

A Rural GARDEN





Below the porch mounds of foliage create an inviting planting, encouraging a visitor to take a seat on colorful chairs and cushions that reflect colors in the landscape. The plants include boxwood (*Buxus* 'Green Velvet'), juniper (*Juniperus horizontalis* 'Limeglow'), spirea (*Spirea japonica* 'Magic Carpet'), a dwarf spruce (*Picea omorika* 'Nana') and low-growing sedum (*Sedum* 'Blue Spruce').

Large lots in rural subdivisions offer a blank slate to the gardener, but also pose numerous challenges. The greatest ones include choosing sizes and locations of beds and structures that will transform a rectangle of ground into a landscape. The lay of the land, the borrowed views, and the horizon serve as inspiration.

Horticulturist Chuck Porto and his wife, Mary, worked seven years to create a vibrant, beautiful garden for their family. With their great interest in plants, I am sure they will add many more in years to come. They provide meticulous care to the garden and enjoy the time spent outdoors. When they bought the house, there were no plants worth keeping in the yard, but some wall stone that Chuck repurposed into low walls and edging. Mary is the perennial expert, while Chuck describes himself as a "tree and shrub nerd."

Left: Standing on the deck and looking out over the backyard, the photographer views the major elements of the landscape. A long perennial and shrub border in the foreground pops with yellow daylilies (*Hemerocallis* spp.), white daisies (*Leucanthemum x superbum* 'Silver Princess') and orange butterfly weed (*Asclepias tuberosa*). A fenced, vegetable garden with a compost bin sits in the corner of the yard, beyond the bed. In front of the vegetable garden, the owner planted a small orchard of 'Redhaven' peach (*Prunus persica* 'Redhaven'), 'Mesabi' sour cherry (*P. cerasus* 'Mesabi') and 'Wenatchee' apricot trees (*P. armeniaca* 'Wenatchee'). Borrowed views of the neighbor's lawn, fence and shed and a barn enhance the scene on a cloudy morning.

A long perennial bed crosses the yard diagonally on the sloped backyard. In this way, the bed does not dissect the yard into unrelated parts, but provides a dynamic element, suggesting movement and a destination. These two gardeners have filled the bed with repeating mounds of perennials and shrubs that hide septic cover lids. The bed is designed to be viewed in many ways, from the house, the deck and the back of the yard, as well as from both ends. Each view presents the plants in different combinations.

A garden shed on one side of the yard offers a focal point and gives the gardener an opportunity to create spatial relationships with the other elements in the landscape. Thoughtfully placed trees create the sense that this landscape is distinct and whole. The vegetable garden in a far corner of the yard helps to anchor the design. This garden must be fenced due to the high deer population.

A colorful, but peaceful seating area connected to the deck by stairs provides a private space in this very open backyard where neighbors' lawns meld together. The view of farm buildings in the distance adds a pastoral sense to this landscape. The garden along the front of the house gives foundation plantings a boost. Repeating gold junipers lead the visitor along the walk and also provide great contrast to other foliage and flowers. The porch furniture, cushions and pots contribute to the color scheme. Shapes and colors connect the front of the house with the backyard. The colors bounce back and forth throughout the landscape. ♡

Judy Nauseef is a landscape designer and garden writer living in Iowa City. Her website is judynauseeflandscapedesign.com.

Seen from the north end, the curvy, diagonal bed gives shape to the large lawn. Repeating clumps of perennials exaggerate the curves and direct our eyes through the planting. Daylilies (*Hemerocallis* spp.), catmint (*Nepeta racemosa* 'Walker's Low'), daisies (*Leucanthemum x superbum* 'Silver Princess'), butterfly weed (*Asclepias tuberosa*), purple coneflower (*Echinacea purpurea*), coreopsis (*Coreopsis verticillata* 'Golden Showers') and bee balm (*Monarda didyma*) create full groupings of stalwart perennials. A birdbath and feeders add to the habitat for birds and butterflies.



Large shrubs punctuate the south end of the border. These plants face east and include 'Irish Belle' pine (*Pinus leucodermis* 'Irish Belle'), butterfly weed (*Asclepias tuberosa*), purple coneflower (*Echinacea purpurea*), daylilies (*Hemerocallis* spp.), catmint (*Nepeta racemosa* 'Walker's Low') and 'Cayuga' viburnum. A path crosses through the bed to connect the two parts of the yard.

'Cayuga' viburnum (*V. Cayuga*) and 'Autumn Brilliance' serviceberry (*Amelanchier x grandiflora*) frame this vignette in the garden and view of the landscape beyond. Daisies (*Leucanthemum x superbum* 'Silver Princess', purple coneflower (*Echinacea purpurea*), *Iris* spp., butterfly weed (*Asclepias tuberosa*), catmint (*Nepeta racemosa*) 'Walker's Low', Oriental trumpet hybrid lily (*Lilium*) 'Vice Versa' and bee balm (*Monarda didyma*) surround a birdbath and feeders.



In this foreshortened view, a cherry tree shares the photo with the back of the long border and a glimpse of a seating area below the deck. A large Fox Valley river birch (*Betula nigra*) 'Fox Valley', and a tall, narrow spruce (*Picea glauca*) 'Pendula' screen a patio. There is space for play equipment on the lawn behind the house.

Looking north along the back of the long border, the view is anchored by an 'Irish Belle' pine (*Pinus leucodermis*) and the tall perennial Joe Pye weed (*Eutrochium maculatum*). An urn with annuals sits on a septic tank cover. The lovely garden shed gives the scene a sense of permanence and directs our eyes back toward the garden. Hydrangeas soften the edge of the shed. Perennials in the bed include daylilies (*Hemerocallis* spp.), catmint (*Nepeta racemosa*) 'Walker's Low', and butterfly weed (*Asclepias tuberosa*).



The vegetable garden with a compost bin anchors the southeast corner of the yard. The fence keeps deer out. The tips of purple coneflower show in the long bed in the foreground.



A pretty garden with a northeast exposure fills a corner behind the garage. An ornamental tree, Korean muscadolewood (*Carpinus coreana*), provides privacy to a three-season porch. Shade-loving plants have found a home here. They include *Hosta* spp., *Astilbe* spp., lady's mantle (*Achemilla mollis*), ferns, lily-of-the-valley (*Convallaria majalis*), goat's beard (*Aruncus dioicus*) and geranium (*Geranium* spp.). Annuals, Dahlberg daisy (*Thymophylla tenuiflora*) and million bells (*Calibrachoa* hybrid) add season-long color.



This striking foundation planting of repeating shrubs and perennials leads the visitor to the front door. The plants include a Japanese maple (*Acer palmatum* x *Acer pseudosieboldianum*), boxwood (*Buxus* 'Green Velvet'), juniper (*Juniperus* 'Limeglow'), spirea (*Spiraea* 'Magic Carpet') and sedum (*Sedum reflexum* 'Blue Spuce').

