



“MAY I A SMALL HOUSE AND LARGE GARDEN HAVE;
AND A FEW FRIENDS, AND MANY BOOKS...”

“The Wish,” Abraham Cowley (1618–1667)

AN ONGOING SPIRIT OF SERENITY

ACORN COTTAGE AND OAK ACRE GARDENS

BY PHILIP AND SUSANN BISHOP

IT WAS EARLY SUMMER 1928. Loaded boxcars from the Gordon-Van Tine (G-VT) Company of Davenport, Iowa had arrived at the final stop of their 850-mile journey: Sprecher’s Hardware Store in Ephrata, Pa. Townsfolk were mystified and all atwitter over the mammoth delivery. Roland H. Garver had purchased the G-VT bungalow for his second wife, Nan, and they wanted to be sure his daughter, June, wouldn’t return from her California trip until the end of that summer so that they could surprise her. As June remembered the place, it “was a beautiful home, unique and cozy, and was quite a showplace.” The thing she remembered most was “the beautiful view.”



MELISSA ZANE



STEPPING STONES AMID HERBS, IRIS, AND AJUGA LEAD THE VISITOR AROUND THE BUNGALOW TO THE RED RHODODENDRON. A LARGE ENGRAVED FLAGSTONE (INSET) LISTS THE PRINCIPAL OWNERS THROUGH THE YEARS.



Roland and Nan had customized the bungalow's interior to complement the merger of two of G-VT's popular styles: the Reynolds and the Redwood. A stylish, artistic type, Nan would have a Faulkneresque sleeping porch with an easel to do her painting; "wallpaper murals" would grace some walls. The kitchen, living room and bathroom just off the master bedroom would round out

the first floor living space. Two "attic bedrooms" would be used for guests or family visits.

How did the locals view it? They peered up from downtown, shook their heads and kiddingly called it "Garver's Castle on the Hill."

A number of distinguishing features had been built into the design. Most prominent were the rolled-under eaves and battered gable ends,

giving the appearance of a thatched roof of an English cottage. Two stout pillars supported the front porch. The roof was made of steam-bent cedar shingles laid in a wavy pattern.

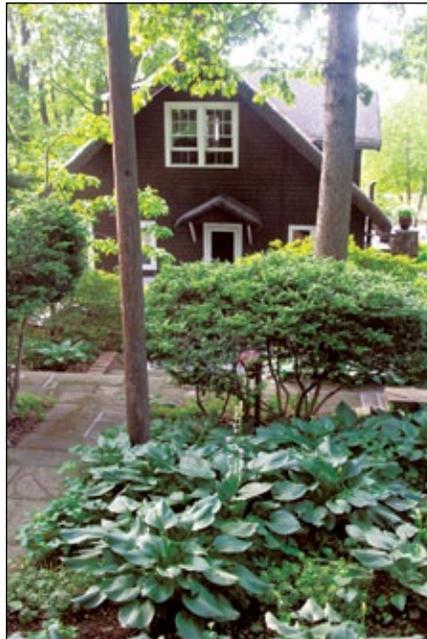
The exterior of the house was clothed in cedar shingles. The interior included a massive stone fireplace. Floors were of white oak done in picture-frame style. The mostly original first floor bathroom sported a

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ON ITS HILLTOP, ACORN COTTAGE OVERLOOKS A GARDEN WITH CASCADING SWEET-POTATO VINES. RIGHT, A CUSTOM-BUILT LIVING ROOM CEILING LIGHT WITH ACORN AND OAK-LEAF MOTIFS BY OLD CALIFORNIA LANTERN CO. AND LAURA WILDER'S "SUMMER PRINT" ABOVE SELECTED POTTERY. BELOW, VIEW FROM REAR GARDEN. BOTTOM, THE BUNGALOW AS IT APPEARED AROUND 1930.



DAVID LOWDEN



SHERRY MCCANNANT

green pedestal sink and green-and lavender-tiles interspersed with decorative "boat-and-ship" tiles. The windows throughout were six or eight panes over one, the exception being the Palladian window out front.

During Prohibition Garver and his first wife's brother, Willie Shimp, illegally sold all manner of liquor in Ephrata. Garver was so concerned about the authorities that he even



ALL HISTORIC PHOTOS COURTESY OF THE GARVER FAMILY.

ACORN
COTTAGE
AND
OAK ACRE
GARDENS



SHERRY MCCAMANT





ABOVE, STRIPED SQUILL OF EARLY SPRING BENEATH A STUMP IN THE FERN DELL. BELOW, BACK TERRACE "ROOM" WITH ACCENTS OF RED AND WHITE ASTILBE AT BASE OF A TOWERING OAK.



OPPOSITE, THE LIBRARY HOUSES A SUPERB COLLECTION OF ARTS AND CRAFTS PUBLISHER THOMAS BIRD MOSHER'S BOOKS. ORIGINAL 1906 WILL BRADLEY POSTER HANGS ABOVE ELABORATELY CARVED CHESTNUT BOOKCASE. ATOP BOOKCASE AND IN UPPER LEFT CORNER, GERMAN ARTS AND CRAFTS CUIR CISELE BOOK BINDINGS.



installed a buzzer system to alert him of any approaching law officer seeking out a "house of disorderly conduct."

After a robbery and bankruptcy, in 1938 the Garvers turned the house over to Willie Shimp, the brother-in-law, along with his new wife, Kathryn. They would greatly extend the bungalow's gardens, as would its next occupants, a spiritualist by the name of Jim Crews, and his mother, who was quite the gardener as well.

A BUNGALOW FINALLY SECURED

For several years my spouse and I had been captivated by a certain quote from Abraham Cowley's "The Wish" that deeply carved itself into our hearts. When we discovered Laura Wilder's "Summer II" pictured in *American Bungalow* with the words "May I a small house and large garden have; And a few friends, And many books..." we were stunned. Having rejected suburban development living, we had bought the bungalow in 2005 after five years of searching. It was surrounded by gardens that complement both its exterior and interior, serving to unite the whole and fold the past into the present. And it had room for many books.



“SPRING GARDEN/ ROLLY AND I BUILT/ GORDON VAN TINE HOME”

Knowing the history of a house and giving the house a name that reflects that history can heighten the sense of relationship, even guardianship, in its owners. It's important to have a sense of place, a certain *connectedness* and *presence* to a property, that can be captured in a name.

So it is that the house now known as Acorn Cottage got a new lease on life through us as we gave it its name, learned who its former owners were and collected a great deal of its history through images and accounts they shared with us and that we have embraced as portions of our own history, including our love the Arts and Crafts and of gardening. This enriched sense of a past in the present has meant merging our own lives and labors into the household fabric and furnishings to create a richly interwoven tapestry of the lives that have been and are now being lived here.



TOP LEFT, MARRIAGE PHOTO OF NAN AND ROLAND GARVER FOUR YEARS BEFORE THEY BUILT ACORN COTTAGE. ABOVE, ONE OF THE REAL TREASURES OF BUNGALOW LIVING: A SECOND-FLOOR WINDOW PORTAL FROM WHICH TERRACED WOODLAND GARDENS CAN BE ENJOYED.

To adorn the walls inside, we selected paintings or prints that reflect specific features of nature outside: a custom-built ceiling light with acorn and oak leaves, framed oak-leaf prints, a poster depicting a sprig of holly with a background of our indigenous holly trees.

Idyllic metal art sculptures of trees grace some walls, while an autumnal-leaf lampshade over an organic-formed base gives us both the needed light for one area of the interior and another connection to the outside, where the trees and gardens have become more and more like rooms. Oak trees abound, so

much so that we call this little piece of the world “Oak Acre.” Many pieces of our furniture are made from oak. The floors of much of the main living quarters are made of oak laid in a picture frame manner.

In her oft-reprinted book *Gardens for Small Country Houses* (first published in 1912), the British horticulturalist Gertrude Jekyll, along with Sir Lawrence Weaver, wrote that “the idea of the garden as an outdoor living room, a seamless extension of the planning and decoration of the house, was an Arts and Crafts invention.” She goes on to say the Arts and Crafts designers “were

ACORN COTTAGE AND OAK ACRE GARDENS



MELISSA ZANE (2)



A RED-GLAZED VASE GRACES THE TOP OF ONE OF THE MASSIVE SANDSTONE PILLARS TO THE SIDE TERRACE (FAR LEFT). TWO OF THE 34 BIRDHOUSES FOUND THROUGHOUT OAK ACRE GARDENS (LEFT). MASSIVE FIREPLACE WITH CORBELS (BELOW) REPEATS THE SAME INDIGINOUS RED STANDSTONE OF OUTSIDE PILLARS; MODERN STICKLEY BOW ARM MORRIS CHAIR IN FOREGROUND AND REPRO LAMBERT LAMP TABLE BY BRETT JOHNSON OF CRAFTSMEN STUDIO WITH QUIOTZEL A&C LAMP IN BACKGROUND.



SHERRY MCCAMANT

ACORN COTTAGE AND OAK ACRE GARDENS



guided by a rejection of ostentatious display and an insistence on simplicity, craftsmanship, tradition, and a reverence for nature in all its forms.” A 1916 article in *The Craftsman* titled “Making the Bungalow Externally Attractive” suggested a garden with “a variety of plants that make the bungalow attractive in winter as well as summer,” pointing to shrubs like azaleas and rhododendrons that stay green all year round, as well as plants that retain colored berries or leave behind architecturally attractive structures of their own.

Drawing on such resources, we continually develop several small gardens immediately around the bungalow and in the terraced grounds and pathways comprising Oak Acre, preserving the sense of enclosure and creating “rooms” each designated by its own name—the Fern Dell, the Astilbe Garden, the Raven’s Roost, the Stumpery. We live out here as well as in the bungalow.

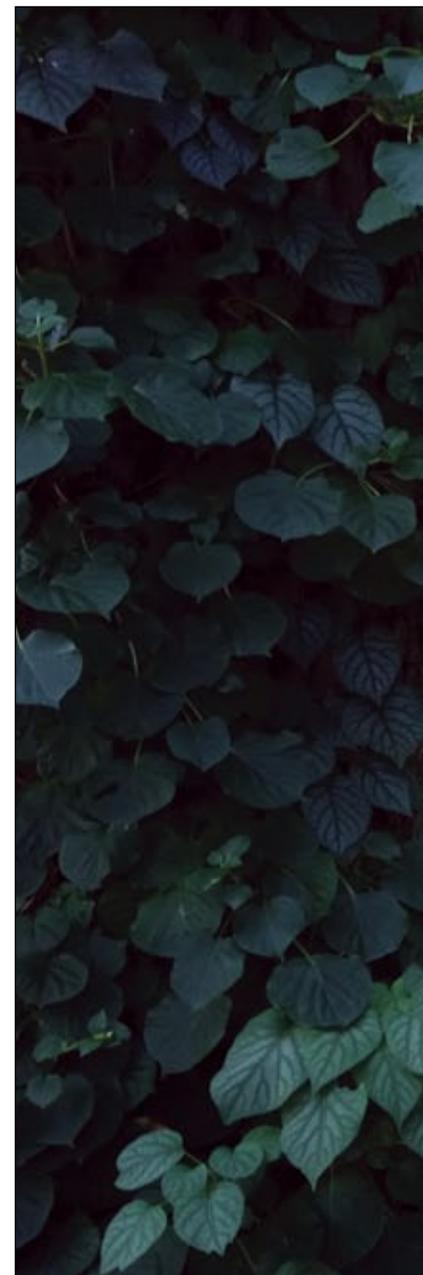
GARDEN SHED AND ADIRONDACK CHAIR (TOP) MARK ONE ENTRANCE TO THE WOODLAND GARDENS. FLORAL STAINED GLASS WINDOW MADE BY THE AUTHORS’ SON COVERS A SKYLIGHT (TOP RIGHT). ONE OF A PAIR OF LEADED GLASS SIDE PANELS DESIGNED AND MADE BY MICHAEL BOVIE OF LANCASTER STAINED GLASS DESIGNS; ABOVE POTTED FERN IS A 3-D RENDERING OF EDWARD BURNE-JONES’S ‘TEMPERANCE’ POURING WATER.



SHERRY MCCAMANT

A SENSE OF PLACE, A SENSE OF TIME

We seek to incorporate elements of texture, color, size and fragrance to create both interest and balance. The bungalow’s interior brings in those colors and natural surroundings in the choice of pottery, tiles, prints, leaded-glass, woods, and even bottles from old middens now holding buds, stems, fresh blooms or dried after-blooms from our hydrangeas to grace the indoors.

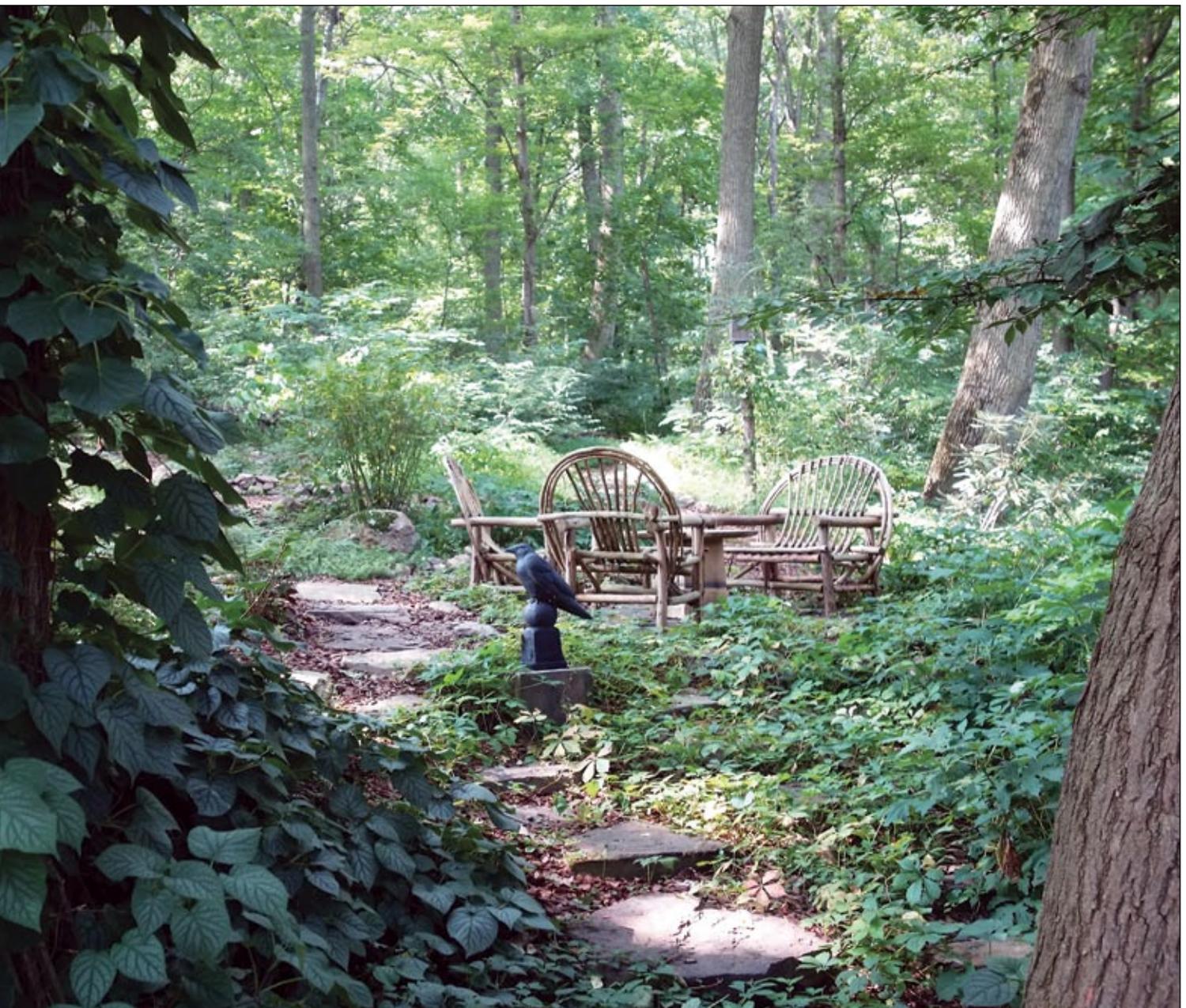


A Chinese professor from Princeton who saw pictures of our house and gardens enthusiastically remarked that she felt they exhibited strong *Feng Shui*, the Oriental art of perfect placement of objects to allow the life energy (*chi*) to move through both exterior and interior environments to evoke harmony, balance, and a deep-seated sense of comfort. Coupled with the seminal thoughts

of observers like Jekyll, we began to see our A & C gardens as providing a sense of unity and integration that help form our lives on a daily basis.

A noted international teacher of *Feng Shui*, Carole Hyder, recommends creating a curving path of stone or chips through the garden and having some form of water, whether a fountain, a bird bath, or even a dry-bed path of stones that

THE RAVEN'S ROOST IS ONE OF THE OUTDOOR 'ROOMS' PROVIDING RESPITE (BELOW).



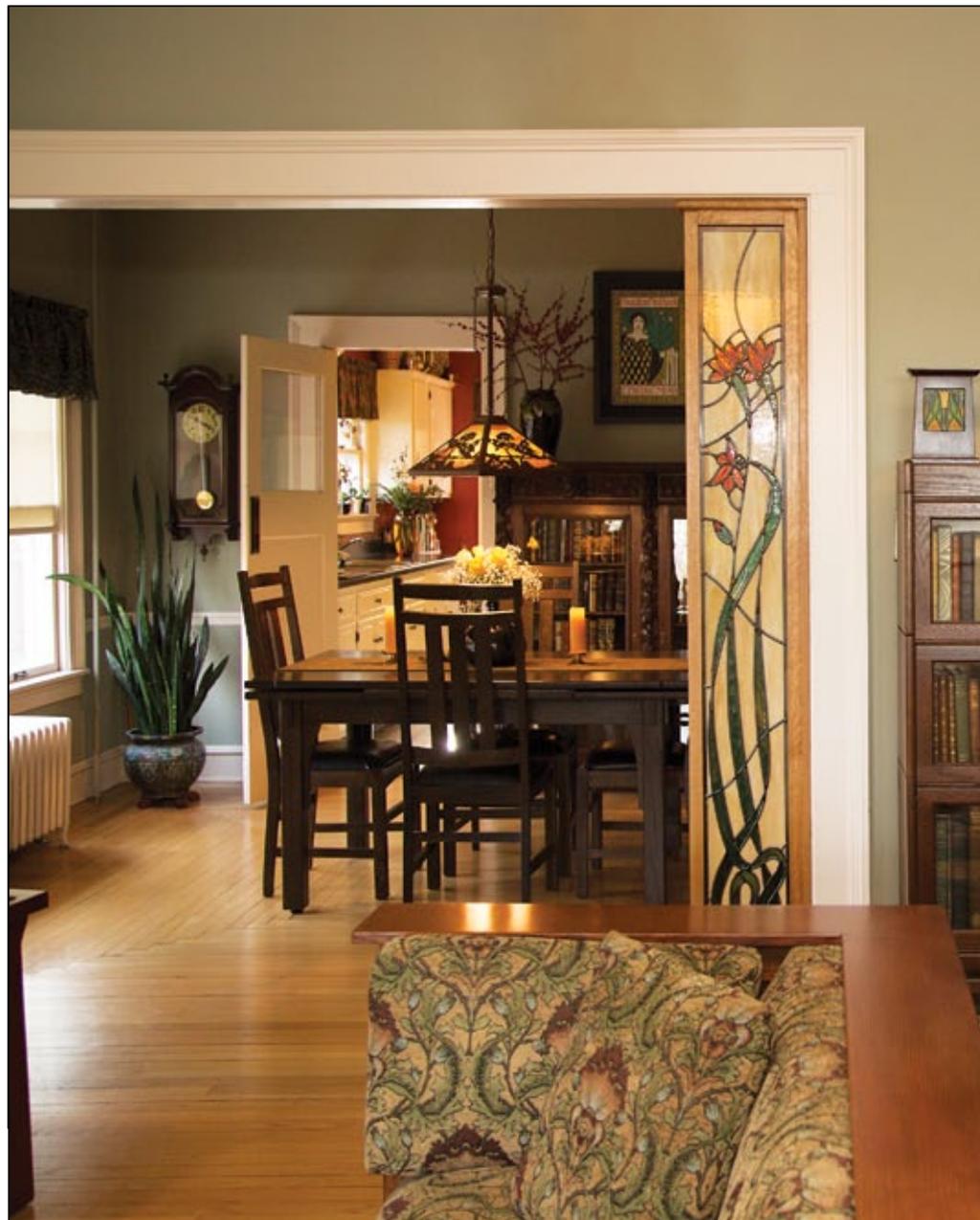
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SHERRY MCCAMANT (3)

simulates a river. Our response? Serpentine sandstone walls, winding pathways, gently curved beds. Of course, we're on a mountainside to begin with, and then there's the natural cathedral-like canopy of oak trees towering above the terraced terrain.

We let the land help guide us in laying out hundreds of feet of winding, stone-lined, pine-bark, covered pathways by paying attention to natural outcroppings of moss, interesting stumps, rocks with character, where and how the largest trees are situated, and by skirting around naturally occurring colonies of hay-scented ferns. Confirming many of our own long-labored practices, Claire Sawyers's insightful book, *The Authentic Garden—Five Principles for Cultivating a Sense of Place*, has been an inspiration. Her principles? Capturing the sense of place, deriving beauty from function, using humble or indigenous materials, marrying the inside to the outside, and involving the visitor.



SEEING THROUGH

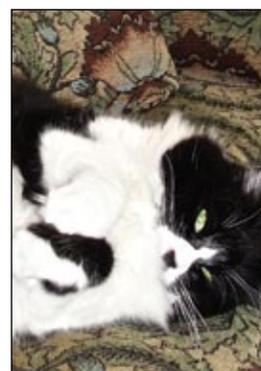
It is said that the eyes are the windows to the soul. So it is with the windows of the bungalow; they are portals to the outside from within and to the interior from without. Windows are some of the real treasures of bungalow living, and it was the abundance of windows that first captivated us in touring Acorn Cottage. The greater scene of the woodland plants and surrounding flower

gardens taking shape and maturing can be viewed any time of day from the bungalow's interior.

Gardening is called the slowest of the performing arts, and through windows the drama of the seasons unfolds—fall colors, snow magically hanging atop barren branches, the bright yellow warmth of winter acornite, white snow drops and multi-colored crocuses, spring's early welcome heralded by carpets of blue-

stared scilla. All are seen as though from a theater's front row.

Attention to our bungalow and its gardens gives us the connectedness we revel in and informs our being. We know exactly why we live in an Arts and Crafts environment and how our lives unify with our surroundings. This is a great and enduring gift. 📖



ONE OF THE ORIGINAL SHIP TILES (OPPOSITE) ADORNING THE GREEN-AND-LAVENDER-TILED BATHROOM. ENJOYING IT ALL IS "FLOPSY" (ABOVE) ON A STICKLEY SETTLE.