

West Portal Family's Garden Transforms Beautifully Over Time

When Sally Maske and her husband Chris moved into their West Portal home in San Francisco 21 years ago, like many new homeowners they concentrated their time, attention and budget on fixing up the house, with plans to renovate the garden later. With a 7-year drought also underway, they sensed no great urgency.

“Those were the years when we lived in each of our rooms at one time or another, pulling our futons around with us,” says Sally. “We concentrated on the interior of the house first, hired a contractor to handle structural issues, and did the finish work ourselves.”

By 1998 they were sufficiently settled to begin a total redesign of the front and back yard landscapes. According to Sally, both were filled with junipers and blackberries that didn't promote much inspiration.

Again they sought the help of professionals to draw up a plan that would develop a garden of their dreams over time and within certain budget constraints. By way of an ad and some garden tour information she saw in a Victorian Alliance bulletin, Sally came across Janet Moyer Landscaping, a San Francisco-based company that specializes in designing, building and maintaining urban residential landscapes throughout the city.

“We hired them because they listened and understood both our design and budget objectives,” says Sally. “We wanted a drought tolerant, low maintenance, kid-friendly garden where we could entertain in the back and enjoy seasonal colors throughout the year everywhere.”

The result has been a total transformation into a landscape that attracts hummingbirds and their feathered cousins, has a splash of color in each season, and features edible plants and fruit trees including lemon, apple, Asian pear and cherry. With a patio made of Connecticut blue stone, the family has an area that is inviting and suitable for hosting outdoor lunches and tea parties. Along with drought tolerant plants, a smart irrigation watering system was installed front and back.

The front garden design takes its cue from the charming informal home with its rounded staircase going to the front door. Plants were placed to emphasize the staircase as a focal point by wrapping around it in the same direction.

In the back yard, the same soft shape was used to create paths that direct the eye to the most desirable view and best access for maintenance. Seating areas were placed to take advantage of ocean views and protection from the wind. Privacy has been created with plant material that creates a tapestry of plants rather than a hedge. The lawn is surrounded by a pathway, which acts as an overflow area for low maintenance and does not require water. The veggie beds are placed in the area with the most sun and protection by the fences.

One of Sally's favorite times to enjoy her garden is when she drives home, parks in the driveway and can watch the hummingbirds darting among the flowers. In the



Modest beginnings—a lifeless backyard is transformed into lush garden with paths that wind around and present a variety of views.

meantime, her neighbor loves the peaceful gurgling sounds of the backyard fountain that the birds use as a favorite place to perch and dip. In this garden, there's something beneficial and rewarding for everyone.

Is your garden a source of pride? Send us your makeover: editor@westsideobserver.com

