

Secret GARDENS

Three private sanctuaries designed for quiet, contemplative time away from the hum of everyday life.

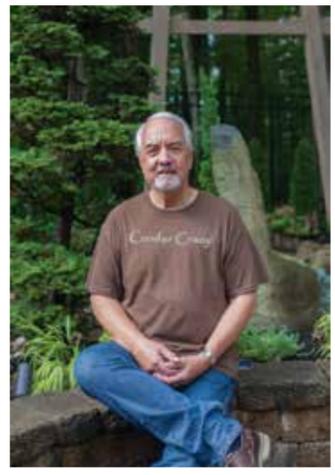
By **Moya Andrews** Photography by **James Kellar**

Gardens serve many purposes. Some are public and frequented by many people; they can be created for recreation like parks or for education like demonstration gardens. Others — like plantings in front yards — are simply to be admired by passers-by. But the three gardens featured here are not created for the public; they are for their owners or by invitation only. These gardens are best described as private sanctuaries, deliberately set apart from the noise and bustle of daily life. They are sheltered, contemplative spaces where nature is celebrated. The gardens are very different in style, yet all three are superbly designed.

Ted and Soili Ochsner's garden seems like a completely different place at dusk than it does during the day. The area surrounding the pool provides the family a perfect entertainment space.



LEGACY OF A
STONE THE OCHSNER GARDEN
LANTERN

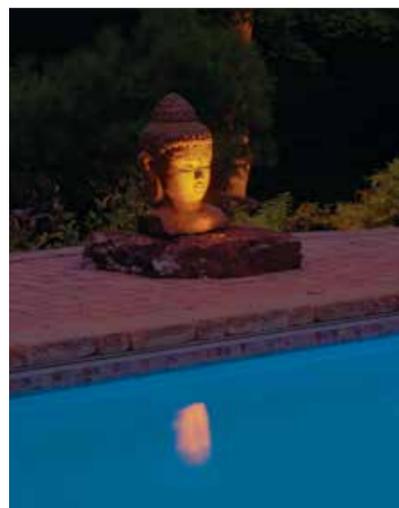


(above) The variation of color in Ted and Soili Ochsner's garden is created by different shades of foliage and is complemented by the color and texture of the stone. (inset) Ted in his beloved garden.

Ted Ochsner grew up in an Indianapolis family that taught him an appreciation of nature, gardens, and art. His parents belonged to the Portfolio Club, of which T.C. Steele and many other Indiana artists were members. Another family friend was J.I. Holcomb, who bequeathed a garden to Butler University. It was during a family visit to Holcomb's private estate gardens that young Ted saw his first Japanese stone lantern; today that very lantern resides in his own garden near the Japanese-style pool house, lighting the path for guests. The house holds the pool equipment but looks like an authentic teahouse with shōji screens and a roof that gently swings upward toward heaven.

Ted and his wife, Soili, who grew up in Finland, share an international perspective on religion, art, and gardens. Long collectors of Asian art, they frequent the Tibetan Mongolian Buddhist Cultural Center and share the conviction that diversity makes the whole world, as well as individual landscapes within the world, more meaningful and enriching.

Before moving to Bloomington and reconnecting with Ted's Hoosier roots, the couple lived right on the ocean in Sonoma County, California, where they could see the waves breaking on the rocks below their house. "I have had a longtime love affair with the texture of stone and boulders," Ted says.



(clockwise from top) The juxtaposition of stone and different-colored foliage provide a perfect foil for artwork in the garden. The sound of water trickling over boulders is an integral part of the magic of this garden. The fire pit casts an orange glow at dusk.

The garden's lighting causes the Buddha to be reflected in the water at night. The Japanese lantern that once belonged to J.I. Holcomb now resides near the teahouse, and is softened by the branches of the sumac bushes nearby.

"As a child, and to this day, I always returned from a walk with a pocket full of rocks, and I still have geodes that I collected then. So when I look at the stones in our Bloomington garden today, I remember how I felt when I found them."

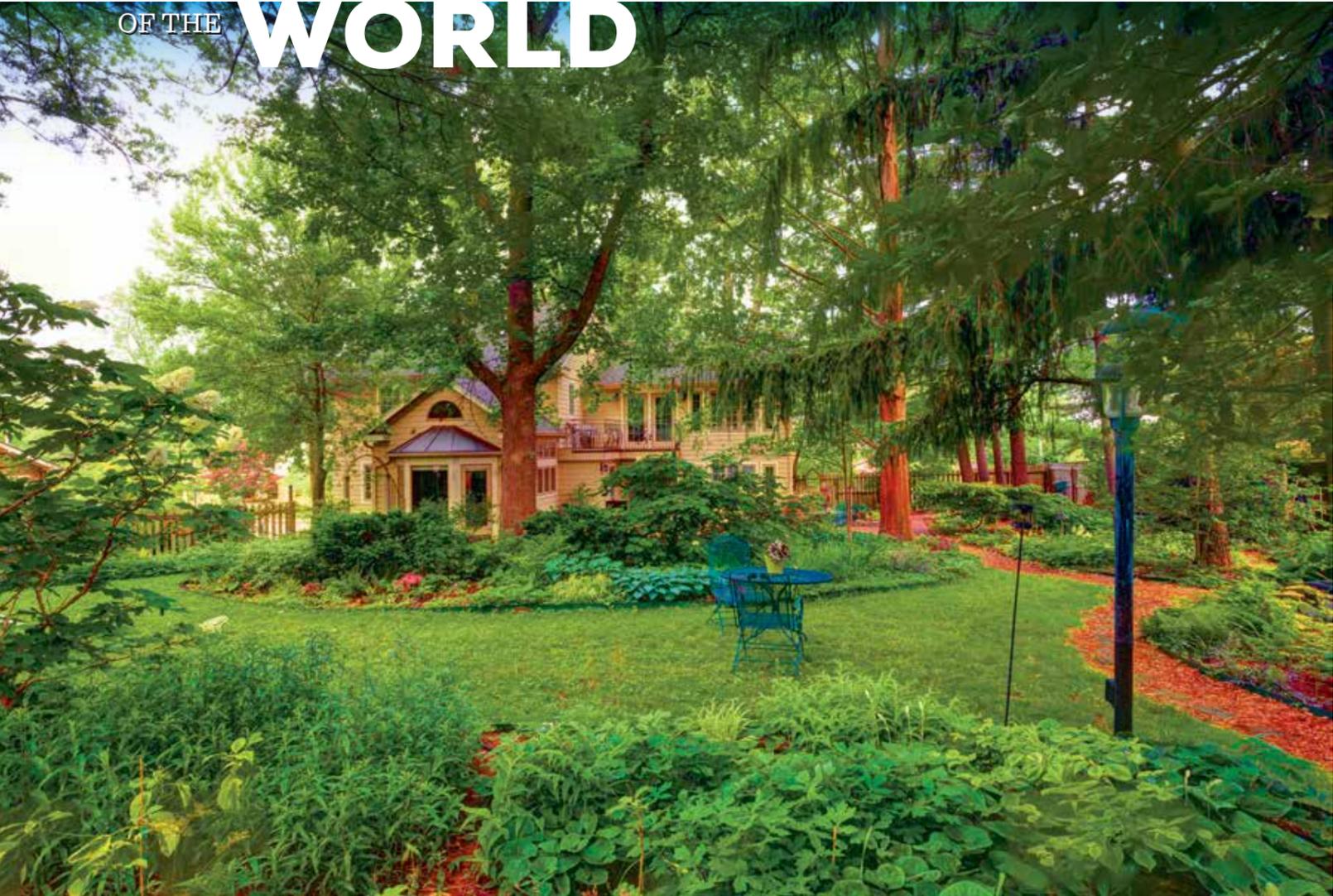
Ted started the garden in the late summer of 2008 after completion of the pool, which he had promised Soili as compensation for moving to landlocked Indiana. Soili notes that the garden is "Ted's passion and reflects his lifelong interest in nature and its eternal mysteries. It is a display of beliefs, images, and mementos of his life's journey."

To the left as one enters the garden is a large Shinto gate known as a torii. On the other side of the torii are miniature gardens known as penjing. Seth Inman from Mother Nature Landscaping "has been the main designer, but many workers have contributed to the garden since it was begun," says Ted. "This has enhanced the process of creating a contemplative space. The evolution of a meditative garden is like running a marathon, not a sprint to the finish line." Tall trees that surround the garden and an 8-foot black aluminum fence create the impression that the garden is enclosed in the vaulted walls of a cathedral. This impression is especially powerful at night when the trees are lit from below.

The large pool is the centerpiece of the garden, and an imposing Buddha statue from Bali, Indonesia, overlooks one side. At the far end of the pool, water dances from a waterfall, and at its head stands a delicate 'Blue Ice' with fernlike foliage. It is just one example of the collection of more than 80 unusual conifers that make up this spectacular garden. Ted is a lover of conifers and delights in the varied shades of light and dark green, chartreuse, gray, and blue as well as the contrasting shapes and textures of the branches and needles. "Each conifer," he says, "does not compete with, but rather complements, its neighbor."

"When plants are crossed and new varieties emerge, they become like cultures that are intermingled in complementary ways. The juxtaposition of plants and objects cause them to enhance each other, and the changing light at different times of the day and night cause not only each item, but also the entire gestalt to change from moment to moment." For Ted, the garden is a metaphor for his life story "and a place of introspection, meditation, tranquility, and refuge."

A PLACE TO SHED THE
CARES THE SCHWEN GARDEN
 OF THE **WORLD**



The windows in the back of Emilie and Tom Schwen's home command sweeping views of their shaded woodland garden. The lower limbs of the mature trees have been removed to filter additional light through the canopy.

Emilie and Tom Schwen's garden slopes gently down to the brick patio at the back of their home on a corner lot in Elm Heights. Mature trees, privacy fencing, and tranquil design features create the impression of a secluded woodland glade. The filtered shade, the pond, and the waterfall contribute to the 10-degree-cooler summer temperature in the garden than in the surrounding areas. There are ever-changing views of the garden that can be enjoyed from the patio or from inside the kitchen, family room, and master bedroom at all times of day and in all seasons. The garden blends

seamlessly not only with their house but also with the Schwens' lifestyle and talents, and they enjoy working in it together whenever possible. Like many well-designed gardens, it looks as if it was created by nature without any assistance from human hands, but this garden is the result of generous human intervention.

The impetus for starting the garden in 1997 was a surprise monetary gift from Emilie's two bachelor uncles who, like her father, were farmers. Emilie's mother was a gardener, so it felt appropriate to use the gift for a garden. Not native



Hoosiers — the Schwens both grew up in Minnesota — their first step was to enroll in Master Gardener classes to learn about creating all-season color and interest in this region. Next they consulted with Anita Bracalente of Jackson & Fourth Garden Design, who provided a list of appropriate plants and helped them lay out the gently curved paths and planting areas. The couple selected and installed some of the initial plants and have subsequently performed all of the garden development and maintenance themselves.

Tom, with Emilie's counsel, designed and built windows in the fence to increase air circulation and to frame views. He also created the pond, waterfall, bridge, and gates. The areas that are most densely shaded are planted with shrubs such as the hydrangea and Pieris and other plants that provide subtle but effective foliage contrast in hue and leaf shape. Where there is more filtered light elsewhere in the garden, colorful annuals, such as Million Bells, Dragon Wing begonias, coleuses, caladium varieties, and perennial lilies (the Stargazer, for example) add vibrant accents.

Swaths of green lawn between the beds and repetition of shade-loving perennials such as hostas, tiarellas, and hardy begonias, also add serenity to the landscape. The limbing up of the trees has provided increased light for the plants and yet maintained the leafy canopy above the garden. The quiet



(clockwise from top left) Tom designed and built the water feature and the bridge over it. A pop of pink from the Stargazer lilies provide a splash of color in a sunny corner of the property. The waterfall, also designed and built by Tom, feeds water into the pond. Red

Dragon Wing begonias contrast with the foliage of the hostas along the side of the house. Tom and Emilie pose near a shade-loving hydrangea between gardening chores.

ambience of the space, the fragrance of the flowers, and the well-chosen ornaments nestled among the plantings add to the tranquility of this garden refuge.

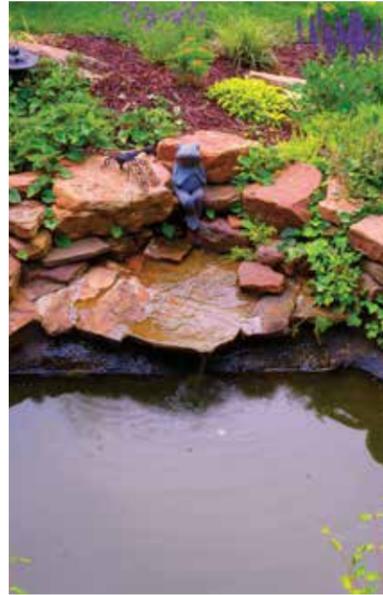
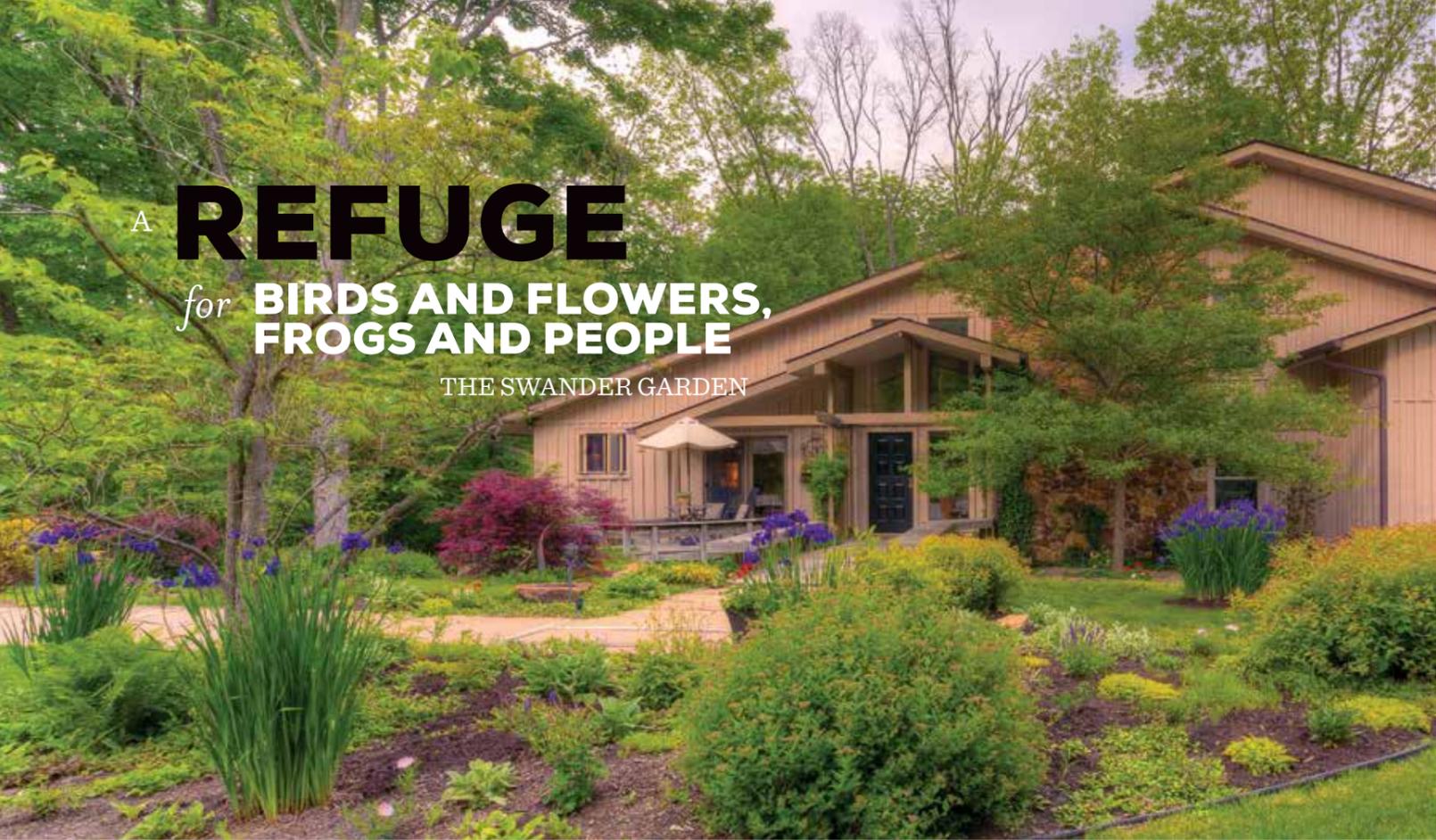
As Emilie says, "Being in our yard — where the oxygen is richer because of the big trees, watching the birds and bees feeding and the squirrels and chipmunks scampering, with interesting views from wherever one is — helps us both shed the cares of the outside world, whether we are working or sitting enjoying time with friends or each other."



A REFUGE

for BIRDS AND FLOWERS,
FROGS AND PEOPLE

THE SWANDER GARDEN



(top) The location of the front deck and the water feature, positioned near the front door, conveniently merges Paula and Chad Swander's indoor and outdoor living spaces. (above) Paula and Chad do most of their own garden maintenance.

Chad and Paula Swander can hardly remember a time when they didn't have a garden. Their current garden has undergone many revisions over the years, with their last major overhaul occurring around 2007 following the latest addition to their Edgewood Hills home. Their lot is surrounded by wooded areas, but the garden close to the front of the house is in full sun, which allows them to grow any sun-loving plant the deer don't like. This takes some ingenuity, but Paula loves flowers and Chad

is a photographer and ardent birdwatcher, so their passions coalesce in the vibrant, colorful garden.

Since birds are attracted to water, Chad built the water feature close to the house so he and Paula can watch the birds come and go while having lunch at the seating area nearby. There is also a ground-level stone birdbath that is a magnet for birds. "We love to sit outdoors in the summer listening to the waterfall in our pond," says Paula, who has chaired three of the Bloomington Garden Club's Garden Walks. The colors and textures of the plants in and near the pond, such as the papyrus, water lily, and purple iris, provide visual interest. The sound of frogs and many whimsical frog ornaments amuse and delight visitors.

Chad also built the stone walls that enclose the home's parking areas, and Mother Nature Landscaping designed and built the patio at the entrance. This additional hardscape gave Paula the opportunity to artfully combine colorful plants that frame the benches on either side of the path leading up to the front door, creating an unusual and inviting approach to the home.

Paula enjoys combining colors and textures in unusual ways and uses strong

colors that remain vibrant even in the heat of high summer. She finds that chartreuse and golden foliage combine well with plants with purple flowers such as meadow sage, salvia, veronica, verbena, and clematis. She also has sought out many shrubs with golden-hued foliage, such as some varieties of cypress, spirea, and caryopteris, that hold up well through three seasons. She uses plants with silver foliage for accents; some examples are artemisia, Russian sage, mounding lamb's ears, catmint, and lavender. And she enjoys using large clumps of vibrantly colored perennials to attract butterflies to the garden.

In her strategically placed containers close to the house, where the deer are less of a hazard, she uses annuals such as chartreuse coleus with begonias, petunias, and geraniums. Because her large perennial beds are surrounded by wooded areas where deer are plentiful, she has learned to substitute deer-resistant plants for those that deer find delectable: daffodils, for example, instead of tulips in the spring and chrysanthemums in profusion in the fall. In summer, instead of hostas she uses mounds of lamb's ears, and for Asiatic lilies she substitutes irises. Her favorite annuals to foil



the deer are the cleome, lantana, and zinnia. To add repetitive touches of white in the more shaded areas, she frequently uses astilbe, which is deer resistant. This allows her to coexist with Bambi and still have many flowers to cut and arrange indoors as well as masses of vibrant color in the landscape through all the growing seasons. ✨



(clockwise from top left) A clump of purple Japanese irises provides a contrast with the chartreuse foliage to the left. The water feature, which includes a waterfall, is home to many frogs that provide auditory interest in the garden. Clivia, native to southern Africa, is grown locally as an annual. The vivid foliage of

the Japanese maple creates an accent behind the birdbath, which is popular with birds and butterflies alike. This whimsical bench has a seat that's painted to pick up the chartreuse accents in the garden and supports that pay homage to the frogs in the pond.