

Our Own
Better Homes
and Gardens

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copper poles and immense concrete spheres scattered about her front yard like remnants from some gargantuan croquet match. Following her around the house, I pass her garage and note it is brimming with works in progress.

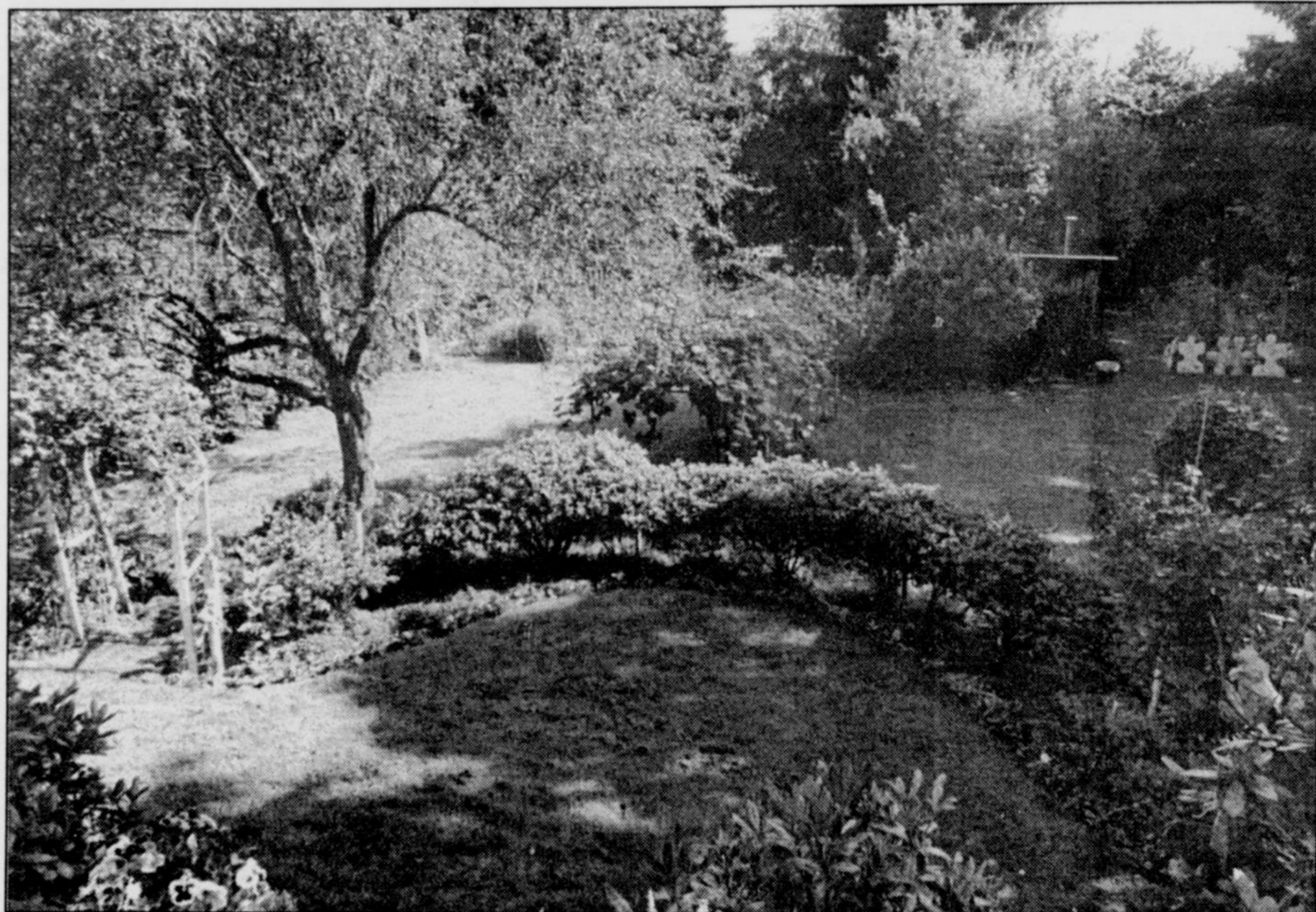
In contrast to her charming but modest front yard, the huge expanse of land in back is breathtaking.

Oliver, the director of Outside In, a social service agency, says, "It's my refuge, my sanctuary."

Her half-acre lot is divided into many smaller garden areas, including a grape arbor, a flower garden featuring roses and astilbes, a vegetable and herb garden, plus the Toulouse the Goose Sauna. Her peas, which she managed to get into the ground in February, are easily 8 feet tall today.

Two small ponds delight the resident raccoons, who climb up to the second story deck each night for further attention. Oliver even installed a house for them high in a cedar tree at the rear of her property. "I'm a caretaker of this land—not just for me, but for all the animals that live here," she explains.

And to further preserve the neighborhood of half-acre lots, Oliver and a neighbor bought the house between them, so at least three plots of land will maintain this unofficial wildlife sanctuary.



Hidden haven—the sweeping view from Kathy Oliver's deck, where she has breakfast in the morning sun (or not)

PHOTO BY K.H. KIMBALL

Twenty years ago when she bought the place, Oliver didn't consider herself a gardener. But that quickly changed.

"I wanted the space as soon as I saw it—I realized what it could be," she says, beaming

quietly as she gazes around her all-organic wonderland.

The large fenced property is also home to countless wild birds, squirrels, a neighbor's ducks who prefer Oliver's yard, her two border


collies, Zoomer and Zeda, and her cat, Diesel, who taunts the dogs with his acrobatic skills. The squirrels have their own garden agenda: They're incessantly planting a forest of hazel trees, which keeps Oliver busy yanking the

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