

Oy Vey! Paradise in a Gully! by Deborah Fagan Carpenter

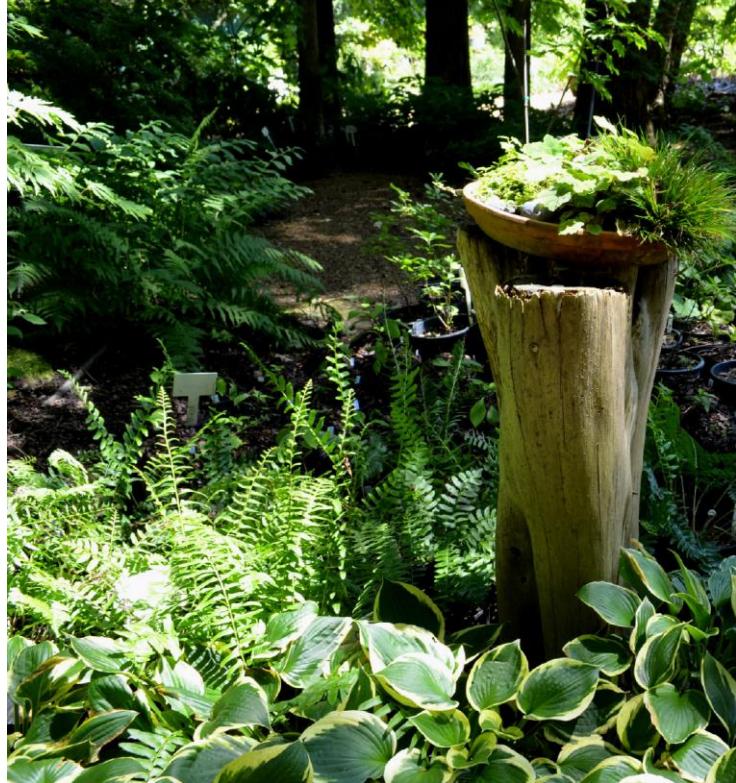


One beautiful garden room after another fills the five acres of land, located in a hollow, once thick with untended brush and unremarkable trees. Solar panels surrounded by a sun filled bed of flowers is a clue that you've arrived at the "nursery within a garden," **Gardens Oy Vey**, near Arlington, Tennessee. "Oy Vey," a Yiddish term, which loosely translated means, "Oh My," or in my words, "Holy Cow," (*or something relatively close to that*) is the typical response of anyone turning into the entrance of this unexpected paradise.

Owners Diane Meucci and Wolfgang Marquardt moved from Chicago to the area in the 1960s, bringing with them a self-taught, but vast knowledge of plants and gardening, combined with a Herculean work ethic. (*Meucci had run an all-woman landscaping business out of a step van while living in Chicago*) The land, which is literally located in a gully, was clearly unsuitable for growing the typical crops of cotton or soybeans, so they were unable to convince bankers to see the profit value of the seemingly worthless property. But the couple persevered and saved to buy the land,

Diane, working by day as a landscaper and as a bartender at night, and Wolfgang working as a skilled printer. They moved to the property in 1985, preceding the re-zoning of the area by 10 years, and set about to turn their vision into reality.

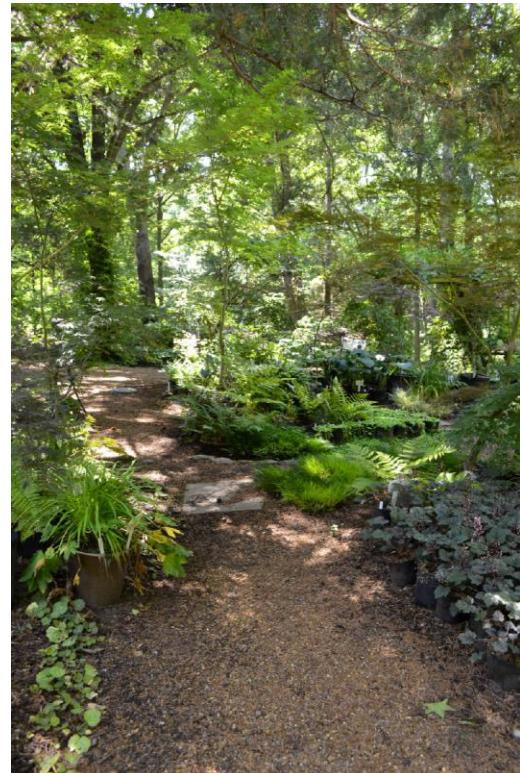
Because Meucci and Marquardt are both “green minded,” and because money was so scarce, an “alternative lifestyle was born out of economics.” (*The progressive pair were composting and growing organic vegetables 30 years ago, long before it was fashionable.*) Their one-room home began as a screened porch, used only on weekends, but evolved into charming well insulated living quarters. Because of the twelve inches of insulation, hand-layered paper, the space is cool in the heat of summer and warm in the dead of winter. The couple is currently devising another method of insulation, reusing some common items, a process which they hope to market someday. Much of their energy is provided by the solar panels, but Meucci makes clear that if there are 8 billion solar panels on the planet, “we’re gonna blow up!”





Extensive travel in the U.S., Canada and Mexico broadened their knowledge of horticulture and environmentalism and increased their already intense respect for nature and its ability to direct us. Each plot of the beautiful garden/nursery has been dictated by its particular needs. A sunny spot at the front of the garden produces vegetables and flowers, grown in a “seed within seed, no-till process,” providing blooms from the various plantings at least three times a year. By using exactly what one area required, a perfect Japanese garden was realized, quite without intention.

Gardens Oy Vey is teaming with activity on any given day, with Wolfgang and Diane working like Trojans, planting, composting, cutting, propagating, packing plants for shipping, loading their truck to take to the local farmer’s markets, and directing the eager aspiring horticulturalists who work for them. And yet the peacefulness of the garden, where nature is allowed to be “natural,” is palpable and significantly impacts any visitor.



It is impossible to capture the beauty of this unique environment, where fairies no doubt frolic atop the thick green moss that covers every surface that isn't planted with uncommon varieties of hydrangeas, and thousands of ferns and hostas. Nothing, including the baskets of childhood bicycles escapes planting! The creative mind of Diane Meucci is constantly churning with innovative ideas for this garden and for the gardens of the many clients who seek her advice and services, her canvas the world around her.

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