

# Imaginative yards

BY KEN ABRAMCZYK | STAFF WRITER

Sharon and Fred Van Hees wanted privacy.

Their property backed into a commons area and they didn't want to live in a fishbowl.

"We tried to create an oasis to get away from the commons," Fred said.

Through trial and error ("mostly error," Fred said), they planted. First it was Austrian pines, a locust and shrubs. Much of this died, so they replaced them with ornamental grasses, river birches, viburnums and perennials.

Recently they've had hostas, coneflowers and irises in bloom in the garden area, which covers about one-half acre. They've got ground covers and old-fashioned roses, too.

"There's really no written plan," Fred said. "It's whatever looks good in the mind's eye."

The garden art and accents include a frog fountain in front, birdbaths, a hippo fountain and a plastic heron standing the pond and the goldfish in it.

But the skunks, rabbits, woodchucks and, yes, real herons, often look for a quick meal, from under bushes or on the deck.

The addition of two small ponds with bubbling water fountains, plus wind chimes, adds to the serenity.

The garden grows, literally, every year.

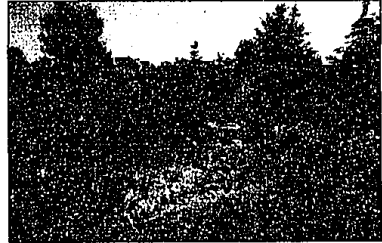
"We're slowly taking away grass every year, then place mulch on top of newspapers over the winter so you can plant it in the spring," Fred said.

The Van Hees garden gets mulch every other year. Fred likes to use liquid seaweed fertilizer. "We do



PHOTOS BY LIZ ORSICO | STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

A heron stands guard over a pond.



Another landscaped area creates a buffer, while adding beauty to the yard.

not have very good soil. It's clay," he said.

"We top it with compost every other year."

The Canton Garden Walk features five other stops. The home of Diane Daniell and Malcolm Wakefield presents color, not just from flowers, but from plant life in all areas. Every bush and perennial in the yard blooms at various times. Peonies and rhododendrons are colorful in the spring, while summer roses, annuals and perennials add to the mix.

Another home's garden draws hummingbirds and but-

terflies to its annuals and a cedar garden shed sits out in the yard.

Visitors on the garden walk will see a home with a yard full of perennials near the Lower Rouge River, including hostas, iris, coneflowers, lilyturs, daylilies, brown-eyed susans, bleeding hearts, perennial carnations and geraniums, columbine, herbs, yarrow, bell-flowers and hollyhocks.

For Fred Van Hees, gardening is a wonderful pastime. "It's always been a relaxing hobby," he said. "I love to see plants grow."

He's pleased to be a part of

## PETALS AND PATHS

What: The Canton Garden Club presents its fifth annual garden walk. Tour six gardens. When: 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. Saturday, June 28, rain or shine

Tickets: \$6 pre-sale, \$7 on the day of the tour. Tickets may be bought from Keller and Stein, 4215B Michigan, (734) 397-0800; Graye's Greenhouse, 8820 Lilley, (734) 453-1220; Mary's Farm Market, 47453 Ford, (734) 981-2866; and Backyard Birds, 627 S. Main, (734) 416-0600.

Information: Contact Judy Bloomquist at (734) 455-8283.

the Canton Garden Walk, and he takes it as a real compliment: "I call it our 15 minutes of fame. It's nice to be recognized."

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Someone can sit in the shade here and sip lemonade.



The garden of Sharon and Fred Van Hees is full of vibrant colors in an oasis created for a little privacy. The Van Hees garden will be featured in the Canton Garden Walk on Saturday.

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