

Celebrating Life in Bloomington

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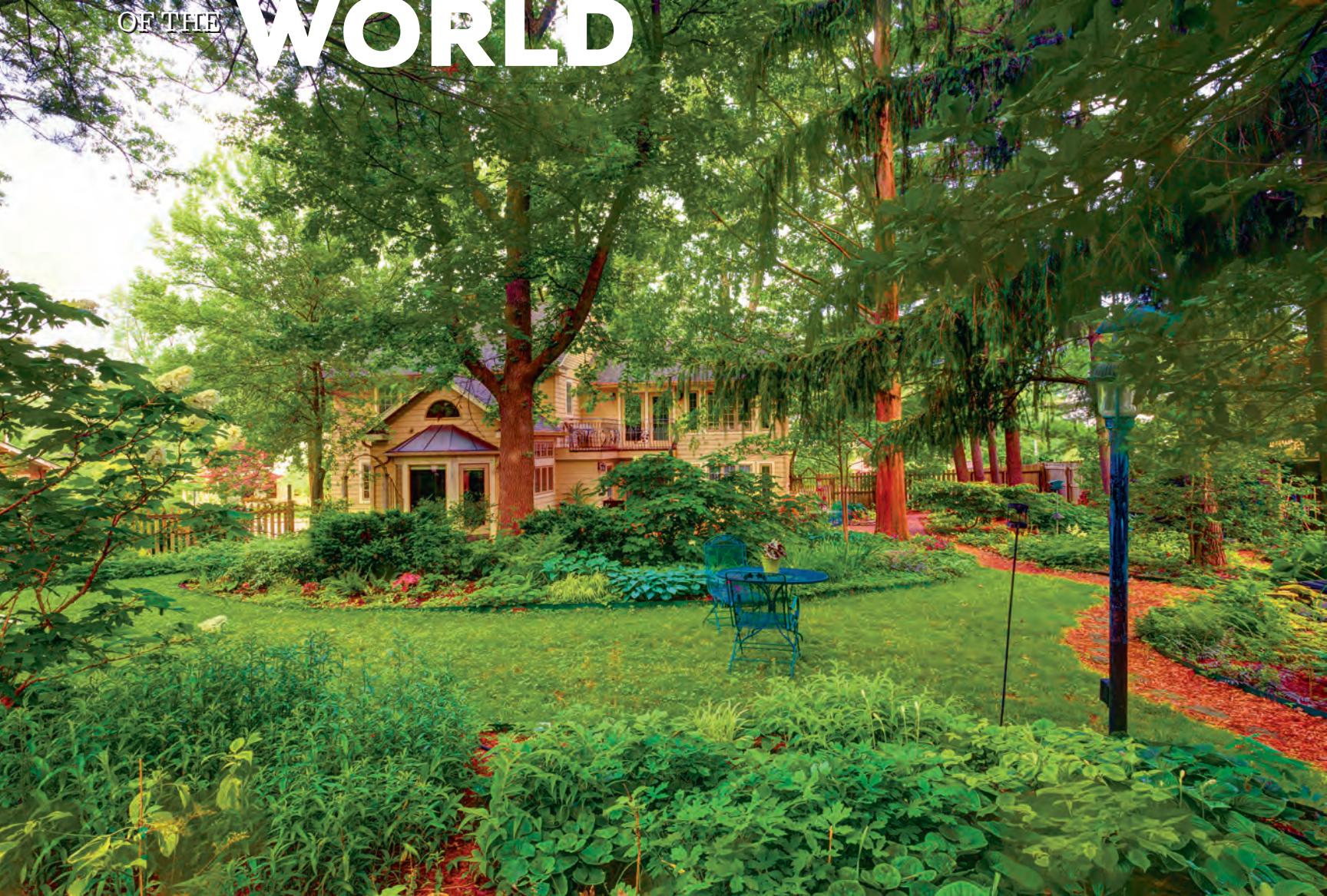
Secret Gardens

Homes That Reflect Our History

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The garden of Emilie and Tom Schwen.

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



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. And yet 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 Gardening classes to learn about creating all-season color and interest in this region. Next they consulted with Anita Bracalente of Jackson and 4th Garden Design who helped them lay out the gently curved paths and planting areas and provided a list of appropriate plants. 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 Hydrangea and Pieris and plants that provide subtle but effective foliage contrast in hue and leaf shape. Where there is more filtered light some colorful annuals, such as million bells, dragon wing begonia, coleus, caladium, and perennial lilies (e.g. Stargazer) add vibrant accents. Swaths of green lawn between the beds and repetition of shade loving perennials such as hosta, tiarella and hardy begonia, 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 ambience of the space, the fragrance of the flowers, and the well-chosen ornaments nestled



(clockwise from top left) Tom designed and built the water feature and the bridge over it. A pop of pink from the Stargazer lily provides 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 Emily pose near a shade-loving hydrangea between gardening chores.



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."

