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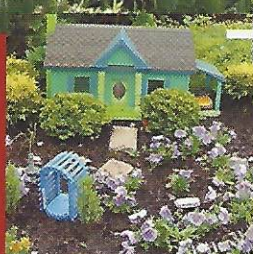
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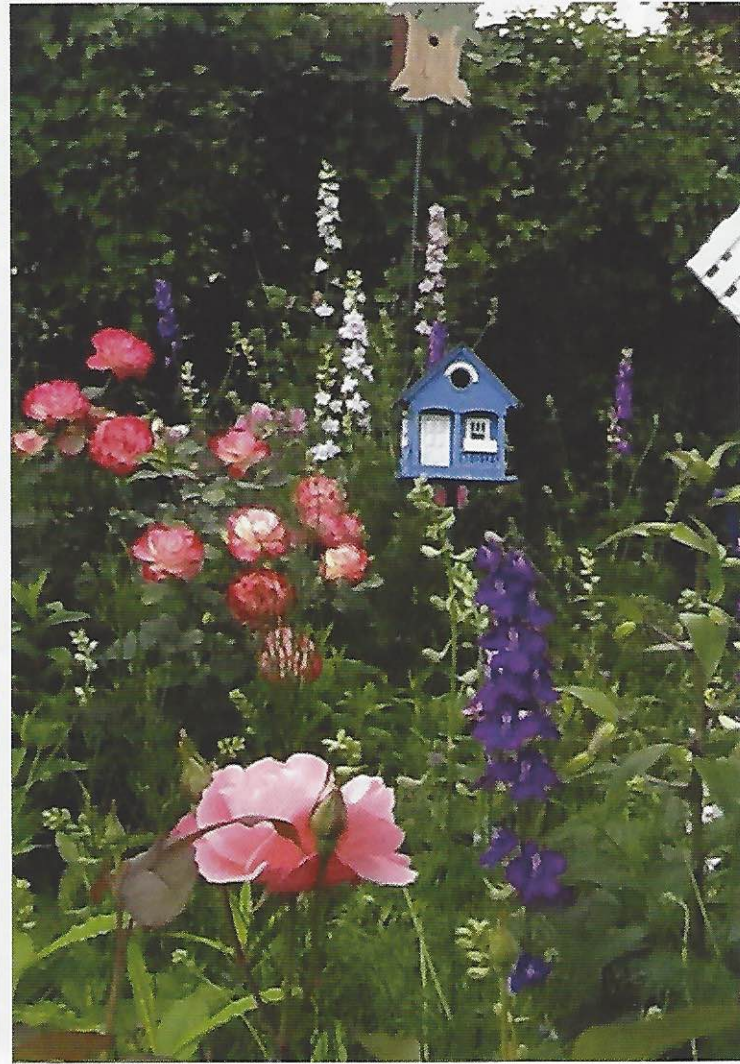
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Serenity in the City

Story and Photography By Rita Perea

Like Alice stepping through the looking glass into Wonderland to leave reality, walking into the garden of Karen and Karl Tandy creates an immediate sense of being out of the city and into the peaceful world of plants and wildlife. Located in Windsor Heights, a suburb of Des Moines, this showplace has been featured on nine garden tours.

Karen named her garden Serenity to invoke a feeling of sanctuary for visitors who enter, both wild and human. Walk-

ing into the Tandy's garden creates an immediate sense of being out of the city and into the peaceful world of plants and wildlife.

Karl, a retired executive of the Meredith Corporation, owned the home before he and Karen were married. "When I arrived, there was only a birdhouse that Karl built, and his in-ground pool in the backyard. Much to my delight, the rest of the yard was a blank slate for my garden design. I have been lovingly gardening this space for 29 years now," Karen said.

LOVES PLANTS

A lifelong gardener, Karen learned the love of plants from her father. "My entire life revolves around gardening – being

Above Left to Right: As with Karen and Karl Tandy's garden, this planter is named Serenity. *Delphinium* and pink mallow (*Malva* spp.), grown from seeds from a friend, surround Lemon Slice *calibrachoa* (C. hybrid 'USCAL5302M').

Proud of his Dutch heritage, Karl Tandy's hand-crafted, 50-year-old windmill is surrounded by some of Karen Tandy's favorite plants: A 25-year-old Queen Elizabeth rose (*Rosa* 'Queen Elizabeth') in the foreground, a 'Memphis Music' rose (*Rosa* 'Memphis Music' (left), pink and purple delphinium, hollyhocks (*Alcea rosea*) and phlox. The birdhouses are also Karl's handiwork.



Above: Pairing bold pink and soft white, the potted 'Fireworks' gomphrena, sometimes called globe amaranth, (*G. pulchella* 'Fireworks') and fragrant tuberose (*Polianthes tuberosa*) surround the in-ground pool with interesting texture and color. The sun-loving gomphrena grows to 8 feet tall.

Below Left to Right: Adding to the full, soft, and romantic feeling of this garden oasis are two of Karen Tandy's favorite plants – blue delphinium and 'Casa Blanca' (*Lilium* 'Casa Blanca'). The soothing blue and white blooms are echoed throughout this peaceful garden.

Karen Tandy loves sharing plants with her gardening friends. She received this pink Asiatic lily (*Lilium asiatic*) at a garden club plant swap. It is a very prolific bloomer and has been divided several times.





▲ A birdhouse creates sacred space for the wrens while blooming 'Jackmanii' clematis (*C. 'Jackmanii'*) meadow rue (*Thalictrum* spp.) and columbine (*Aquilegia* hybrid) sustains pollinators in the serenity garden.

▲ 'Roguchi' clematis (*C. 'Roguchi'*) surrounds the Tandy garden, adding to the feeling of privacy and peace.

◀ Sitting on top of the world, this little angel is surrounded by Shasta daisies (*Leucanthemum x superba*), pink speedwell (*Veronica* hybrid), lilac ladybells (*Adenophora confusa*), delphinium, and Orienpet lilies (*Lilium* hybrid). Karen Tandy's garden is a full, soft, and romantic oasis to help visitors leave the stress of the city.

➤ 'Purple Sensation' allium (*A. af-latanense* 'Purple Sensation') paired with a simple yellow columbine (*Aquilegia* hybrid) creates an automatic feeling of tranquility. To keep their color throughout the summer, Karen Tandy spray paints her alliums a deep purple when they begin to fade.



in the garden, going to garden club meetings, sharing favorite plants with gardening friends, and hosting family gatherings in the garden,” she said.

When Karen welcomes a garden club’s visit, she shares that her gardening style is “full, soft and romantic.” Predominant colors of purple, blue, white, and pink are echoed throughout the garden with trellises, hand-built bird houses, and angel statues snuggled amongst the plants. Karen believes that there is always room for another plant and an overflowing garden keeps the weeds, and the work, in check.

Boasting seven expansive tiers that run the entire width of the yard, the hand-built terrace is a unique feature of the serenity garden. Surrounded by fencing covered with overflowing varieties of clematis as a backdrop, the terrace is brimming with all of Karen’s favorite perennials: *Delphinium*, *phlox*, mallow (*Malva* spp.), and *allium*.

FRAGRANCE AND BEAUTY

The serenity continues when visitors gaze upon the breathtaking array of stunning annuals planted in pots surrounding an in-ground swimming pool. Karen’s trick is to overwinter the plants inside her home to encourage early growth the following spring. Among her favorites are the heavenly scented Peruvian daffodils (*Hymenocallis festalis*). “I’ve carefully chosen plants for the pool area that add to that peaceful feel of my garden,” she said.

Karen attributes the healthy size of her plants, their prolific blooming habits and her gardening success to something she calls no-fuss gardening. She uses only her homemade compost (no chemicals), as a top dressing on each plant. She is often asked to speak at garden clubs to share her gardening wisdom. “Gardening can be so much work that the gardener might not get the time to just relax in the garden. We need to find a way to simplify. Then, we can relax in the joy of gardening: Sitting, listening to the birds, and letting our senses drink in all of the beautiful sights, sounds and smells. To me, that is heaven on earth.” ✨



A connoisseur of tranquil gardens, garden communicator, Rita Perea (RitaPereaGardenCommunicator.com), is the founder of the International Contemplative Garden Association, ContemplativeGardens.org.