



My
SECRET GARDEN



DIRECTIONS TO this secret garden are only shared with a select few. It isn't coyness so much as respect. Some things are better left alone. Some places feel diminished when pinned on a map or plugged into a phone. This one prefers to be found slowly.

The house anchoring the garden's 15 acres was built in 1924, with the quiet confidence of an era that valued proportion. It rests lightly among the rolling landscape of Barrington Hills as though it grew there, rather than arrived. Time has softened its edges, but not its purpose: to look out, to hold space, to observe the seasons as they move deliberately.

The garden reveals itself in layers. While the vast majority is not manicured perfection, there is a formal garden that insists on order-clean lines, intention, symmetry. Yet even here nature quietly negotiates. An adjacent and companion frog-and-fish pond stirs with life, its surface broken by ripples and the occasional unapologetic splash. At dusk, the frogs announce themselves, as if clocking in for a night shift serving Mother Nature, uninterrupted for decades. A lap pool lies nearby, long, narrow and reflective, mirroring sky and trees and hedges and vines—a ribbon of stillness on

summer mornings.

During the day, horses move outside with an ease that suggests they know something we've forgotten. They are housed at night in a barn built for up to five horses in 1890. Older than the house itself, still standing, still useful, it's a working relic that once shared the property with a modest frame house long since gone, but it has endured, as practical things often do. Today, the barn shelters not only horses, but also a self-appointed barn cat, and a rotating subcommittee of chickens who take their duties seriously.

Apart from the barn (and its residents) is a chicken coop that deserves its own paragraph. Inspired by the discovery of "Irish cordwood sheds," it was built roughly twenty years ago using five-inch-deep slices of cordwood, placed like clay bricks and held together with a special mortar. It is beautiful, humble and ingenious... a structure that feels simultaneously ancient and experimental. Some forty hens and two roosters rule the surrounding yard producing eggs, opinions, and drama in equal measure.

The secret garden is a living, breathing collaboration between history, animals and time. It keeps its secrets well and rewards those who respect them. 



