

Panoramic views of the lake can be seen from Berta Moore's house, and change season by season. In midsummer, fields of colorful daylilies are center stage. Here you can see two of the many bird statues that adorn this garden guarding the path to the lake.

# As Time Goes By

## *Timeless Gardens & Tireless Gardeners*

It's inevitable that successful gardens evolve over time. Living plants are not static, and as gardeners learn more about their craft, they envision their space in new ways. The three gardens featured here—two in expansive rural settings and one on a narrow city lot—have passed through a number of stages, but what is most noteworthy about them is that they have been tended by the same dedicated hands since they were first planted decades ago.

Berta Moore began with views of a lake and woods near Spencer, Indiana, and created a kaleidoscopic landscape of flowers, plants, and trees. Dan and Lisa Burnham closed their retail nursery in northeast Monroe County but continue to incorporate unusual combinations of plants in their private, contemplative garden. And the city garden of Laura Ley and Barry Kern has morphed from a small vegetable patch into a garden of densely packed beds of colorful annuals and perennials. In each case, both garden and gardener have matured *in situ*.

By Moya Andrews • Photography by James Kellar





# Berta Moore's

## *Passion for the Natural World*



(top) A close-up of a few of Berta's colorful daylily cultivars.

(Inset) Berta's personality is as exuberant as her garden. A knowledgeable horticulturist, Berta's passion for plants is reflected in her eclectic repertoire of botanical specimens, many of which are rarely seen in southern Indiana. Her love of all creatures has enabled her to create a sanctuary for an astonishing number of unusual birds.

When Berta Moore and her former husband purchased 40 acres near Spencer, Indiana, in 1979, "there was just lawn, privacy, and water," she recalls. The property included a 3-acre pond and a one-story bungalow. Over time, the house was expanded to include a second story and more windows to capitalize on the views. And year after year, Berta planted daffodils, daylilies, and other plants and trees.

"I planted every tree on the property near the house," she recalls. "Some of my favorites are a native lettuce leaf magnolia with huge white blooms, big-leaf and little-leaf European lindens, a forest pansy redbud, two moisture-loving bald cypresses near the pond, and a fragrant fringe tree. All of their roots have settled comfortably into this ground, and they have also settled into my heart."

In mid-summer there is a kaleidoscope of color as masses of daylilies stretch from the house to the water's edge. Many are unusual cultivars, such as the tall yellow 'Sears Tower,' a double pink 'Almost Indecent,' and the striking red/yellow 'Paco Bell.' Tall Oriental lilies also

bloom in profusion, especially the pale cream 'Big Brother,' whose scent fills the air.

Berta developed her passion for the natural world at an early age. She was only 2 years old when her family moved from urban Germany to rural Ohio. "My father was a physicist at Wright-Patterson Air Force Base and taught us scientific principles," she says. "My mother loved plants and animals and taught herself how to milk a cow from a German encyclopedia." The family menagerie even included a domesticated monkey.

Over time, Berta has populated her own garden with a surprising number of creatures. There are five gambling dogs, all foundlings; crested pigeons; silver and Lady Amherst's pheasants; bantam chickens; and five emus. "I just love emus. I read a story when I was young about an emu that went fishing," she says. "I have two boys and three girls, and they have houses for shelter in the winter." There is a waterfall and pond with koi, and a 25-year-old Australian blue-tongued lizard who monitors the action at the bird feeders from a glass case in the dining room.



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In the garden there are also a number of bird statues, a stone dinosaur, a table in the form of a praying mantis, and several benches where visitors can rest and enjoy the rich variety of plants in this lush garden. Those plants include *Brunfelsia*, a tender plant that winters indoors and has lavender flowers; Berta's mother's *Clivia*; iris 'Wabash,' a gift from a high school friend; bear's breeches with its dramatic foliage; native blue gentian; and crinkle leaf dogwood bush 'Pucker Up.' Crotons, with their multi-colored leaves, are houseplants that are enjoying the summer outdoors.

Since 1983, Berta has planted between 200 and 1,000 bulbs each fall so that early, mid-season, and late-season daffodils bloom and paint the earth yellow from March through May. The garden, she says, "has been a labor of love over many years to create a welcoming sanctuary that nurtures many of God's creatures."

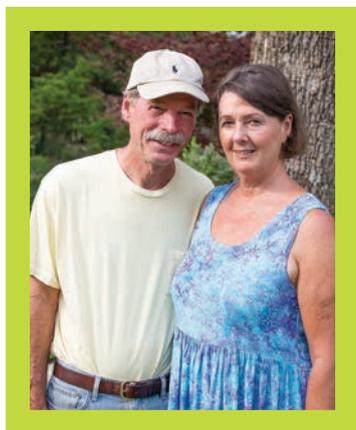
1. A few years ago, Berta decided to create this waterfall from local stone so she could add an auditory dimension to the character of her garden and provide a home for some interesting fish.
2. Vibrant color is provided by innumerable daylilies and black-eyed Susans.
3. Bicolor daylilies.
4. Daylilies with ruffled petals.
5. Throughout the garden, there are many nooks and quiet spaces where visitors can rest and enjoy different perspectives of the plantings.
6. An Australian emu, one of five that live year-round in Berta's welcoming sanctuary for creatures from all parts of the world.
7. A second story was added to the house many years ago so that views of the lake could be enjoyed more easily.

# Burnham Woods Nursery May Be Gone but Dan & Lisa Burnham Garden On



In midsummer, the garden is full of different textures of green interspersed with clumps of vibrant color. The plantings change and evolve throughout the seasons.

(left) Career horticulturalists Dan and Lisa Burnham frequently travel and gather plants, making their garden a showcase for many unusual specimens.



Dan and Lisa Burnham, both career horticulturalists, operated Burnham Woods Nursery, a valued and popular destination for local gardeners, from 1989 to 2006. They educated their patrons by creating demonstration gardens that modeled how plants could be sited in home gardens. To this day, plants purchased at Burnham Woods are being admired in local gardens.

Although they no longer have a nursery, the Burnhams still garden on part of their 150

acres in northeast Monroe County, and their personal space resembles an extensive botanical garden, showcasing unusual specimens and combinations of plants. They still grow many perennials but have expanded their repertoire to include many more conifers and Japanese maples.

"We are on the top of a ridge, and it used to be just an open expanse once the perennials died down in the winter," Lisa says. "Now it is less exposed as we have trees and shrubs with interesting shapes, berries,

and bark, and conifers that provide the garden backbone, so it is vibrant until Christmas, and the shapes and textures are interesting all winter."

Dan notes they look for the following qualities when choosing trees: the shape of the outline, seasonal changes in foliage color, bark interest, flowers, and berries. "The conifers don't like to be crowded," he says, "so as they grow larger we'll remove some of the perennials and the landscape will become an even more subtle array of scenes with a wide variety of nuances as the light changes across the seasons."

Behind the house, the landscaped vista extends for almost a quarter of a mile, the lawn merging into a field and the field into the tree line. The woods are the far-away backdrop, with many native trees providing spring-flower and fall-foliage color. The beds that are far from the house rely on the boldest plantings like the *Rudbeckia maxima*, a tall gangly sunflower that sways as birds perch on it to get the seeds.

Lisa explains that the garden is designed to include sequences of bloom and fragrance in addition to form, shape, and texture. For example, a sequence of bloom in one bed starts with *Forsythia*, followed by *Spiraea*, peonies, *Hydrangea*, ornamental grasses, varie-



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1. This photo illustrates part of the expansive mowed lawns in the foreground of plantings of shrubs and perennials. The scale of the plantings, interspersed with berms and beds, creates the illusion of a large botanical garden.
2. The garden is designed so there are views from the porch, which encircles three sides of the house.
3. Pink *Dianthus* with gray foliage, purple *Scabiosa* in the center, and tall gray *Lychnis* and cone-flower in the back create a bed with visual and textural interest.
4. A rustic bench sits on a path with a bark mulch surface. A white *Hydrangea* can be seen behind the slats.
5. The Burnhams have a wide selection of conifers and Japanese maples. Even in winter, the conifers provide accents because of the chartreuse and blue-gray foliage, which contrasts with the varying shades of green.

gated *Caryopteris* 'Snow Fairy,' the iridescent pink Japanese anemone 'Bressingham Glow,' and deciduous holly with red berries in the fall. One detects many fragrances in this garden, including those of *Abelia*, lilac, *Clethra*, *Phlox*, and *Hosta*.

There's an auditory dimension to the garden, too, "such as the chorus of spring peepers at the pond and the cooing of the mourning doves," Lisa says. "We also enjoy the diversity of the critters: turkey babies, turtles, a family of hawks."

This expertly designed garden has continued to evolve in many dimensions. As part of the nursery, it already had a rich tapestry of established plants, and the owners used their knowledge, skills, and creativity to expand the plant repertoire. They also



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had the courage to delete and fine-tune. They are now painting on a much larger canvas, considering both long-range vistas and close-in plantings from a variety of perspectives, and harmonizing many different variables across the seasons.



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# Laura Ley & Barry Kern's *Haven for Birds & Butterflies*



Laura Ley and Barry Kern are city gardeners who have created a colorful urban oasis on Bloomington's Near West Side on the site of an old orchard. "When we purchased the house in 1982, there were seven trees that quickly died, a dog pen in the back yard, a grape arbor, and some zebra grass," Laura recalls. "Barry concentrated on remodeling the house, as he specializes in restoring older homes, and I started the garden in the back by planting masses of daffodils. Then I just focused on growing vegetables for about seven years."

As it is for many gardeners, the creation of a garden using plants remembered from childhood was the initial motivation for Laura. She started planting old-fashioned

annuals grown from seeds inherited from her grandmother—e.g. *Nicotiana* and yarrow. "I started sowing seeds of zinnias and marigolds for color among the vegetables, and enjoyed it so much that I expanded my flower repertoire," Laura says. "I purchased some of my best plants from Lee Jones, Linda Chapman, John Bavender, Mike Salem, and Don Dunkerly at the Bloomington Community Farmer's Market.

"I discovered the benefit of planting annual self-seeders such as globe amaranth, balsam, four-o'clocks, moss roses, and *Cleome* that return year after year. I also grew to depend on perennials such as *Geranium* 'Rozanne' and cone flowers that bloom for a long time," she continues.



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1. The dense plantings and the artful combinations of color and fragrance provide a whimsical experience of sensory affects. The narrow paths provide opportunities for close-up inspection of the blossoms.
2. Barry specializes in houseplants that winter indoors but spend the summer outdoors on one side of the house. Laura is the creator of the annual and perennial beds. They enjoy working together in the garden and have done every bit of the work themselves.
3. A *Spiraea* shrub with varying shades of pink blooms is combined with a *Sedum* on the left that will bloom in the fall, and a perennial *Geranium* on the right, which bloomed earlier in the spring.
4. The castor-oil plant, with colorful palmate leaves, grows quite tall and is a striking accent as it towers above its neighbors. Though beautiful, this plant is poisonous.
5. An island bed by the garage is edged by geodes and includes an array of self-seeding annuals as well as perennials.
6. Barry created the fountain. Not only is it visually attractive, it provides a soothing auditory dimension that melds with the sound of insects and birdsong.

“Friends gave us geodes to edge the beds near the house, and we planted a dark-leaved Norwegian maple that now anchors the entire garden.”

The elongated back garden stretches past the garage until it ends in a steep incline that allows for a backdrop wall of creeping phlox and an old-fashioned rose on a fence. The gardens farthest from the house are punctuated with statuesque clumps of perennials such as queen of the prairie; native Culver’s root and Joe Pye weed; and annual *Celosia* and purple fountain grass.

Barry constructed a water feature in the far back corner, creating a dramatic backdrop for the dark foliage of taro “Black Magic,” while Mediterranean plants such as lavender and rosemary thrive on the nearby dry banks. Laura realized the need for height in the distant beds, and repeats clumps of castor-oil plant (which is poisonous but striking), tall daylily ‘Autumn Minuet,’ Mexican sunflower, and native cup plant, which holds water for the birds to enjoy.

At one point in the evolution of this garden, Laura started to focus on fall bloomers and added various types of *Sedum*, *Aster*, golden rod, blackberry lilies, and *Helenium*. Another phase of development included planting flowering shrubs that bloom at different times and are low maintenance. She lined the side of the garden that abuts a lane with *Abelia*, ‘Miss Kim’ lilac, and ‘Lime-light,’ ‘Little Lime,’ ‘Oakleaf,’ and ‘Pinky Winky’ hydrangeas.

This garden is a haven for birds and butterflies, but chicken-wire cages covering newly planted annuals deter rabbits in the spring. Motion detectors set off alarms to confuse deer and the raccoons. Laura spends time in the garden every day during the growing season and keeps a garden journal. “We both enjoy the garden each day, and even when we are traveling I am on the lookout for new plants,” she says. ✨