

A vintage bicycle with a black seat and handlebars is parked in a lush garden. The front basket is overflowing with bright pink flowers. The garden is filled with green foliage, including tall lilies and various leafy plants. A wooden log lies horizontally across the middle ground. The ground is covered with brown mulch. The overall scene is vibrant and well-maintained.

THE LUXURY OF
COUNTRY
gardens

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Country gardens share many common attributes, among them spaciousness, privacy, and tranquility. The three country gardens showcased here (all within 35 minutes of downtown Bloomington — two in Brown County and one near Lake Lemon) share those attributes and more. All are designed to meld with adjoining undeveloped land. They are built on sloping sites and have benefited from human engineering to make them safer to navigate. Each includes multiple areas for entertaining. Yet these gardens are unusually personal and reflect the passions and lifestyles of their owners. And though they are quite different in style, each garden is in harmony with its surroundings.

(left) One of the many old bicycles integrated in the garden of Beverly and Michael deFord.

A GARDEN FILLED WITH
MEMENTOS—
SWEET & Bittersweet



Michael and Beverly deFord.



Beverly and Michael deFord's garden chronicles their life together. Like an outdoor gallery, the garden on North Tunnel Road showcases their eclectic collection of folk art and is steeped in family history.

The flowerbeds are edged with fieldstone from the garden of Bev's great grandfather, Thomas Campbell, who was the first settler in Nashville, Indiana. The deFords met at Binford Junior High when they were both 15 years old, "and this November we will celebrate our 50th wedding anniversary," Bev says. Mike remembers their first date: "I rode 15 miles on a single-speed bike on a gravel road to her

father's farm. Our date consisted of us riding around on my bike with her sitting on the handlebars." The deFords have been riding bicycles together ever since, and 16 of their bikes are displayed in the garden. There are antique bicycles, a tricycle that Bev rode as a small child, and two tandems.

The home was built for the deFords in 1970 and remodeled according to Mike's design in 2014. The spacious front lawn with island plantings slopes gently away from the house. The rear garden, which backs onto a nature preserve, has mature trees and shade-loving plants. The preserve's trees have now grown so tall that, in the

summer, Lake Lemon is no longer visible from the back porch that Mike built. But his 15 custom-made birdhouses, with license plates for roofs, draw birds from the preserve into the garden.

Repurposing is the overarching theme in this garden. One of Mike's old boots makes a comfortable nesting spot for a Carolina wren; a bicycle serves as the gate to the daffodil/daylily garden; and bicycle baskets are lined with moss, filled with soil, and planted with annual flowers. Wooden frames on artists'

easels hold floral pictures composed of live flowers. The frames are filled with screening through which the roots of *Impatiens* and *Begonia* are inserted. The frames are then backed with landscape cloth to contain soil.

High summer brings bright-hued perennial flowers to the yard near the front driveway: Asiatic and Oriental lilies, an entire bed of pink *Phlox*, and solid blocks of red *Crococsmia* and orange butterfly weed. Stately white *Yucca* blooms create vertical accents. In shaded areas, cranesbill geraniums weave between plantings, knitting the garden together. Favorite annuals also spill out of containers made from a variety of small wagons and carriages. To deter hungry

deer, the deFords installed motion sensors hooked up to a hose. They also have a Deer Chaser radio producing intermittent sound.

Bev and Mike do all of their own gardening. They also pay homage to family members in the garden. Their late son's motorcycle helmet and the sled he used as a child are planted with flowers. "The rock garden is dedicated to Doug's memory," Bev says. "Gardening is therapeutic when one has lost a child. We are comforted to feel that Doug's spirit and those of other family members and friends are still alive in our garden."

1. The daffodil and daylily garden, two perennials that are a carefree combination.

2. A yellow bike is used as a gate.

3. An easel holds a floral picture.

4. The fence provides a backdrop for the couple's folk art, including this patriotic bicycle.

5. Island beds grace the front lawn.

6. Variegated *Hosta* and pink *Begonia* provide focal points in the shade garden.