorious
gardens
of Bloomington

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There's not a pair of legs so thin, there's not a head so thick,
There's not a hand so weak and white, nor yet a heart so sick,
But that can find some needful job that's crying to be done,
For the Glory of the Garden glorifieth every one.

Rudyard Kipling & C. R. L. Fletcher
(*A History Of England*, 1911)

From window boxes downtown to the original plantings on campus to the colorful gardens of private homes, the city is in bloom. This is the season when locals and visitors alike treasure the rich tapestry of form and color found in Bloomington gardens.

Historic buildings look like jeweled dowagers with their window boxes and flower plots. The range of its many plantings reminds us that Indiana University has earned its ranking as one of the five most beautiful campuses in the nation. And Bloomington is fortunate that so many businesses across town have either boxes or beds of flowers during the summer months. While professional horticulturalists contribute much to this seasonal landscape, the city also has many home gardeners who are creative and skilled amateurs.

Nowadays we regard garden design as an art form, but it was not until the beginning of the 20th century that home gardens—and not only those of the rich and famous—began to be accepted as works of art. Monet and other Impressionist painters were instrumental in focusing attention on the exquisite play of light and color that could be found even in small gardens. The way they captured flowers and other natural elements on canvas, and Monet's own marvelous garden at Giverny, helped to elevate the status of gardening.

Drive around town and you will see ample evidence of our local home gardeners' artistry in front of their houses. But there are many other secret gardens, nestled like jewels in more private spaces. Some are on the outskirts of town, but others are tucked away behind houses on busy streets. In the Elm Heights neighborhood, for example, there is a gem of a garden behind the home of Marie-Louise and David Smith at 904 E. 1st



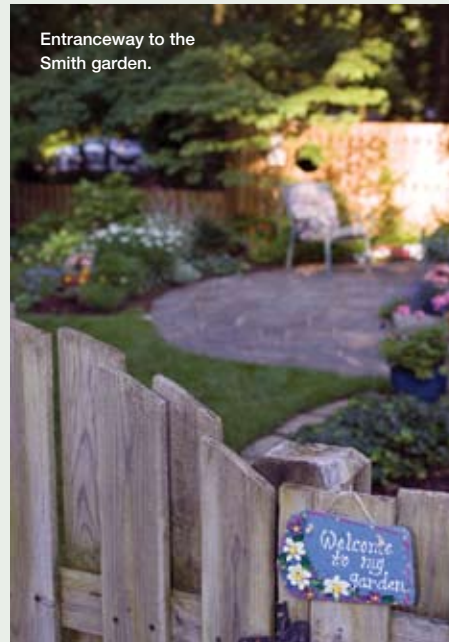
Coneflower

St. For a view of the back garden, walk down the alley that runs along the side of their house. The scale and flow of the design is perfect for the size of the lot, and since Marie-Louise is a musician, her combinations of perennial and annual plantings are like visual melodies with inspired variations and repetitions.

Nearby, on the corner of Maxwell Lane and Fess Street, Chris Holly and Bev Ohneck-Holly have made another exquisite small garden. They have planted a perennial border



The Holly garden featuring larkspur (blue), daylilies (orange), crocosmia (red), and rose campion (magenta).



Entranceway to the Smith garden.



Mary-Louise Smith working in her front garden.



Coreopsis

along their sunny sidewalk, demonstrating how to have something in bloom throughout the entire growing season. Their fenced back garden is a shady oasis of unusual natives and other shade lovers and is designed to be canine friendly with paths for their two dogs and a small pool that the dogs can wade into for a cool dip.

There are many other wonderful gardens in Elm Heights that can be seen on a summer evening stroll. But every neighborhood has surprises in store for those who enjoy flower walks.

In search of secret gardens

If you are out driving some day, take a trip to Inverness Woods (off Moore's Pike) and swing by John Hartley's corner lot at 2718 S. Bluff Ct. John has worked on his large stylish garden for many years and has embellished it with many decorative pieces from his international travels. When his daylilies are in bloom, the path to his front door, known as the Lily Walk, vibrates with color and can be seen from the street. There are also many hidden spaces in his garden that qualify as

secret gardens. The concept of a secret garden with magical healing properties is a powerful image in our cultural and religious history, one of the most notable examples being the Garden of Eden in the Christian tradition. The symbolism of treasure protected within a garden can be seen in illustrations and records of abbeys and nunneries across centuries.

Not all secret gardens are filled with flowers. The enclosed herb garden tucked next to the barn behind Julie and Owen Slaughter's lime-

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The Slaughters' enclosed herb garden at 2424 N. Dunn St. features subtle variations of color and texture, including gray lambs' ears (foreground) and green bot wood.







(clockwise from top left) The backstairs and deck at the Smith residence. A mounted teacup serves as garden art at the Hollys'. Metal sculpture in the Slaughter garden. The side of the Holly garden at Maxwell and Fess can be seen from the street. The screened porch at the Benders' offers sweeping views of the back garden.

(opposite page) The lush, overgrown Hartley garden at 2718 S. Bluff Ct.

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stone home at 2424 N. Dunn St. is notable for its subtle and calming variations of green and gray foliage.

Privacy in a garden also can be created by using adjoining woodlands and vistas as a backdrop for cultivated garden beds. Peggy Bender's back garden at 4408 N. Thistle Dr. in Marlin Hills is an example of how the garden boundaries seem to melt into the adjacent vistas.

In non-confined suburban gardens, an expanse of lush green lawn can showcase island plantings. Drive by Marlene Fulcher's garden at 2298 W. Amherst Rd. (off Maple Grove) and see how she has created imaginative and varied focal points in her garden. It's on a corner lot, and most of it is visible from the street.



The back garden at the Benders' with winding limestone paths.

The thought that goes into a garden

Many modern gardeners who retreat from the pressures of their jobs to the privacy of their gardens speak of how working in the garden rejuvenates their spirit. Designs by these hobby gardeners is intensely personal. The wide range of stylistic approaches, color combinations, and attempts to solve site challenges result in every garden being somewhat unique.

The gardeners grow what pleases them and display their plants in ways they find satisfying. How ambitious their gardens are is usually dic-

tated by the size of the lot and the energy and financial resources available.

Garden design is also influenced by the perspectives from which plantings are to be viewed. The placement of design elements is often dictated by what can be framed by a window or looked down upon from a deck,



The Fulchers' exquisitely designed pond with rocks, foliage, and sculpture.

or complements a patio or seating area. The purpose of the garden—either public display or private refuge—also shapes the result.

Then there are the subliminal motivations arising from the gardener's personal history, such as a fondness for plants that relatives grew or memories of gardens that evoke happy experiences. All of these, as well as many other factors, are instrumental in shaping each individual's notion of a perfect garden. And, of course, those notions are fine tuned as gardeners, and their gardens, evolve over time.

If you are thinking of beginning a new garden, choose a professional designer who will listen to your personal preferences and help you to turn your ideas into reality. If you are doing all the work yourself, you should realize that creating a great garden involves trial and error, a lot of sweat and even occasional tears, and that there is no template to follow except your own vision. As Alfred Austen (1835-1913) wrote long ago, "A garden that one makes oneself becomes associated with one's personal history and that of one's friends, interwoven with one's tastes, preferences, and character, and constitutes a sort of unwritten, but withal manifest, autobiography. Show me your garden provided it be your own, and I will tell you what you are like." ✨

