

THEN

A Floral Affair

A charming cottage-style garden



flourishes in Arcadia

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Opposite, top: Plain and simple was how the space to the right of Karyn Swan's driveway once looked. • **This photo:** After the addition of a white picket fence, cobblestone path, garden house and hundreds of flowers, the front yard is as enchanting as it is welcoming. • **This page, top:** A red wagon comes in handy for transporting potted plants. • **This page, bottom:** Swan, who collects anything heart-shaped, displays a wooden stake she received as a gift.

Karyn Swan is used to neighbors and strangers peering into her yard. She sometimes finds people taking photos in the middle of her lawn, and has often been asked to host a friend's wedding or engagement party. But instead of being annoyed by all the attention, Swan appreciates the fact that others are enchanted by her garden.

According to Swan, a Valley real estate professional, her garden is her passion and a dream come true. "This is literally my dream garden," she says with enthusiasm. "I grew up wanting the white picket fence, red geraniums and a real cottagelike, comfortable-feeling garden. The transformation has taken time, but it is so worth all the effort. I really can't believe what it looks like now, compared to what it used to be."

When Swan moved to the Arcadia area home nearly 13 years ago, the landscaping was sparse. Although surrounded by oleaners and dotted with a few established pine and citrus trees, the front yard consisted mainly of dirt with patches of grass scattered about where the sun managed to shine. Amid the foliage Swan found and rescued the rose bushes and ivy that are an integral part of a front courtyard garden today. The back yard was simple, with a healthy lawn, several mature mesquite trees, a pecan tree and a fantastic view of the Arizona Country Club golf course.

Lots of space, lots of possibilities. Undaunted, Swan immedi-



ately set to work. During the first several years she concentrated on adding a pool and creating outdoor living areas and flower beds. As the foundation plantings were maturing, Swan continued to buy and try plants of all varieties, perusing nurseries such as her favorites, Baker Nursery and Berridge Nurseries. "I didn't know you weren't supposed to plant certain plants in certain places, so I just experimented," admits Swan. "I think that is one reason the gardens are so interesting and fun."

The front yard is a magical, environment with a riot of vibrant color. Swan's latest project, a garden house, features a geranium-red front door. Windows give the 10-foot by 14-foot garden cottage a cheery and welcoming feel. Inside, Swan has a sink, potting table, terra cotta pots, hanging garden tools and other inspirations found on her many scouting trips.

Leading to the garden house and the main house is a winding path made of look-alike cobblestones molded from cement. Although it took more than 20 hours to make them, Swan believed that the stones were more appropriate than brick or flagstone. New terra cotta brick borders outline the perimeter of the yard, the trees and a variety of plants, including caladium, columbine, geranium, foxglove, gladiola and amaryllis.

Swan replaced the aging fence around the front courtyard with a white picket fence and an arbor on which snail vines and



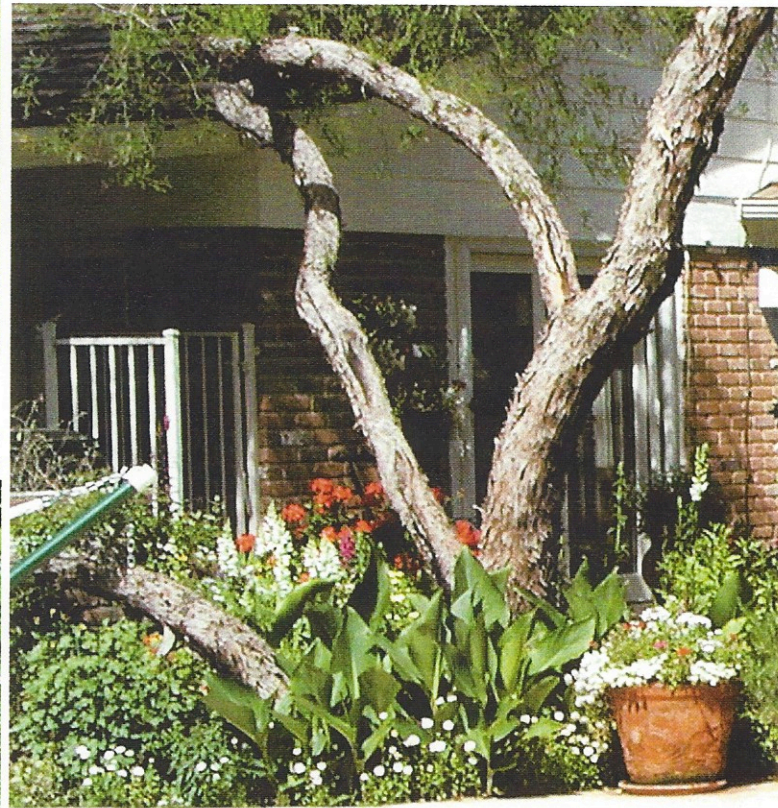


This page: A trellised entry encourages visitors to explore a quaint courtyard beyond. • Opposite, top: A wooden seed stake brightens up a heavily planted area. • Opposite, bottom: When the homeowner decided to replace a wooden fence put in several years ago, she chose one made of a poly-coated plastic material. "It's durable, doesn't rot from the sprinkler system or from the vines growing on it, and it never has to be painted," she explains.

bower vines intermingle. A sun-soaked garden and gurgling fountain placed inside the courtyard offer a peaceful respite. New brick borders installed against the exterior of the home accent plantings of rose bushes, bougainvilleas, black-eyed Susans, white alyssum and other volunteers.

The courtyard also holds a sentimental place in Swan's heart. When her mother passed away three years ago, a friend gave her a purple orchid tree, her mother's favorite. Planted in the courtyard, it has thrived and serves as a happy reminder of her mom. With hanging birdhouses and heart-shaped treasures hidden in unexpected places, the space has become one of Swan's favorite places to unwind.

Geraniums planted in the ground and in containers are in abundance throughout the property, and Swan proudly boasts of the nine-year-old potted specimen that blooms yearly on the east




terrace. In the back yard, a poolscape comprised of a vibrant mixture of flowering vines, shrubs, succulents and perennials offers a feast of color. Several types of peppers, including habanero and jalapeño, grow in abundance and produce more than enough spice for the Swans to use in their favorite hot dishes. An herbal cooking bed holds sage, basil, parsley, mint and tarragon, as well as an experimental cauliflower or two.

Swan credits her husband, Joe, an attorney, with being incredibly supportive of her gardening habit. She also relies on several others for garden assistance. "I couldn't have achieved all of this without help," says Swan. "My friend Cindy (Richman) is a botanist, and she helped me find plants that would thrive under the dense shade. Another friend visits once a week and works on the roses. And Christopher (Warren) helps me maintain everything."

Warren, a Phoenix landscape professional, also has worked with Swan to develop a mixture of fescue and rye grasses that will grow under the trees in the front yard.

All in all, Swan estimates that it takes about 16 hours a week to work the gardens. "I work outside as often as I can and usually every Sunday," she says. And regular watering is a must. Swan uses sprinklers, bubblers and drip irrigation to nourish her plants. A misting system installed for the comfort of outdoor entertaining on the back porch has turned out to be a bonus for the vegetation as well, and Swan finds herself turning it on more for the plants than for visitors.

Relaxing in a white antique wrought-iron chair in the front yard, Swan gazes upon her garden with satisfaction. A combination of vision, faith, love and hard work has made her dream a reality—proof positive that dreams come true.  See Resource Guide.



This page: For Swan, more is better when it comes to planting around the pool. Pots filled with alyssum, geraniums, delphiniums and other annuals and perennials are painstakingly watered by hand. • **Opposite, top:** A wooden folk-art figure watches over the yard. • **Opposite, bottom:** Birdhouses and alyssum are two staples of this densely planted garden.