

the cultivator

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Serenity Within the Idea Garden

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Photos by Mary Yeomans

In the southwest corner of the Idea Garden is an oasis of serenity for pausing and finding a state of calm and peace. Refreshing cool colors — white, blues, lavender, and pastels are dominant.

Winter-hardy herbaceous perennials are the backbone of the Serenity Garden. Filling in the larger spaces are woody, compact shrubs suitable for small gardens. Several of these have spring blooms that appear just as the scattered tulips, daffodils, and hyacinths in the garden are fading. First to bloom is the Meyer lilac by the west entrance, which has fragrant lavender flowers on stems with ruffled leaves. Nearby, the vining clematis bush, 'Betty Corning', attracts early hoverflies and bumblebees to delicate lavender-blue bell-shaped flowers. The Weigela florida, with variegated leaves and dark pink flowers, is a late spring to early summer bloomer. The compact butterfly bushes take their turn next—'Magenta Munchkin' with fuchsia-red blooms; 'Harlequin', a variegated-leaved bush with purple blossoms; and 'White Ball'. These bloom from June through September attracting butterflies to long, colored, flower spikes.

Along the west fence is the Suwara False Cypress (Chamaecyparis pisifera) native to Japan. Its yellow-green threadlike foliage retains color throughout the four seasons. Normally, this variety of cypress is cultivated to stay only 20 to 30 feet tall. In the Serenity Garden, it receives an annual "mop hair cut" every spring to keep the conical shape at approximately 8 feet.



Clematis bush and False Cypress

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Zinnias

Interspersing annuals in the garden beds among perennials and shrubs is a way of extending color continuously from spring to fall. With a large selection of annuals to choose from in garden centers, color combinations can be chosen to energize or subdue a garden space. Zinnia may be an old-time, reliable annual but new varieties with bi-colored blooms have now become favorites in this garden. Multiple colors of petunia, blues and whites of tender salvia, verbena, lantana, angelonia and sweet potato vines add a variety of

colors, forms, and textures to the landscape while attracting pollinators—butterflies and bees.



Multiple varieties of annuals in limestone bed



White Garden border

The color white can be refreshing on a hot summer day or in the evening as a moonscape, evoking calmness. The west border of annuals and perennials are planted predominately in white. 'Immortality', a bearded reblooming white iris, flowers in early May and again in late summer until frost nips the last buds. In the border, the tall purple giant alliums and the shorter rose-colored tumbleweed onions are an ornamental burst of color in mid-May. By early summer, an annual, Alyssum 'Tiny Tim' with white blooms, and evening primrose, a perennial with rosy-pink flowers, spill over the brick-lined border. Against the fence line in July fragrant five-foot-tall Silk Road lilies are surrounded by Shasta daisies, white flowered cosmos, and Echinacea 'Pow Wow White'. A trellis against the fence provides a space for fragrant climbing moonflower vines that attract night-feeding Sphinx and Luna moths.

In the southwest corner of the garden is the Japanese Maple 'Bloodgood', shading the meditation bench under the fragrant 'Polka' rose arbor. Behind the bench is rose campion with fuzzy silver foliage and masses of small deep-rose blooms—a self-seeding biennial not often seen in gardens. On each side of the bench are clumps of the 'Green Twister' coneflower with blooms edged in yellow green and a lilac pink center. It is paired with another perennial, Sweet Alyssum 'Raspberry Stream'.



Polka Rose

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Spend a moment sitting on the bench and enjoy the view across the “Rock River.” Imagine flowing river currents across blue “waters” of ‘Blue My Mind’ dwarf morning glories. A riverbank is formed by a curved line of *Heuchera* ‘Purple Petticoats’. The main attraction in May are the peonies—‘Double White’ and ‘Sarah Bernhardt’ with pastel pink double flowers. By July, a pair of hardy hibiscus ‘Perfect Storm’ with white blossoms trimmed in pink will anchor each end of the central garden bed. Agastache, *Heuchera* ‘Paprika’, and daylilies are a few of the summer perennial companion plants in this bed. In late September the bees and butterflies will partake of the fall nectar found in the deep violet blooms of New England asters.

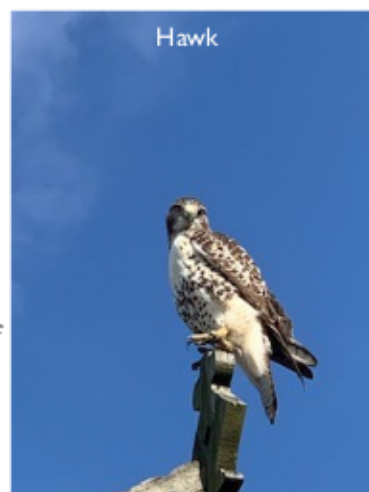


New England Asters with pollinators



Gazebo

Let your gaze travel beyond to the limestone raised bed where a row of hardy Russian Sage ‘Denim ‘n Lace’, on two-foot upright stems, hold lavender-blue flowers until frost—a calling card for pollinators and hummingbirds. Filling in the raised bed, colors are balanced with verbena, deep-lavender ‘Violet Ice’ and soft purple ‘Stormburst’, bordered by taller Blue Mohawk grasses. At either end is a pair of pyramid trellises with white Mandevilla vines, complimentary to the peak of the Idea Garden gazebo where occasionally a hawk will perch.



Hawk

Bring a book if you would like to spend time in solitude sitting on the padded bench or join with a friend for quiet conversation in the early evening hours. You may be distracted, though, by the buzzing of bees along the south fence where tall hardy ‘Playing the Blues’ salvia share blue blooms with the hummingbirds that will dart close by you.

Serenity Garden:
... reflect and find tranquility.

