

# Secret GARDENS

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

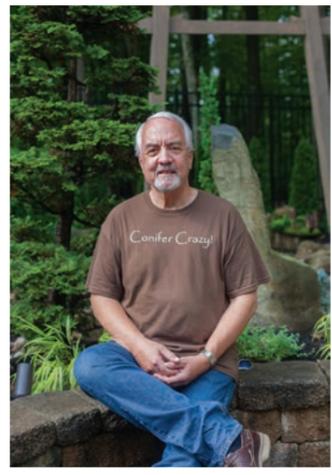
By **Moya Andrews** Photography by **James Kellar**

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**

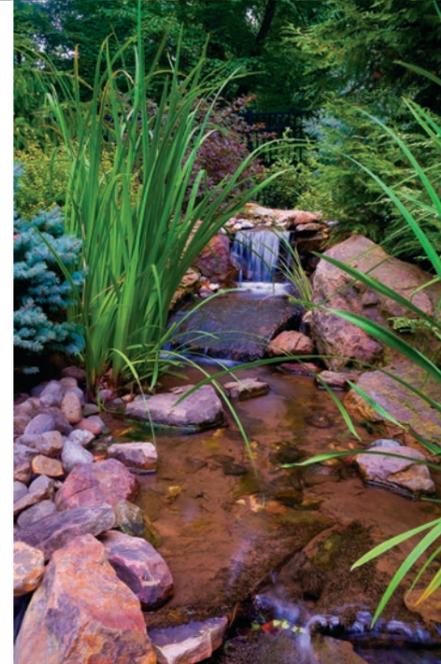


(above) The variation of color in Ted and Soili Ochsner's garden is created by different shades of foliage and is complemented by the color and texture of the stone. (inset) Ted in his beloved garden.

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 to light the path for guests. The house holds the pool equipment but looks like an authentic teahouse with shoji 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 Indiana 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 long-time 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. At night, the lighting causes the Buddha to be reflected in the water. 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 land-locked Indiana. Soili notes that the garden is "Ted's passion and reflects his life-long 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, "and this has enhanced the process of creating a contemplative space. The evolution of a meditative garden is a like running a marathon, not a sprint to the finish line." Tall trees that surround the garden and an eight-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 from Bali overlooks one side. At the far end of the pool, water dances from a waterfall, and at its head stands a delicate Cypress x Gabra 'Blue Ice' with fern-like 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, grey, and blue hues and 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."