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The Garden of the Rose: A Celestial Garden [Transforming the American Garden: 12 New Landscape Designs-Exhibitor]

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Author:

[Sullivan, Chip](#)

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"The real gardens do not last long—but it is only through them that the knowledge can be truly learnt and people can come to see what a garden truly is."
Abu-Ishak Chishtī

Throughout history, the garden has always been seen to represent man's view of his universe. It has functioned as a recreation of heaven on earth and has embodied his perceptions of the universe and how it is related to a specific reality on earth. My garden is related specifically to Persian mysticism in garden design. In Persia gardens are considered sacred and are thought to embody a mystical interpretation of creation. The entire garden and its vegetation functions as a continuous symbol of life and death.

The Sufis, a Persian mystical sect, used images of the garden as analogies or parables in their religious writings. The garden for them became a place of transcendence; a symbolic journey for those who were on the path to divine knowledge.

My garden is encased in a medieval triptych. The wooden frames, like garden walls, are metaphors of the body as shelter for the soul; the green oasis within.

The triptych doors, gates of paradise, are open only to those seeking divine knowledge. The second triptych contains perspective illustrations which define certain important places in the garden. These illustrations are set above a lower compartment which has a series of seven miniature pull-outs, each illustrating an aspect of creating a Persian garden. Each is intended to be an individual story.

This garden, located in north central Florida, was designed for my own use. At the very center of the garden a fountain with a single jet of water symbolizes the origin of life and the center of the universe. At the base of the fountain are four channels, representing the four rivers of paradise and the four corners of the world. The visitor enters from the south through a solid wood door in a blank, concrete wall.

Inside, the garden in the simple gravel and stone space evokes the desert. At this point there is a choice: one can proceed straight to the center of the garden through a series of eight allegorical gates and chambers, or take a circuitous path that travels slowly towards the center. At each of the gates is a terrace with a different

type of flower, representing the eight terraces of paradise as described in the Koran. A series of trellises lining the pathway is covered with flowering vines, radiating out from the center of the garden and dissipating into smaller sections the further one moves from the center—analogue to the image of the onion used in Sufi mysticism to represent the different stages one must pass through on the journey to divine knowledge. The eight cypress trees and eight orange trees along the allegorical path symbolize eternity and fertility. On the other side of this path, four hedges situated in the path of the prevailing winds serve as "breezeways" or "wind funnels" and direct the winds over a planted area of low-growing flowers and into the center of the garden, filling it with sweet aromas. At the central fountain channels break off to the east and to the west. A pool at the eastern end reflects the moon and the stars, symbolically connecting heaven and earth. At the western end a square fountain in a sacred grove of trees is framed by an elevated pavilion facing the central part of the garden. Two arbors flank the central fountain, reminding one that the arbor was the

first structure to integrate architecture and landscape. Behind the central fountain stands the tree of life.

In the lower compartment of the triptych are two chambers with whirling dervishes. The dervishes are used here as an allegory of the garden, following the Sufi belief that when they twirl they become the center of their own self-perpetuated universe. In the center of this lower compartment is the rose, seen by Persian mystics as the most genuine symbol of true knowledge.

The garden is an attempt to reintegrate lost concepts of the spiritual in garden design and to combine elements of the beautiful with an individual microclimate. By studying the mysticism of the Persian garden, we can produce new ecosystems which may achieve a better balance between man and nature.





