

## Garden 2:

# *Sanctuary for Nature and Neighborhood*

It starts in front with the owners desire to increase interest, beauty, color, shade and movement. It had to start with the removal of half the lawn, in order to provide the space for the new elements. That flat lawn space was divided into several mounds for a more natural flow of line. The clients were invited along to choose rocks they loved, that would provide vertical relief as well as architectural presence. Those rocks then provide the backbone for the placement of plants that include the home owners favorites, and follow the simple rules of both in-and-out and up-and-down profiles, interplaying textures, complementary colors and through-the-year displays of features that will delight the senses with surprises every passing season - every month of the year.

All the rocks were placed manually with a tripod and a 3 ton engine hoist and wooden rollers, technology that would have been familiar to ancient Egypt, China, Maya....no motorized equipment.



The old garden only included a patch of bulbs in front of the porch. The entire composition was designed to present maximum interest from the two perspectives that the clients would see it from the most: the view from the front window and porch, and the view from the street toward the front of the house. Approaching the house, the largest rock is matched with a weeping redbud to help them both look like they belong to the space, and provide an explosion of purple bloom color on bare branched in the Spring, giving way to soft yellow green leaves that soften the rock itself. Cousin It's are one of Rachel's favorites, that sprinkle throughout the entire landscape, and too soften the entry around the frontmost rock, providing evergreen interest when the weeping Japanese maple and the greeting crepe myrtles are dormant. The airy vertical of the twisty baby locust on the left provides contorted branch interest in the winter, soft foliage in the spring, and white flowers in the early summer.

You will have missed the explosive white flowers of the popcorn viburnum patio tree- peaking in April- that also provides brilliant fall color.

As you walk toward the porch, the dwarf kangaroo paws by the house were a lesson from Rachel to me that they can be kept blooming almost all year long by the removal of their old flowers. As you look to the right of the porch, a very old sasanqua camellia shows off, bringing soft flowers all over its low spready form in the fall. That porch was blasted by late afternoon sun, so we appointed a Chitalpa tree, pink dawn, to provide summer shade, and early summer blooms, while letting through light in the winter. Notice that it is placed in line with the sun's max about 3 o'clock and the porch.

This home is situated on a very well used path for walkers in the neighborhood, and later in the summer the astounding grass pink muhly captivates passers by with its soft pink cloud of finest textured color.

Glancing toward the driveway, a pair of small coral bark maple trees flank the white birches - repeated themes- and flank some shade loving bloomers that bring their color in spring - azaleas, and late summer hydrangeas. That spot had to be appointed carefully, as parts are full afternoon sun, and some are shade. The japonica Camelias lining the front wall are very old, and provide a huge show in late winter. They are bordered by snow-in-summer that blooms sparkling white for us through late winter and spring- leading along a path to the driveway.

The mound toward the West is populated by lots of standard elements meant to bring color over 9 months of the year- lantana, butterfly bush, carpet roses, interspersed with elements to show off and hold the scene in the late winter: euryops daisies and the vibrant green airy ceanothus dark star, as well as the trailing bright yellow ceanothus diamond heights.... all drought tolerant and water use efficient!



The back yard scene needs to be contrasted with the previous 20 years when the family never extended their living space beyond the patio at the back of the house. We again eliminated 1/2 the grass, this time to make room for mounds but also a dining pavilion hidden against the back fence, and a social setting around a fire pit open to the glory of the garden for myriad social encounters from neighbor wine sharing to book clubs. During Covid, the gate at the West side of the yard came to be known as "the Covid



gate" that invited neighbors often to get together outside, masked and distanced, and share the connection our whole community was yearning for. Dinners, too, could be hosted at the pavillion around a spaced outdoor table.

Walking past the wisteria whose spectacular flowers and fragrance you just missed a month ago, notice the intertwined trunk that has been a feature at this corner of the house for many years.

As you glance to the back to see the tall lattice screen that seems to embrace the dining area, appreciate that its function is to shield the yard from the intrusive lights from the church parking lot behind the property. Walking toward that dining table, notice that the dwarf magnolia [whose name is Bob] provides screening of the driveway and the significant evergreen piece for winter presence among the other deciduous pieces that play from early spring, the dogwood, then the red

emerging leaves of the bloodgood maple [ a particularly sun tolerant cultivar], then the crepe myrtle catawba with violet flowers in the summer... providing a symphony of fall color from both dogwood and crepe myrtle.

Walking to the table, you pass the young small graceful tree "Micaelea", whose white flowers also passed in April.... more wisteria on a second arch [more repeated themes], then a kaleidoscope of interest through the year surrounds the table area: a small deeply yellow variegated daphne "rebecca" with intense fragrance in February, a twisting Harry Lauder whose winter framework delights the eye, camelia japonica blooming in late winter, rosemary with blue flowers throughout winter, rhododendron for show late May, azaleas with staggered bloom times [some peak in the fall!], viburnum and tri color beech show off in May, hydrangeas coming on June through fall, Gardenia "mystery" for fall white flower show with stunning fragrances.

As your eye moves West toward the water feature, imagine a creative design process where rocks were placed and re-placed until the entire composition felt like it belonged together. The waterfall is driven by two pumps, so running just one provides a serene setting, and adding the second "gusher" brings drama to the scene. The statue of "Ernestine" is a family heirloom that we placed on a concrete pad for stability, and calls to the water. The large amount of rock in the waterfall itself is softened by plants caressing its borders as well as pots within the rocks.... notice the white variegated acanthus mollis near the back ~ contributing a unique texture of big leaves and bright color in the shade. Those leaves are the model of all rolled leaves atop Corinthian columns for centuries !

The many hydrangeas in pots along this shaded back fence were all transplanted from the old garden, since they had never been able to perform well competing with the redwood roots. Their first season in the pots they thrived! Moving still Westward toward the street fence, the large signature rock was starkly dramatic when first set, but now works with its symphony of accompanying plants to make the scene look like God put it there. Notice the up and down of the plant profiles, as well as their complementing colors: starting with a dark evergreen vertical chamaecyparis, then a sprawly and airy red twig dogwood with white edged leaves [ red twig stems in winter cold], a tall special camelia reticulata, a unique hybrid created by one of the last American Camelia breeder from Lafayette, Garth Jacober. A small pot of annuals is snuggled in, then a dark red cultivar of loropetalum "everred". You will have missed a stunning show of the snow ball bush in April, with scores of pure white blooms opening from chartreuse buds the size of tennis balls.... but it will show off again in the fall with red-orange color.

New trees were planted to screen specific views of neighbors second story window, aligning the trees carefully from the vantage points in the yard where privacy was most desired. Those trees are a thoughtful mix of forms, textures, colors... the evergreen magnolia, the vase shaped parrotia persica "ruby vase" outside the fence [ whose fall color is among the most stunning of all trees], purple plum inside, grey of olive outside, then the magnificence of the valley oak... leading further along the fence to the secret space canopied by the large japanese maple, Acer palmatum, the grand daddy of all modern japanese maples. All the trees that were planted are invested with a "deep root watering system" that admits water 4 feet deep into the ground, and trains the tree roots to develop deeply, which increases their capacity to both grow and withstand heat and drought stress of summer. A pink jasmine vine against that fence is planted there because it will flourish and bloom prolifically and fragrantly at Easter even in very limited light.

The rock set in front of the secret space arch features an oak leaf hydrangea, which blooms with foot long creamy flowers in less light that normal hydrangeas can handle, then its textured leaves turn stunning red/orange fall color and those leaves hang on the plant throughout the winter to continue that fall display, until spring growth pushes them off.

We so hope you have enjoyed this garden as much as the homeowners and I enjoy sharing it.

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