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The Magic of **COLOR**

*A collection of
 gardens flush with
 vibrant plantings*

Form, fragrance, texture, and color are all significant variables in garden design, but of these it's undeniable that the most attention-catching is color—and the gardens here all make creative use of it.

In one garden, a single “cool” color is highlighted in a monochromatic sequence of flowers while in another, well-chosen “hot” blooms paint a landscape so vivid it looks exuberant even beneath the unrelenting summer sun. Here we see how specific colors repeated throughout a garden can draw attention away from unsightly structures and, conversely, how color can transform even the most utilitarian items. We learn, too, how color can create focal points in a garden, carpet the ground, or be silhouetted against the sky.

The hands-on gardeners showcased here understand the magic of color.



(above, l-r) Deer-resistant Zinnia, Petunia blossoms (new striped cultivar), day lily, Coreopsis.

(left, l-r) Bicolor coleus, Hydrangea, unusual Canna with bicolor flowers and leaves, bicolor day lily.



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A Garden of Treasures

The Miller Garden

1. This seating area creates an ambiance of seclusion and intimacy where there are interesting flowers to study. On the left is an unusual purple Clematis with bell-shaped blooms and to the right is a mandevilla vine scrambling up an old-fashioned trellis.

2. Bob and Nancy Miller.

3. White sand was brought in to create a beach scene at the end of the swimming pool, complete with a fake palm tree, fire pit, and beach umbrella paired with pale pink lawn chairs and matching table in front of a pink Hydrangea.

4. Nancy's favorite white 'Annabelle' Hydrangea grows in front of three colorful birdhouses that Bob constructed.

5. The entrance to the garden includes a gate and a path the Millers laid themselves. The gate, with pink Hydrangea on the left, protects the back garden from deer.



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When Nancy and Bob Miller built their home on one-third of an acre in 1988, their future garden was just a sloping lot. The garden they envisioned was one with a sense of enclosure and discrete areas for sitting, playing, and entertaining.

Bob, who is skilled in all types of construction, and Nancy, who is a master gardener, combined their expertise to create a back garden that is fenced for privacy and displays a flourishing collection of mainly flowering plants in a cool palette of white, pink, blue, and lavender. The lot has been artfully contoured to display plants and objects d'art at varied levels. There is much to see as one traverses the cobblestone paths that wind around the garden: retaining walls, a waterfall, ponds, potting sheds, arbors, trellises, miniature gardens, benches, birdhouses, a fire pit, and a swimming pool complete with sandy white beach, palm tree, and umbrella.

From early spring through fall there is a sequence of flowers produced by an array

of bulbs, annuals, perennials, low-growing bushes, shrubs, vines, and trees. The dense plantings produce masses of flowers continuously throughout the growing seasons and a textured whiteness when snow and ice coat the plant skeletons in winter. All of these changes in the landscape are visible from the large picture window in the living room.

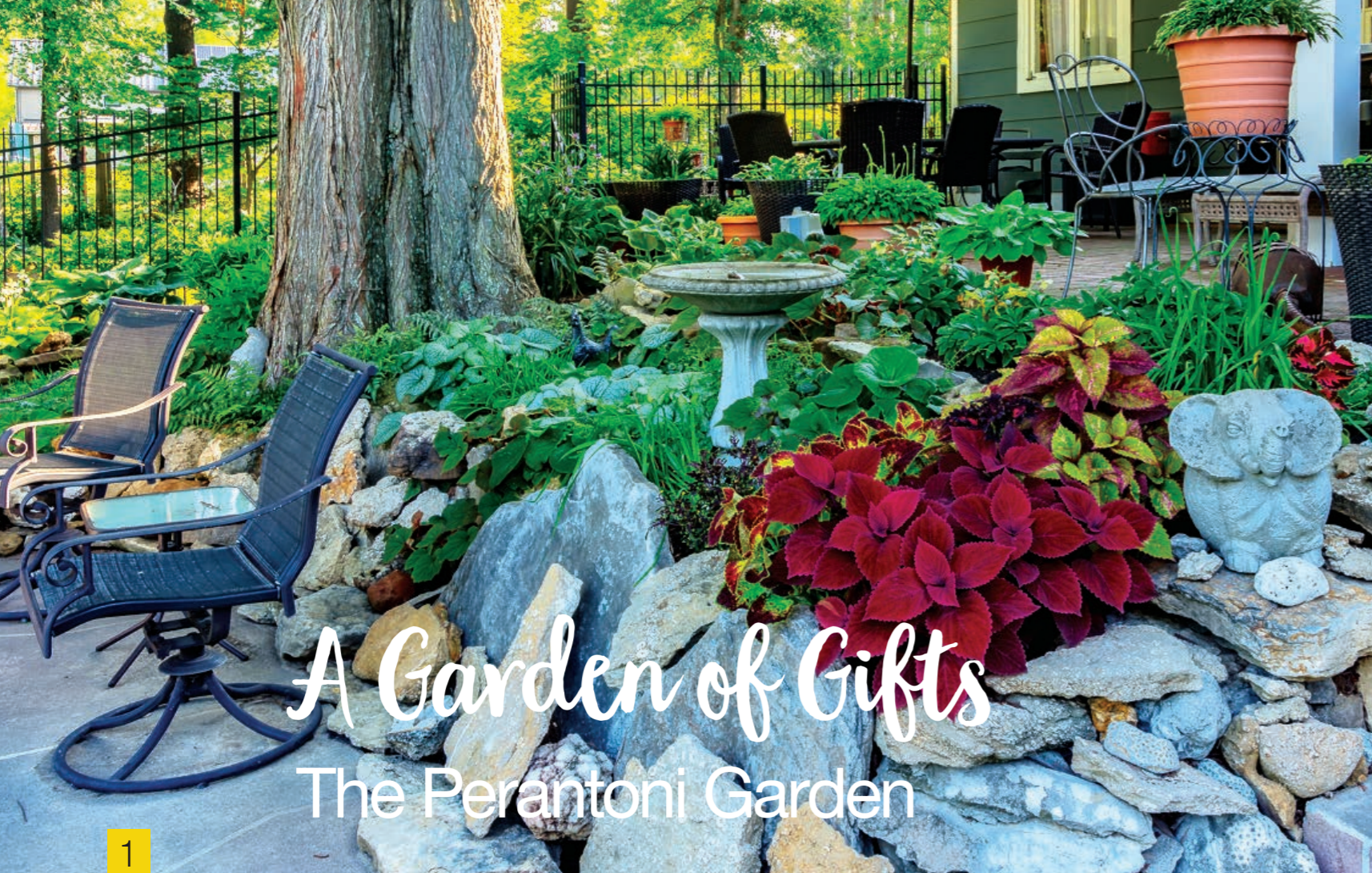
But it is in summer that the eye-catching pastel blooms are most abundant. Nancy grows more than 100 different varieties of *Hydrangea*; their names are almost as enchanting as their heavy blossoms: 'Endless Summer,' 'Twist-n-Shout,' 'Penny Mac,' 'All Summer Beauty,' 'Invincible Spirit,' 'Incredibelle,' 'L.A. Dreamin,' 'Quickfire,' 'Wee White,' and 'Mini Mauvette' to name a few. But Nancy's favorite is the old-fashioned variety 'Annabelle'—a *Hydrangea* that produces white blooms on new branches every year.

Nancy says she has so many varieties of *Hydrangea* because she cuts each bush down to six inches in the spring, makes cuttings

from the discarded stems, and sticks them into the soil wherever she would like to grow another bush. She chooses a rainy week to do this as cuttings need moisture to root.

The front garden of the home is unfenced so it is populated with deer-resistant plants. Recently, the Millers have been incorporating more conifers in both front and back gardens for year-round interest and easy maintenance.

Nancy comes from a family of gardeners and enjoys teaching children to garden. She continues to volunteer at University School, helping in the children's garden just as she did when she taught there before retiring. Bob, a retired assistant prosecutor, says he finds gardening enjoyable because he and Nancy are always planning and working on new projects. The challenges they face—moles, deer, weeds, poison ivy—pale, he says, in comparison to the pleasure they derive from experiencing nature together.



A Garden of Gifts

The Perantoni Garden

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1. The back deck is sheltered by a bald cypress tree original to the house. Some of the rocks from Judy's collection contrast with the texture of the colorful coleus plants surrounding them.

2. Annual *Canna* with red and yellow blooms line the entire wrought-iron fence by the pool. The bulbs are dug and stored indoors during the winter before being returned outdoors when the cold subsides.

3. A labyrinth constructed using stones that massage the soles of the feet as people walk on them barefoot is an unusual addition to the large back garden. Annuals are displayed on posts along the edges of the labyrinth.

4. *Petunia* blossoms (new striped cultivar).

5. A large number of unusual day lilies populate many areas of the garden.

6. Dan and Judy Perantoni.

Judy and Dan Perantoni's home was built in 1965 and is surrounded by an acre of gardens. From his second-story studio, Dan, a professor at the Indiana University Jacobs School of Music, can play his tuba while enjoying expansive views of the back garden.

"As a Catholic boy, I especially love the way the morning sun lights up a small statue of Mary," Dan says. Judy likes to grow a wide variety of flowers and shrubs, so early on she enlisted the help of her brother, Marc, who is a professional landscaper. "Not only does Marc contribute significant horticultural expertise," she says, "but we also enjoy the fun the three of us have gardening together."

Judy especially likes shade gardens and treasures her first *Hosta*, a gift from Charles Webb, the dean of the IU School of Music for a quarter of a century. She calls the far back corner of the garden, with its mixed shade plants, her "sea of tranquility." A majestic bald cypress casts shade on the back patio facing the swimming pool where Judy has her collection of miniature *Hosta* and multi-colored coleus.

Judy also likes bright flowers, so the back garden's masses of spring bulbs are followed by hundreds of summer blossoms on peonies, marigolds, *Zinnia*, coneflowers, and day lilies, as well as on larger bushes, shrubs, and trees. An unusual variety of *Canna*, planted in a row, creates a line of vibrant red and yellow along the fence by the pool. Judy has brought rocks from her property in Springville, Indiana, for edging, and coral fossils from Michigan for focal points. She collects a variety of interesting garden ornaments and uses seating areas to provide views of the plantings from a variety of perspectives.

A stream bisects the lower part of the garden, and its banks are overflowing with blue forget-me-nots in late spring and early summer and with hundreds of varieties of day lily blossoms later in the season. Colorful mums and *Aster* carry the sunny gardens into fall.

A unique aspect in this spacious garden is the reflexology labyrinth. Surrounded by flowering annuals on stands, the circular design is made up of both flat rocks and grass

so it can easily be mowed. Judy says that when the first snows come each winter, they quickly melt off the rocks but remains on the grass. Later, when the rocks are frozen and the grass is warmer, the reverse occurs. She recommends using the labyrinth in the warmer weather: "Walk into it on the grass barefoot and then massage the soles of your feet by walking on the stones."

Because Dan loves white flowers, he suggested that only white flowers be planted in the garden at the front of the house. Masses of white daffodils, a 100-foot bed of peonies, azaleas, Siberian *Iris*, bearded *Iris*, *Hydrangea*, *Hibiscus*, Shasta daisies, a white redbud tree, and a variegated *Yucca* bloom profusely across the growing seasons. The monochromatic theme creates an air of serenity. "There used to be tulips," Dan says pensively, "but since the front is unfenced, the deer got those."

Over the years, many friends have contributed plants for the garden. "When they bloom," Marc says, "we three gratefully remember the donors."



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A Private Garden

The Plaford Garden



When Linda and Gary Plaford, both retired educators, moved into their retirement home in Park Ridge East 12 years ago, they wanted to create a low-maintenance garden on their .29-acre pie-shaped lot. Although the back yard was fenced, the fence was not high enough to prevent deer from jumping over it.

“We wanted to create privacy in the back garden,” Gary says. The general plan was to grow a mix of dense shrubs that eventually would grow higher than the fence and block the deer. They researched shrubs, both evergreen and deciduous, considering their height at maturity as well as foliage colors and textures. They didn’t need all of the shrubs to bloom, but they wanted some that did bloom at different times in the growing season. They also had to deal with a number of unsightly poles and telephone lines, some of which were too high to be screened. The only solution was to provide attractive botanical distractions at eye level. They added a garden shed at the far end of the lot and placed flowers at various spots in front of the screen.

“When we moved in, there were just two terminally ill evergreens,” Gary recalls. “It seemed a good idea to remove them and create a berm, which allowed us not only to plant things higher to get a head start, but also to bring in a lot of better soil. We planted evergreens such as chartreuse cypress ‘Lemon Thread’ and green ‘Steed’s Holly’ shrubs under the telephone lines.”

They continued planting a dense line of evergreens such as ar-

borvitae ‘Green Giant,’ *Cryptomeria* ‘Yoshino,’ and cypress ‘Golden Mop,’ interspersing some pines, spruce, and more holly for subtle color variation. Deciduous trees and shrubs such as Japanese maple ‘Tamukeyama’ (which has crimson leaves maturing to purple), purple-leaf sand cherry, *Hydrangea* ‘Limelight,’ forest pansy redbud, and an assortment of ninebarks, *Viburnum*, and locusts were then added. These barrier plantings around the entire fence line of the back garden have now matured into a privacy shield that is rich in tonal and textural contrasts while creating a sense of harmony and seclusion.

Colorful groundcover creeps along paths bordering the house. Flowers in the adjacent beds bloom in hues compatible with the screening plants: burgundy, deep red, purple, and chartreuse, with occasional accents of blue, bronze, and pink.

In the front yard, which is unfenced, pots of colorful annuals look welcoming near the front door of the house. There is also a sidewalk bed of deer-resistant bulbs, perennials, and low-growing shrubs that provide a sequence of color throughout the growing season. “I love to work in my sidewalk bed so that I can chat with neighbors who pass by,” Linda says. “My color scheme there is mainly chartreuse and purple, and the perennials are tough, such as creeping phlox, grape hyacinth, *Iris*, salvia, and chrysanthemums.” Linda comes from a family of gardeners and has shared a love of nature with her three children, who often now send photos of their own gardens to their parents. ✨

1. A four-season back porch provides expansive use of the back garden.

2. Chartreuse creeping Jenny carpets a path providing contrast with the colorful perennial flowers surrounding it.

3. Linda and Gary Plaford.

4. Forget-me-nots carpet the garden, combining beautifully with the subtle colors of the foliage plants that provide privacy for the backyard.

5. The front door displays a welcoming selection of colorful ferns and annuals.

6. Maroon flowers complement the hues of the accompanying foliage plants in containers. They offer spots of color against the background of evergreens in the privacy hedge.