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Small Gardens

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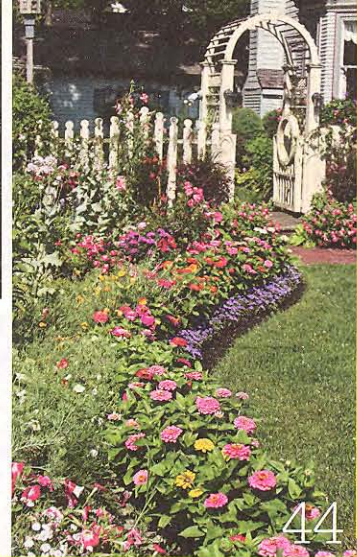
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SMALL GARDENS Need Planning



PHOTO: PETER AFIF

BARBARA MAYER

Zinnias and cosmos took over in my garden last summer.

For years, I've been reading about perennial borders and beds filled with flowering plants that return each season to create a succession of color and interest. Last year, I began my own small perennial garden.

What my efforts made clear is that even in a very small garden it's quite an accomplishment to select plants in the right height and color that will be happy in the available soil and light conditions. My experiences helped me realize why great perennial gardens are written about with such enthusiasm. But annuals were still an important part of my garden. Cosmos and orange zinnias 'Apricot Blush' added midsummer color and filled in bare areas.

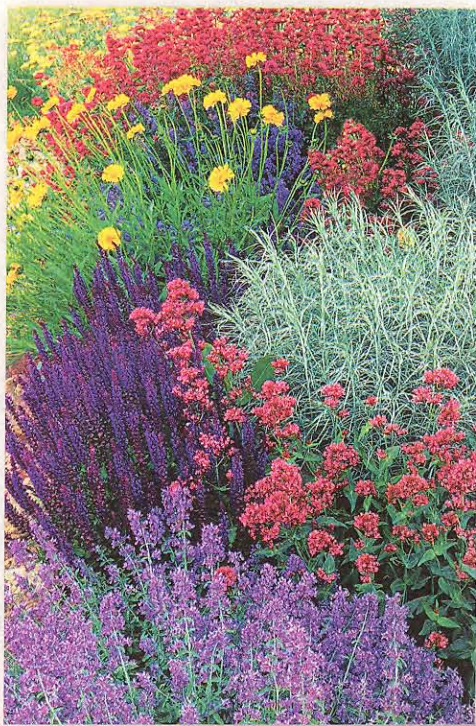
I am eager to see which of last year's perennials return and to augment them with more plants selected over a winter of reading. I hope to come closer to my goal of creating a fine perennial garden for the long haul. Gardening for the long haul is something of a theme in this issue of Small Gardens, with stories on how to design a garden for long-term low maintenance and on plants whose good manners, if you will, make them ideal partners for other plants. Be sure also to see our Special Section on building variety into your garden; it's chock full of ideas that will keep paying off, season after season.

Here's to meeting great expectations for your garden this season. But the great thing is that if things don't work out perfectly, there's always next year!

Barbara Mayer

A RICH DISPLAY
A bed of red valerian, golden coreopsis, gray rabbitbrush, salvia and nepeta.

PHOTO: "PERENNIAL COMBINATIONS" BY C. COLSTON BURRELL, COPYRIGHT C. COLSTON BURRELL. PERMISSION GRANTED BY RODALE, INC., EMMAUS, PA 18098



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■ ON THE COVER:

Traffic-stopping daylilies and climbing roses, in shades of pink, white and soft yellow, add a fairytale effect to this classic arbor and fence. Photo by Mark Lohman; styling by Sunday Hendrickson.

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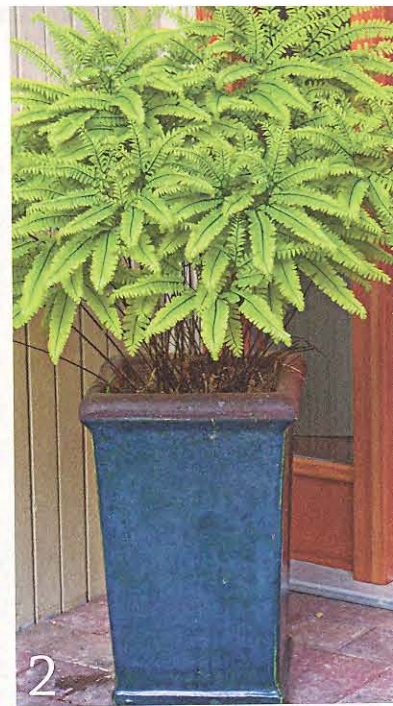
Room for Living

Small but spectacular, this front yard haven bids a warm welcome to all!

TEXT BY DIANE SPEROS
PHOTOS BY JERRY PAVIA

Walking up the path to Marilyn and David Huffer's home in Richmond, British Columbia, you know you're in a special place. Free of clutter, but filled with character, this outdoor room encourages lingering. And that's exactly the effect the Huffers want. "This isn't just a pretty garden to admire from afar," says Marilyn. "This is a living space that's as much a part of our home as any other room."





1. FIRST IMPRESSION

The front yard's cedar enclosure allows for privacy but filters in plenty of sunlight for a warm, natural mood.

2. PORTABLE PLANTING

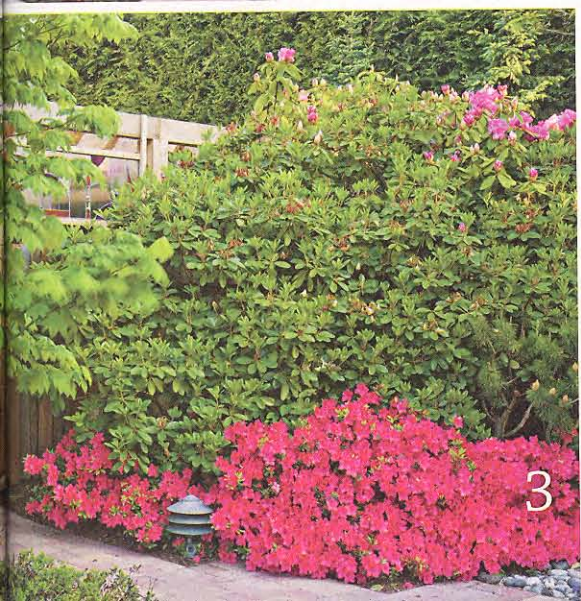
Easy-care container plants, like Marilyn's Maidenhair Fern, add instant color and texture with little fuss.

3. BORDER PATROL

Splashes of color, like these rhododendrons and azaleas, enliven the border leading up to front yard entryway.

4. CREATE CONTRAST

A mix of bamboo, ornamental grasses and hellebores strikes the right dynamic with round river boulders, stained glass and terra-cotta tiles





FUN FEATURE
Details like the whimsical circular gate add personality but don't compete with the surrounding elements.

designer Bruce Hunter. Working with his daughter Lara, the duo created a design that combined strong architectural elements with a variety of plants such as rhododendrons, azaleas and ferns, that highlighted the entrance and enhanced the overall landscape.

STRIKING THE RIGHT BALANCE

Striving for a balanced mix of hard- and soft-scape elements was crucial to the overall success of the project. "We consider the hard-scape as the foundation blocks and the soft-scape the icing on the cake," explains Bruce.

Set back about 60 feet from the street and measuring in at 20 x 25 feet, the Huffers' front yard wasn't tiny, but it was just small enough to present a few design challenges. Establishing a privacy boundary was crucial since this was an entryway space. Rough cedar fencing was chosen to enclose the area. Designed to look as though it had always been there, with no two pieces alike, the fence's openings filter in plenty of sun while imparting a natural feel.

That old saying "little things mean a lot" is never more true than when designing an outdoor room. To make the Huffers' front yard unique, a few surprises were added that still continue to delight its residents.

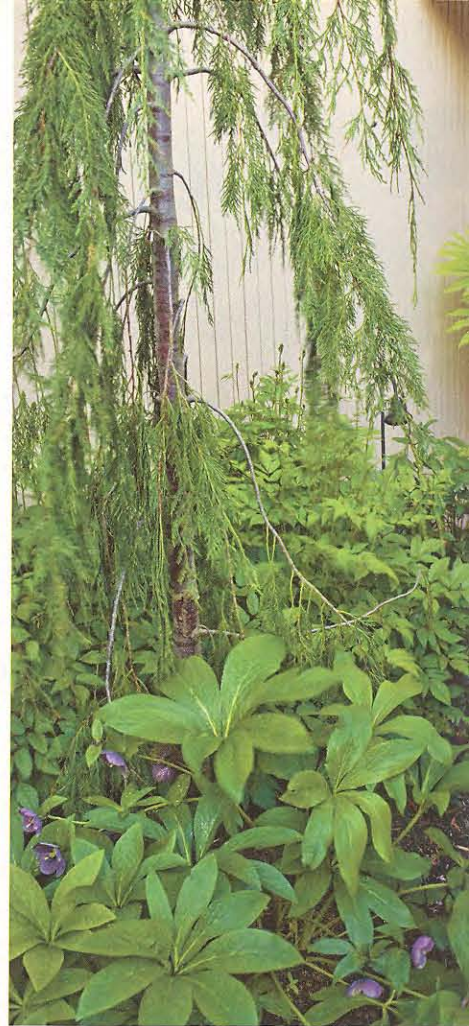
"I love the way the path is broken up," says Marilyn. The part leading to the front door is continuous, while tiles leading to the lounge area are spaced apart. Strategically planted in the openings is mint groundcover. "Every time someone walks over it, the fresh fragrance releases into the air! It's probably my favorite thing!" Marilyn exclaims.

Although the water feature in the original plan was dropped in favor of the stained glass, the round river boulders and riverbed rocks still create the Zen-like atmosphere the Huffers wanted. Their smooth surfaces and subtle tones add an air of calm that the Huffers appreciate, whether they're sharing a morning coffee or serving refreshments to their walking club buddies.

The Huffers will continue to embellish the garden. In the meantime, morning is now their favorite time of day in their new living 'room.' "The sun streaming through the stained-glass windows is always a beautiful start to the day!"

TIME FOR CHANGE

"We always wanted to be surrounded by a garden," says Marilyn Huffer. "Our dream house would be a greenhouse right in the middle of one." That dream became a reality after 25 years for Marilyn and David. While the backyard is filled with fragrant, colorful perennials and raised vegetable beds, the front was dominated by a deck that had seen better days. "Our mission was to make this small space an attractive, functional one," explains landscape





CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT:
PLAYFUL HEIGHTS
A single tree surrounded by low-growing blooms creates the illusion of height and visually enlarges a small space.

SIMPLY STUNNING
Framed with an array of color and texture, the path leading to the Huffers' home lets you know you've arrived at a special place.

GET TOGETHER
Clusters of plantings keep traffic patterns clear and encourage lingering, while avoiding a cluttered look.