



# Gardens Oy Vey

*Don't blink, you might drive right by*

If you are a plant lover, your head will swivel as you pass the exuberant spill of flower and foliage at the entrance to Gardens Oy Vey. If you aren't, you might not even notice it. It certainly isn't a faddish, commercial business, with lots of parking lot and signage. It's a quaint, bucolic nursery, set so naturally into the woody countryside near Arlington, Tenn., that you might think it had always been there.

*Pots of emerald moss sit next to strawberry geranium (Saxifraga stolonifera) in flower amongst other interesting species. ▼*



Photos by Carol Reese

In actuality, Diane Meucci and Wolfgang Marquardt bought the place in 1988, when it was known locally as "the gullies" because of its eroded, gutted topography. If that weren't challenge enough, the property was cloaked with kudzu, a gardener's nightmare.

They rescued the property, which in some cases meant removing aggressive exotics, mostly the kudzu. In other places, the objective was to cover the raw land with appropriate plant selections. Though many of these selections were native, some are not but were chosen for their ability to adapt to the site and provide a natural ambience.

Though parts of the garden are sunny, it's the shady woodland paths that carve their way into your memory, primarily because of the incredible emerald moss. Broad streams of moss flow alongside the mulch or gravel paths, sometimes on embankments that invite you to stroke them as you pass. Large pools of moss form the flooring for forest rooms, bordered with hydrangea and sweetspire.

The paths lead you irresistibly to several wonderful destinations. One is an idyllic deck, set angularly into the hill that slopes into a beautiful pond. You may sink back into the Adirondack chairs that face the water and enjoy the reflections of the colorful planting on the opposing levee. A great blue heron is often seen stalking among the water lilies.

The paths will tempt you out of your chair again, leading you to more closely examine the lively levee planting, only to find it even more high spirited than you expected. Among the gauzy spill of flowers and foliage, three brightly colored bicycles are buried half into the ground so that they sit upright in the beds. Dragonflies seem not to mind that these whimsical pieces aren't a normal feature of Tennessee countryside

and perch contentedly on the bright chrome handlebars.

Soon you begin to expect the unexpected. Diane has a talent for surprising you with clever, lovely vignettes – using plants, pots, bits of imaginative fencing, and creations from fellow artists. A certain wildness flavors the garden, and this has always been Diane's essence. This innate ability to prescribe some order without forfeiting nature's wanton spirit, to show the hand of man, yet show it can be gentle on the land, has attracted a like-minded clientele to her garden design business.

You might say that it's not only attracted a like-minded clientele, but converted a few. A woman I know to be of extensive means with a traditional house and landscape said simply of Diane and Wolfgang's place, "I think I could live here..."

Diane and Wolfgang do live there. In the heart of the grounds, you will find the small house they built. Charming in its simplicity, you see it for what it is – a cozy shelter, and what it is not – a formidable separation from nature. This couple's interior lives are closely intertwined with their outdoor habitat – so closely, that the bathtub is on the porch. Yes, it's a good idea to call before you come for several reasons.

For a map (which you will need!) and a phone number so you may make an appointment to see the gardens and shop at the nursery, visit the Website [gardensoyvey.com](http://gardensoyvey.com). Arlington is just minutes from Memphis, and the nursery is just a few minutes more from the Interstate, though you will feel you are walking paths in the wilderness. And that's how Diane and Wolfgang wanted it. ♡

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