



**FREE-SPIRITED PARTERRE** *In the historic Bellamy-*





*A small pool reflects both the statue perched on its edge and the unpretentious flowers around it, among them a white bellflower (*Campanula persicifolia*) and *Lobelia siphilitica*.*

*Ferriday Garden, roses and perennials bloom exuberantly within formal frames of yew*



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An informal mix (above) includes foxgloves, white *Digitalis purpurea* 'Alba', and buttery yellow *D. grandiflora*, and (below) lavender *D. purpurea* backed by *Salvia pratensis haematodes* alongside *Rosa* 'Mme. Hardy'. Right: Rounded steps lead from parterre to peonies. Opposite: Peonies, self-seeding violas.



The yew hedges outlining the seventy-year-old parterre behind the Bellamy-Ferriday House in Bethlehem, Connecticut, which is now open to the public from May through October, have grown out into the gravel paths, making them pleasantly irregular and lending the garden an air of delightful informality. Unpretentious old-fashioned flowers—rose campion (*Lychnis coronaria*), Sweet William (*Dianthus barbatus*), and a perennial foxglove (*Digitalis grandiflora*)—escape from the beds where they flourish alongside roses to seed themselves in the paths. They have been encouraged in this sweet disorder ever since Eliza Mitchell Ferriday created the parterre behind her white clapboard house in the 1920s. (Legend has it that she based the curving shapes of the beds on the design of her Aubusson rug.) “The entire landscape reflects the spirit in which Mrs. Ferriday and her daughter, Caroline, created this very special place,” says horticulturist Robin Zitter, referring to the casual intermingling of roses and perennials with wildflowers which Caroline collected in nearby fields. One, a white penstemon, tucked into the border behind the parterre, has escaped to soften the gravel paths.

Zitter, who has been working on the garden’s rehabilitation ever since the Antiquarian and Landmarks Society inherited it from Caroline Ferriday in 1990, strives to maintain the slightly blowsy quality while trimming hedges and renovating beds. The roses in the parterre were so crowded that she dug them up and removed some to a nursery bed. The remainder, pruned and replanted in enriched soil, thrive with vigor. Beyond the parterre the peonies, segregated in their own beds in the old-fashioned way, were in such poor shape that Zitter dug them up, then replanted them in improved soil with better drainage.

If you visit the Ferriday Garden, be sure to go by the propagating area, where excess plants are sold at modest prices. You can take home a lovely piece of history.





