Tending where faith also flowers



IRENE VIRAG

n a night a few years ago when the full moon filled a desert in Israel and for a moment the world seemed at peace, Ed Dugger traveled into the soul of his own garden.

Ed's journey took place during a pilgrimage to the Baha'i Center in Haifa, where greenery and tranquillity bloom in a country besieged by strife. "One night we were in the garden praying and meditating," he says, "and I looked up and realized the security guard had locked the gate. There was a full moon, the garden was serene and very spiritual. I attribute my own garden to that place and that experience."

Ed's garden grows in New Cassel, which he described in a letter inviting me to his home as "a neighborhood beset with litter, graffiti and gang violence." He is a Baha'i, and his faith teaches that the essence of all religions is one. It is that way with Ed's eighth of an acre. It is a garden of many rooms. And all of them make sense as one garden.

We stand in one of the rooms - a lily garden in a corner of the front yard. "In Haifa," Ed tells me, "everything was green and beautiful like nothing I'd ever seen before. I was praying for this neighborhood, and it occurred to me, if Haifa could bloom in the desert, maybe my community could, too.'

The lilies soften the summer heat. Pink, white, cream and yellow, they are offset by ferns and Japanese anemones and hostas and hollyhocks. "I don't like hosta flowers," Ed says, "but I like the architectural form of the plant. I cut back the flowers so your eye goes to the maroon hollyhocks."

kids about private space and

as a tribute to Israel; they

spend the winter in the ga-

of the house, where red

roses bloom against a gold-

ing posts. In reading about

the Edwardian era in En-

gland, Ed came across the

phrase "one golden after-

room? he thought. In the

turn fiery orange and the

in a long narrow woodland

border. Conifers show off in

shades of green, a silver king

euonymus brightens a dark

area, and the mottled green

and silver foliage of lamium

spills out of a pot. Moss and

ferns live on the stump of a

chokeberry bush that died a

garden seems ablaze.

noon." So why not a golden

light of the setting sun, the trellis sparkles and the roses

A few steps farther, we are

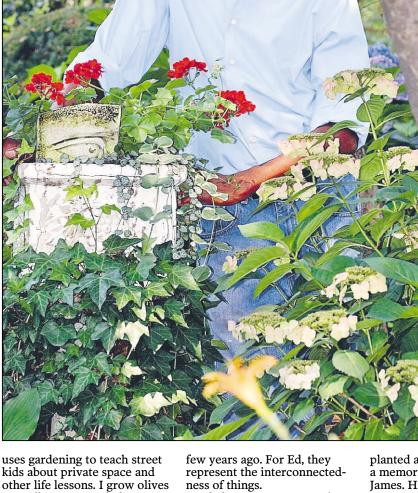
painted trellis and freestand-

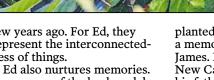
We stroll around the side

I notice orange lilies popping up among the whites. "I was never a fan of orange," Ed explains. "But in Haifa you see beautiful orange colors in the garden. And Gertrude Jekyll says if you combine it with blues and whites, it works.'

That's another thing about Ed's garden. It also blooms with many influences and life experiences. He draws from garden legends Gertrude Jekyll and Vita Sackville-West. From his father who died three years ago. And even from his job as director of college counseling at Friends Academy in Locust Valley. "I grow squash from Brazil, because every year I take a group of students from Friends to Brazil, where we work with an organization that









A sign of "Peace" marks the gate post in a part of the

a memorial to his father, James. His parents came to New Cassel in the 1960s, and his father, who grew up on a and practical — if he couldn't eat it, he didn't grow it. When with this earth he tended for I do in the same space.'

Ed read about George Washington's garden at Mount Vernon — so he planted a boxwood border around the potager. He added herbs, soybeans and nasturtiums, and espaliered apple, pear and peach trees along a trellis. "I don't know what my father would make of all this, but I think he would be impressed with my yield. My tomato yield is higher — not collards

Finally, we come to his white garden — inspired by Vita Sackville-West's famous white border. It includes a lovely Japanese anemone and white phlox and Casa Blanca lilies and a Liberty elm. Every summer, Ed holds a Baha'i feast in the white garden. Lights and candles twinkle, and the garden glows.

The tour ends. Ed stands on

Ed Dugger, left, in his New Cassel garden. Blue hydrangeas snuggle up to potted lavender,

above, and pink roses get a little support from weathered statuary, below.

his driveway and views his verdant plot of earth. He reads a Baha'i verse written on his garage that begins: "Flowers may be varied in their colors but all are flowers of one gar-

And he thinks about his community. "I see my garden as a way to make a statement," he says. "Maybe this is the desert. Maybe this garden is the oasis that can inspire someone else to plant a flower, to take care of another living

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planted a vegetable potager as farm in Virginia, planted vege-tables in rows. "Collards, toma-toes, squash. He was utilitarian he died, I thought what do I do so long? I'd never grown vege-tables. Then I got an idea — to combine what he did and what

In a corner of the backyard, he

garden scented by lilies.