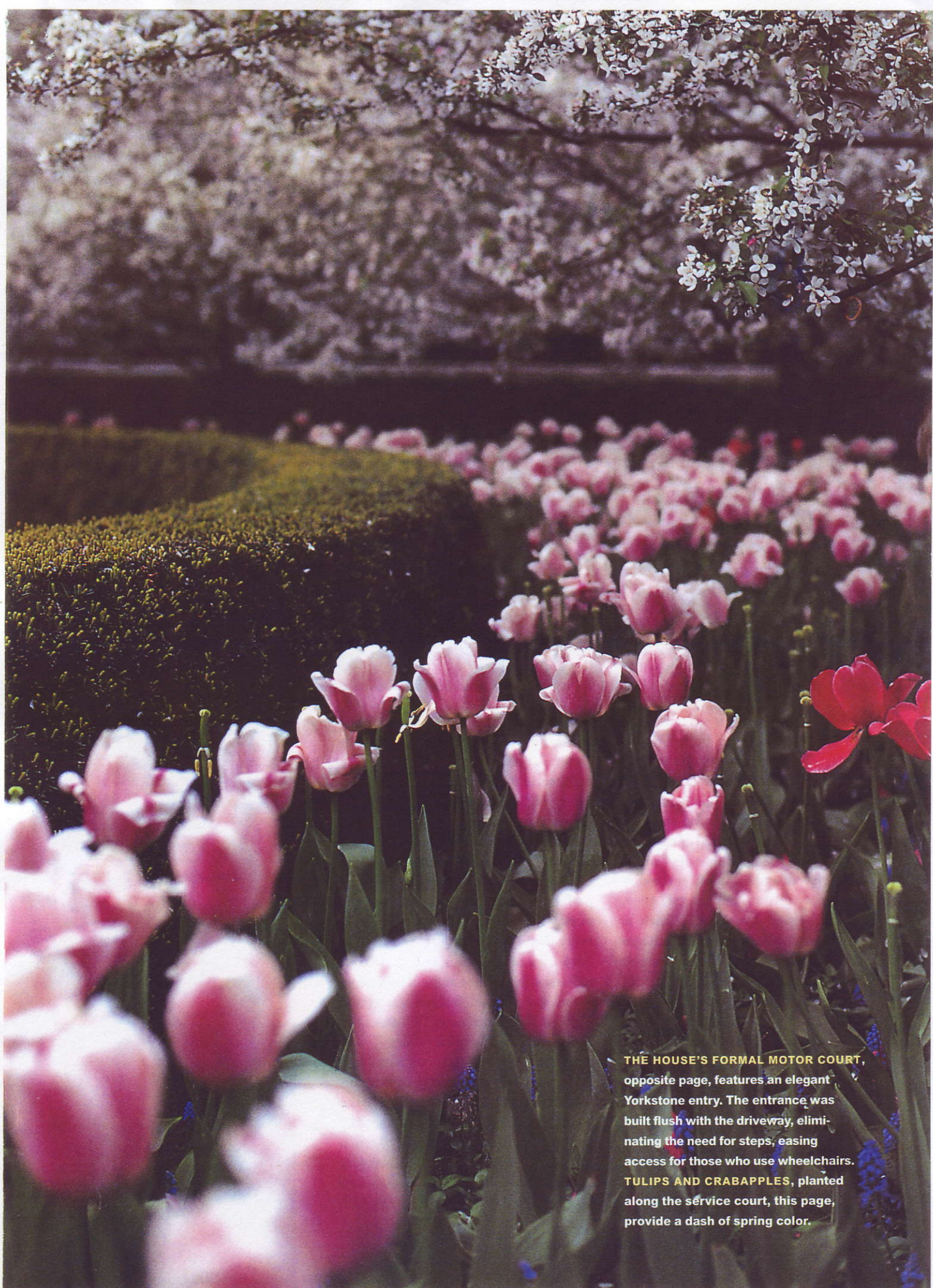


*beauty without
boundaries*

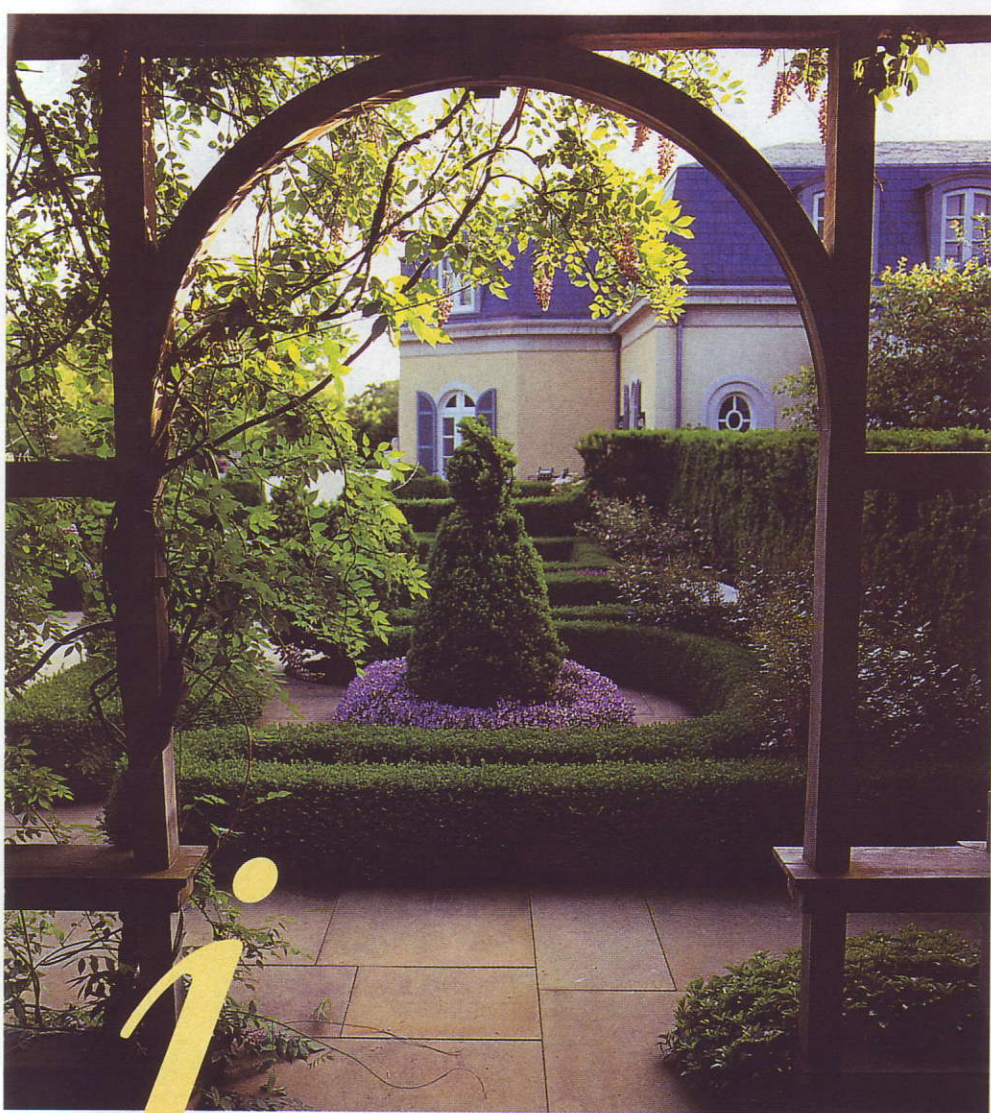
With a few design tricks, Deborah Nevins creates a Midwestern garden that can be enjoyed by visitors of any age or ability

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THE HOUSE'S FORMAL MOTOR COURT, opposite page, features an elegant Yorkstone entry. The entrance was built flush with the driveway, eliminating the need for steps, easing access for those who use wheelchairs. TULIPS AND CRABAPPLES, planted along the service court, this page, provide a dash of spring color.



IT IS OFTEN SAID that good gardens are built from the inside out—from the house, and into the world. But perhaps the best gardens are those that begin even further inside: in the heart. To be sure, this three-acre garden in the Midwest could not be imagined without its house—for the layout and spirit reflect the architecture of a classical French-style manor. But this grand house and garden are as they are for another reason, both humble and personal: a place that everyone in the family can enjoy.

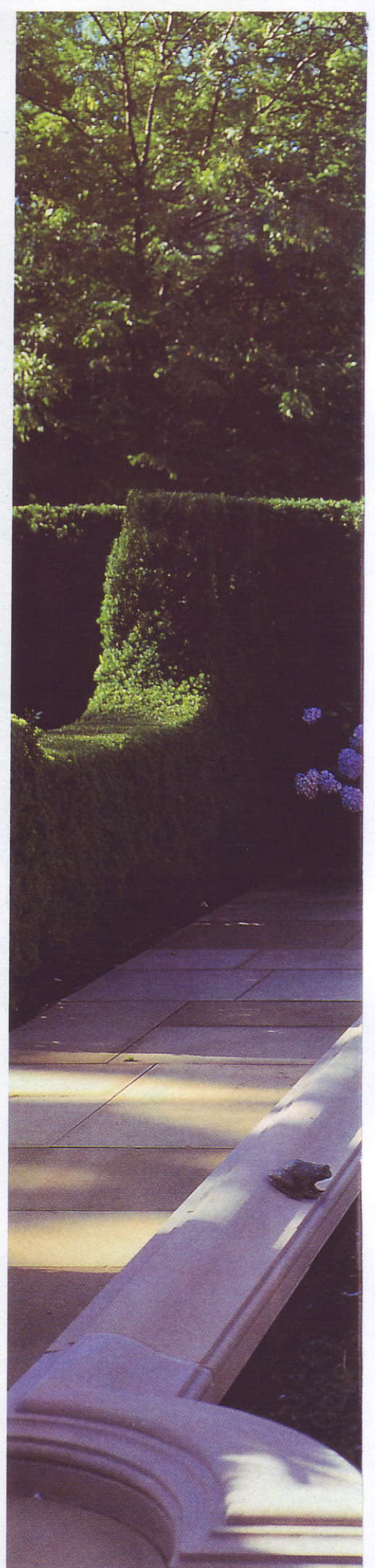
With one child who uses both a wheelchair and a walker, the owners wanted a home accessible to all people. The garden, like the house, is constructed according to the principles of universal design. The idea is to remove barriers so that physical limitations of mobility or sight pose no limit to someone's ability to take full advantage of a place and its pleasures.

Architect Thomas Beeby and decorator Stanley Falconer of Colefax and

Fowler were already at work on the house when they invited garden designer Deborah Nevins to meet the owner. An architectural historian and a former lecturer on landscape history, Nevins is known for her classically inspired gardens and her sensitivity to architecture.

Nevins and the owner struck an immediate rapport, probably because both are perfectionists, in the best sense of the word. The owner involved herself in every detail of the project. She scoured books, asked questions, and made trips to France to examine architecture, ornaments, and gardens. Her level of attention inspired Nevins, who says, "We should all apply such care to any life project."

For her part, Nevins is motivated by a belief that well-articulated spaces encourage intimacy between people and the landscape. This garden was influenced by the classic seventeenth-century French gardens of André Le Nôtre. Following his example, Nevins organized the space into a series of garden "rooms," each of which



A QUIET ARBOR, opposite page, graces one end of an intimate 16th-century-style garden. When fully grown out, the yew at center will resemble a swan. THE CONSERVATORY VIEW, this page, takes in a winsome froggy fountain. The Yorkstone pavers in the walkway, set tightly on a foundation of stone dust for fast drainage, have enough roughness, or "tooth," to grip shoe soles and rubber tires, but not so much as to be bumpy.





THE WHITE GARDEN, above, features a border with 'Krinkled White' peony. AN EARLY SPRING SHOW of bluebells, hellebores, and mini-narcissus, left, blooms near an allée of honey locust trees. Opposite page, clockwise from top left: THE CONSERVATORY was suggested by a friend who gets around on a motorized scooter, as a place to view the garden comfortably in any weather; AN ARMILLARY SPHERE stands by the garden path, which is made of decomposed granite mixed with Stabilizer—the blend creates a firm surface that lets water percolate through; WOODLAND BLOOMS, white *Anemone sylvestris*, and purple *Pulsatilla vulgaris*; THE LOCUST ALLÉE is softened by underplantings of hostas, astilbe, and ferns.



IN A PURPLE EXTRAVAGANZA, a patch of *Scilla siberica* and violas, this page, blooms near one end of the house. The stairway in the distance—and another flight, outfitted with an electric seat—lead to **AN AMPHITHEATER** framed in boxwood, opposite page, which is hand-pruned to maintain a puffy, cloudlike shape.

offers a different experience. Walking from the terrace, one can hide away in the small, enclosed topiary garden or wander under the dappled shade of the honey locust allée, where plantings spread out like a tapestry. In the other direction, tough, sturdy lowland plants populate a dell, and a luscious amphitheater is formed by billowy cushions of boxwood. A generous path, resembling the packed-earth paths of France, curves like a golden ribbon, uniting the entire garden.

In this garden, each beautiful surface or gentle dip in the land has a purpose. The


gracious path, which is in perfect proportion, is in fact wide enough to accommodate two people, one in a chair, moving side by side. The path is made of decomposed granite (in a sandy color that matches the house) mixed with a binder called Stabilizer, forming a base that drains quickly. "A bark or gravel path is a Do Not Enter sign to someone in a wheelchair," says the owner. Benches punctuate the path at strategically close intervals. "Distance," the owner says, "can also be a barrier."

Seamlessly blending the aesthetic and

the pragmatic, the garden is a place where family members can reconnect with one another, read, or meditate on nature. Nevins has even created an area that simulates a visit to the woods, an experience difficult for someone in a chair. She planted evergreens close to the path, to give guests the feel of being enveloped in a forest. When those in wheelchairs remark on how delightfully cool it feels in this area, and how intense the evergreens smell, the owner rejoices. She has succeeded in creating a place where sensual delights are open to all.







THE WIDE LAWN, opposite page, includes a 12-foot-wide border that is much like a putting green. It has a sandy subsurface that packs hard, drains quickly, and is bump- and barrier-free. **THE FOUNTAIN** sits on the main axis of the landscape plan, and can be seen from some of the surrounding gardens. On this page: **ALONGSIDE THE PATH** sloping gently into the area of the garden called the dell, a patch of Siberian iris catches the morning dew. Sources, see back of book.



site plan

- 1 Arbor
- 2 16th-century-style garden
- 3 Fountain terrace
- 4 White garden
- 5 Bench
- 6 The locust walk
- 7 Shade garden
- 8 Covered garden seat
- 9 Grass terrace
- 10 Fountain
- 11 Viewing terrace
- 12 The dell
- 13 Armillary sphere

