

Turning The Back Yard Into A Garden Of Earthly Delights

BY LYNN CARLSON

It's an unlikely place to find Japanese water gardens, down a sand road, past a travel trailer park in a neighborhood of well-kept mobile homes on large wooded lots.

And it would seem to be an unlikely hobby for a burly sheetrock worker—the kind of guy you might assume would be more at home hunting and fishing than tending delicate aquatic lilies and nurturing several ancient varieties of brightly-colored carp.

But get Andy Ludlum started talking about his projects, and preconceived notions float away on the breeze that blows through the tall pines near Holden Beach.

"It's really the perfect hobby," he says about designing and constructing flowing fountains and peaceful ponds with neon-colored goldfish and koi gliding beneath the lily pads. "You can give it as much or as little time and money as you want to."

This passion began a few years back when Andy and wife Demona got the idea to put a little goldfish pond in their front yard. A neighbor passing by on a backhoe saw Demona wielding her shovel there and helped dig the first of their two water gardens.

The small, front-yard garden is pyramid-shaped and cement-lined, flanked by banana trees and a cozy swing. In the pond are the smaller varieties of Andy's burgeoning fish population, ranging in size from inch-long new hatchlings to feisty fan-tailed goldfish several inches long and the color of geraniums in bloom.

It's a peaceful place to sit in the shade and enjoy the relaxing sounds of a trickling fountain and the breeze through pine boughs while watching the fish dart among plants and flowers. Demona swishes her hand in the water and dozens of fish break the surface of the water, conditioned to know it's feeding time.

"These will eat out of your hand," Andy said. "They like for you to get in there with them. They kind of peck on your legs."

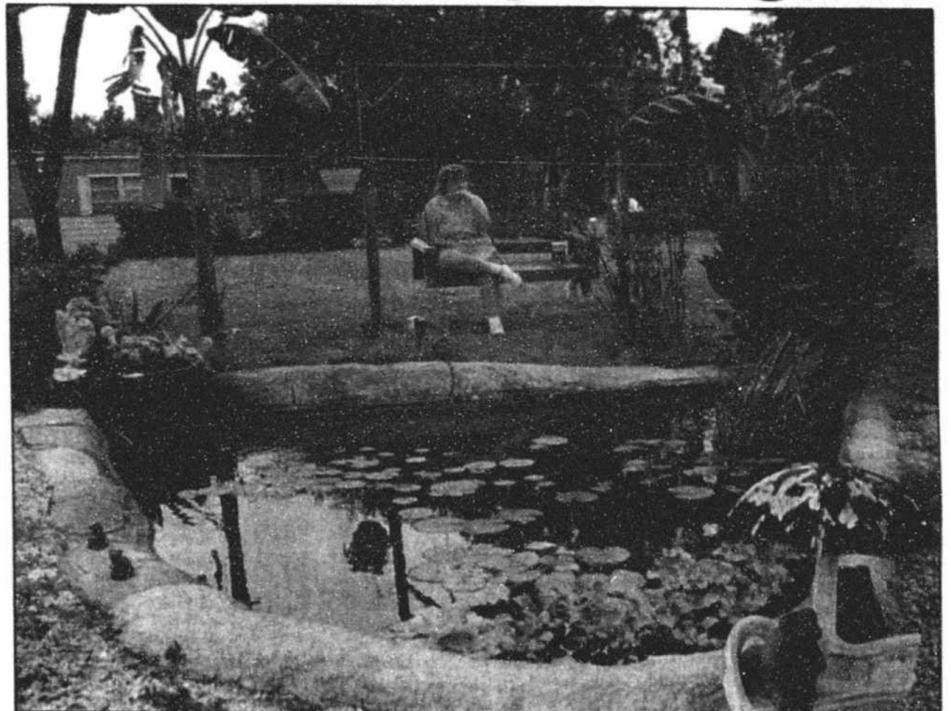
Their backyard water garden is a work in progress, only three months old and at 3,000 gallons, many times the size of the little garden. It is rectangular, the dimensions of an in-ground swimming pool and 3½ feet deep. Andy and his oldest son dug the hole.

Its centerpiece is a fountain shooting a gentle spray of water several feet into the air. At one corner is a grouping of exotic plants including carnivorous trumpets, pickerel rush and hyacinths. In the pond are several varieties of lilies in bloom, plus about 50 of the Ludlums' larger fish.

But when Andy and Demona look at the big garden, they see it as they dream it will someday be.

"The one in the front I'm going to keep for everybody else. That one'll be for the neighbors or people who want to see it. This one's going to be mine, the place where I can go to take it easy."

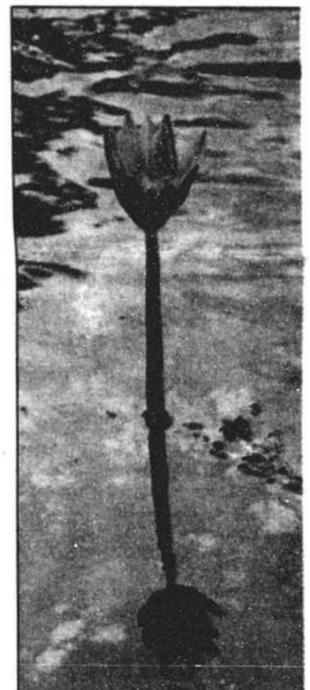
He envisions a perfect space for quiet time. He'll surround it with a row of tall hedges, put in a waterfall, let fragrant flowers and vines cover the archway he's constructed, get the chemical balance right so the water will be clear enough to watch the



ANDY AND DEMONA Ludlum relax in their front-yard water garden. A much larger back-yard version is a work in progress.



GOLDFISH swim just below the surface while a tropical lily blooms in the bigger pond.



GAILLARDIA and honeybees seem to go together during the summer months.

Flowers And Insects A Summertime Item

BY BILL FAVER

One of the sure combinations during the summer months is that of flowering plants and insects. We can find insects almost anywhere we can find flowers blooming, for they seem to go together.



FAVER

One of our best coastal varieties of annuals is the Gaillardia, or Indian blanket or blanketflower. These plants seem to be so appealing to insects because they bloom for such a long time, usually from June to the first killing frost sometime in November.

Gaillardia are fine plants for hot, sunny areas and seem to like the kind of soils we find along roadsides and behind dunes along the beach. Their yellow to orange to reddish brown flowers are aster-like and seem to be favorites of many insects. In the fall, the Monarch butterflies move among the Gaillardia from flower to flower. Honeybees also seem to prefer nectar from these colorful flowers.

Bees are important insects, mostly because of their role in the pollination of plants. From flowers, honeybees collect pollen on their hind legs and transport it from one flower to another. This pollinating activity is much more important than the honey and beeswax they produce. Long ago, farmers and orchardists realized how important bees were to the yield of their crops and provided man-made hives where they could live.

Honeybees are also among the smartest of all living beings. A worker bee can discover flowers with a good flow of nectar and return to the hive to tell the other bees the direction of the blossoms, the distance from the hive, and what kind of flower it is. Researchers think they tell the direction and distance by a certain dance they do inside the hive and communicate the kind of flower by the odor of the flower on the body of the bee.

Take note of the insect activity around flowers this summer and learn more about the fascinating combination of summer flowers and insects.

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