

A formal garden with manicured hedges and tulips. The garden features several large, rounded, topiary trees in the background. The foreground is filled with rows of tulips in various colors, including red, purple, and pink, planted in a grid pattern. The hedges are neatly trimmed and form a series of rectangular beds. The overall scene is well-maintained and aesthetically pleasing.

AN INTIMATE TOUR  
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# ADVENTURES IN EDEN

CAROLYN MULLET

# The Stream Garden

WASPIK, NOORD-BRABANT

WHEN JOHN AND GERDA REKKERS contacted garden designer Noël van Mierlo in the summer of 2015, they knew the kind of garden they wanted. It was to be a natural, peaceful place with curving lines that would harmoniously blend into their one-acre property. Trees and terraces would be located in the sun as well as in the shade, and the garden would be welcoming to visitors, birds, and insects. Perhaps the most essential item on their garden wish list was a sense of privacy; they lived on the property alongside their business, a busy marina on a branch of the Meuse River, and the time had come for a bit of separation.

When Noël, a winner of design awards in both the Netherlands and Great Britain, heard the couple's requests, he picked up on something more. The landscapes they loved and described were the places they had visited in the Alps, while hiking along boulder-strewn streams that were different in every way from the low, flat, and rockless topography of the polder where they lived. Noël realized that the couple's garden would need to be a place to escape from the challenges of work—it would require an aura of vacation and adventure.

The following year, he built a garden centered on a naturalistic pond with river-sourced water, situated next to the house terrace. Flowing from the pond is a 325-foot meandering stream, scattered with boulders and rocks imported from Luxembourg since the Netherlands has no rocks. A gentle current drops into small waterfalls, before it eventually reaches a larger pond at the far side of the property. Along the stream is a rustic, linear boardwalk with uneven edges, built from wood recycled from an old boat deck. Noël thinks of this as the heart of the garden: "It really is the magnet that gets you out of your chair to start exploring."

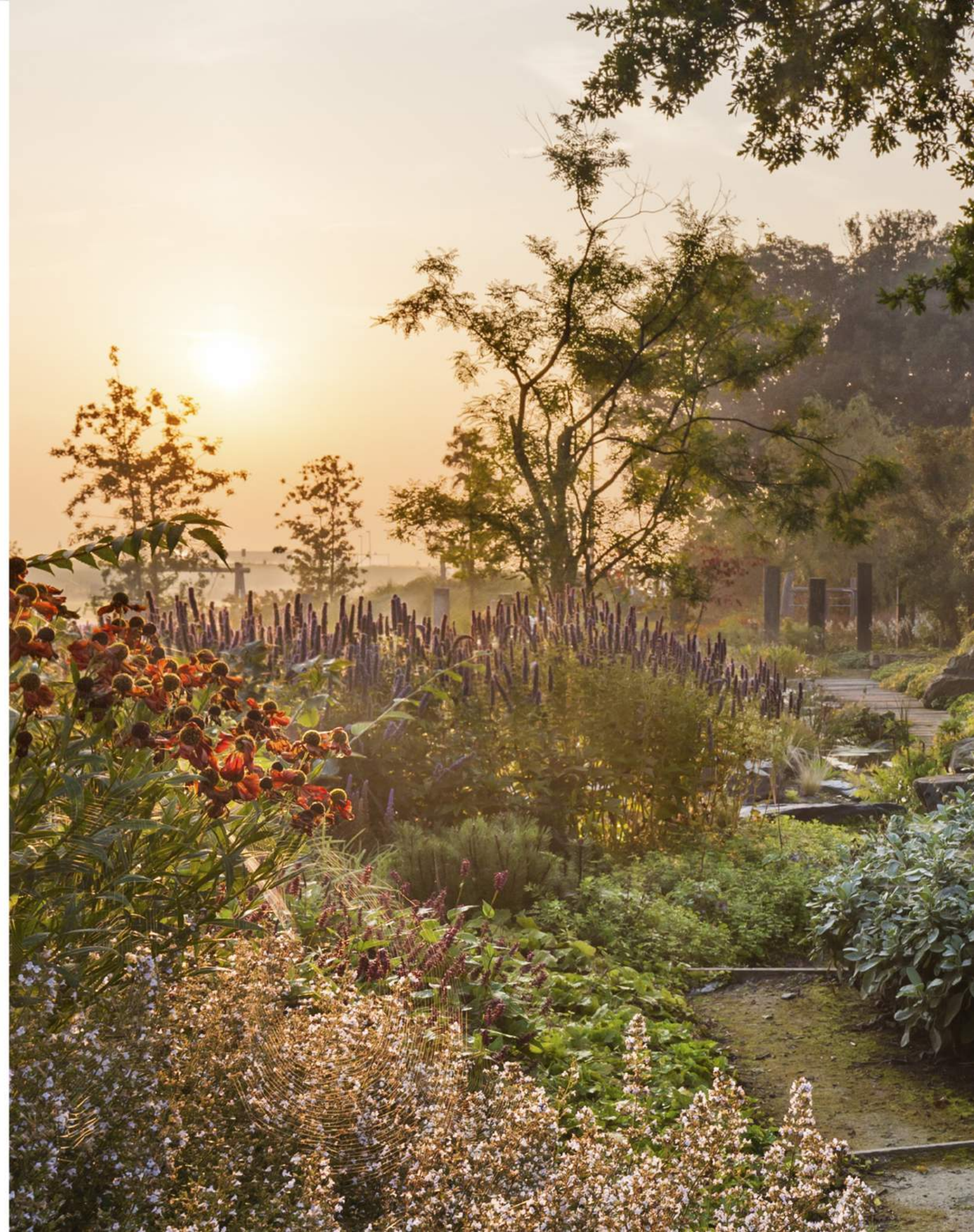
A log wall now forms a visual, and psychological, barrier that separates the garden from the marina. Stout, square, wooden bollards, originally used in the marina, gently separate public space from private. Two terraces, one in the shade of an existing tree and the other opposite on the sunny pond edge, are paved with small, square-cut sandstone. Paths made from tiny, flat rocks and well-compacted sand lead around the pond through flourishing plantings of calamintha, ceratostigma, and tiarella, along with sedum, helenium, rudbeckia,

anemone, and oakleaf hydrangea. Near the pond edge are royal fern, rodgersia, and astilbe, and in the water margins pickerelweed thrives with the delicate Dutch native flowering rush, adding a light, airy touch.

Though only a few years old, this naturalistic garden looks settled and well established, as does the pond, which is full of life and home to frogs, fish, and ducks. Trees and perennials are host to birds, bees, and butterflies. This garden provides the Rekkers with the privacy they longed for. "It is a luxury to have our own small park," says Gerda, "and be able to stay at home and still enjoy a natural environment."

Morning is the best part of each day for the Rekkers. The garden faces east, and as the sun rises, the effect over the pond and stream is breathtaking. In October, when the sun is less glaring and the light seems filled with a golden dust, the garden glows.

**OPPOSITE** Helenium, rudbeckia, and agastache brighten the path leading to the boardwalk.





Watching the sun rise over the garden is a favorite daily experience for the Rekkers.



Astilbes grow near the pond edge and in the water margins pickeralweed thrives in large clumps.



A sitting area overlooks the pond, where pickeralweed and water lilies bloom.



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