

# Serenity in Full Bloom

NATURE IS A SOURCE OF INSPIRATION,  
RESPIRE AND RECREATION  
FOR LAKESIDE POTTERY OWNERS  
MORTY BACHAR AND PATTY STORMS

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Photography by **Pamela Aquilani**





**A** rush of warm sunlight and peaceful gurgle of a koi pond fill the Lakeside Pottery ceramic studio

when owners Morty Bachar and Patty Storms open the full-length glass doors to let the outdoors in. Their L-shaped home in Lewes, Del., was designed around the water feature and gardens.

Studio space flows into a courtyard and garden rooms connected by meandering paths provide distinct spaces for growing organic vegetables, sketching in the shade, and watching wildlife amid lush container plantings.

"A huge reason for us to have the environment we do outside is it brings the outside in, and that influences us tremendously," says Storms, a ceramic artist and painter who practices sgraffito, an Italian word for scratch and ancient technique where colored surface on clay is etched away to produce a design. "Most of my work is about animals and nature," she relates.

Bachar is focused on restoration at this point, namely the Japanese art of Kintsugi: putting broken pottery pieces back together with gold. The practice is based on the idea of embracing imperfection to create stronger, more compelling results.





When the couple shifted gears from teaching and found the Lewes property, it was an opportunity to create an inspirational setting that gives back with plants that attract life. Since, their art-by-nature creation has garnered interest from institutions such as The Smithsonian, which released a podcast about otters visiting the koi pond on site, and receiving an award as a Lewes in Bloom Beauty Spot A, not to mention garden tours.

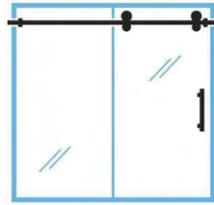
The couple, both artists with three operating studios at home, prioritized their gardens as inspirational views and hands-on exhibits in their own right.

**First, the pond.** “When we were working with the architect, we wanted to have a heartbeat to the outside and it’s a magnificent fishpond with waterfalls,” Bachar says.

With 38 inches of water, fish can deep dive to protect against natural predators like herons. Yet there’s a shallow area where birds can bathe.

“It’s very peaceful,” Bachar says. At the same time, it’s also high-tech. A special self-cleaning filter keeps water clear, “and we really have to do nothing,” he says, noting this is the third pond he and Storms have managed. The German-made mechanical filter mimics nature.

**Garden rooms.** A series of garden rooms bring a sense of wonder to the property. “I always envision what my grandchildren would want to see — ‘Let’s go into this area now, let’s explore over here, and let’s sneak into the woods over there,’ — so there is always an adventure, depending on which room you choose,” Storms relates.



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**Naturally responsible.** Behind the home is wooded area with a canal that cuts through the marsh. "It was important for us to create a bubble in this environment," Bachar says. "Everyone sprays for mosquitoes and that also kills butterflies, and we didn't want to do that."

In fact, the couple selected plants that attract pollinators like bees. Turtles, snakes, otters, bugs of all sorts and even the raccoons are all welcome. Though they did establish pond edges that deter "friends" from entering and bothering the koi.

Ultimately, Bachar and Storms want their property to be a diverse ecosystem. When choosing plants, they ask: Who will it help?

"There is so much development and areas being plowed over," Storms says. "Part of this garden, too, is to educate that you can plant even a small group of flowers or the right kind of tree and start attracting the wildlife back and providing for them in a way that hasn't happened in a very long time. And if everyone did just a little bit..."

**Functional finishes.** The vegetable garden sitting area is constructed from woodwork that provides spaces for sitting and housing container plants. "The woodwork is beautiful," Bachar says, alluding to the level of detail that the couple bring to their outdoor pursuits.

**Growing a bounty.** A dedicated raised-bed garden section of the property is gated off and includes drip irrigation. A quaint seating area provides a spot to rest or simply soak in the scents and scenes.

As with the garden, other beds contain at least 12 inches of composted soil. "That way if we move plants around, which we do all the time, it's easy," Bachar says of giving plants a healthy start. "People come here and they can't believe we've been here for six years. But plants matured so fast because of the rich soil."

**Perpetual motion.** Storms stumbled upon a concept called perpetual journaling, originated by botanical artist Lara Call Gastinger to document the natural world through the seasons and over the course of many years. "You separate a journal into weeks and make an entry of something you found or saw that is growing—I sketch and paint a little bit," she describes. "Each year, you go back to that same week so on one page, you'll have all these different entries from previous years."

"You'll notice how plants might be blooming earlier than they were three years ago," Storms relates. "It's a way to see how our garden changes over the years." **CS**



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