

## **“CULTIVATING A SENSE OF PLACE” 2026 Riley County Extension Master Gardener 37<sup>th</sup> Annual Garden Tour**

Our 2026 theme is a nod to Dr. Gus van der Hoeven, KSU retired Extension Landscape Specialist, whose many broadcasts and writings over the past 40 plus years celebrate an intimate, deeply rooted “sense of place”, that champions the landscapes, ecology, and rural communities of the Flint Hills. His work, as well as the time and effort that our home garden hosts have put into their gardens over many years, reflects on the emotional bonds we form with the land.

### **Kansas State University Gardens, 1500 Denison Avenue**

The Gardens at K-State is a horticultural display garden that was established in 1875 as an educational resource and learning laboratory for KSU students and the visiting public. We will have Master Gardeners stationed at the Adaptive & Native Garden, Butterfly Garden, and Cottage Garden. A new highlight this year is the Reflecting Pool area with a Master Gardener present. The landscaping around this area has been completed in the past year and we’re eager for you to come listen to the soothing sound of water spilling into smaller pools. The area is home to a large reflecting pool that is paralleled by two smaller aquatic plant pools with water lilies. Enjoy listening to the sound of water spilling into smaller pools. Besides the plant material, there are sculptures, water features, and numerous arbors and benches located throughout the Gardens. It is open to the public year-round with free admission and parking. Proceeds from this garden tour help support the Gardens.

### **Marti Wickham & Bill Franz, 2001 Plymouth Drive: A Duo of Lifetime Gardeners**

Marti and Bill designed their garden for seasonal color, with daffodils and tulips in early spring, daisies in late spring, coneflowers and butterfly weed in summer, and mums in the fall. They enjoy abundant wildlife in the form of bees, butterflies, orioles, and hummingbirds that are drawn in by their diverse plantings. Two favorite spots to view this garden, according to Marti, are sitting on the deck watching the pollinators sipping nectar from the cannas and hibiscus, and on the bench near the pondless waterfall. Hummingbird moths are attracted to the bee balm planted in that area. The perennials flowering in the area between Kimball Avenue and the front yard are truly lovely. Marti reports that this garden has gone from consisting of barberry bushes providing cover for rodents, and in turn black snakes, to the multi-flowered garden beds you see today. Black snakes still provide great rodent control, though. Favorite plants include family heirloom peonies, canna lilies, elephant ears, castor beans, coneflowers, milkweeds, and hosta. Marti reports that she must thin the perennials annually to keep them from overtaking neighboring plants. Look for the sedum and hens & chicks in the cracks between rock walls.

### **Molly Callaghan, 2436 Lookout Drive: A Pocket of Prairie**

A courtyard wall, initially functioning as a “garden room” tying the house to the yard outside, weakened with age, necessitating the renovation of the front porch garden. Molly wrestled with the idea of replacing it, and decided she enjoyed the view of her whole yard from the deck and picture window when inside. The front porch garden is still home to her courtyard penstemon and milkweed, as well as a Keyhole Garden that has compost in the center and plants around the perimeter. Keyhole gardens are used in arid climates to keep moisture in a raised bed. In 2016 native grasses were planted at the corner of the lot and gives a nod to the tallgrass prairie landscape that surrounds Manhattan. This pocket prairie contains big bluestem, little bluestem, switchgrass, Indiangrass, and milkweed. Two unusual plants in the pocket prairie are rattlesnake master and buffalo gourd. Molly has started a small patch of buffalograss in the backyard. The side yard has been home to chickens in the chicken tractor in the past. Gardening in earnest since she was in college, Molly loves experimenting with different gardening techniques and plants and encourages you to look for butterfly caterpillars and chrysalis on the milkweed and fennel.

### **Ursula Weiser, 811 Houston Street: Kansas Opened Up the World of Gardening**

A European-inspired garden is how Ursula describes her garden, but moving to Kansas about 10 years ago, when a friend got her interested in growing plants, opened up the world of gardening for her. Now she wouldn't want to live anywhere else! Patience and observation are the skills of a good gardener, Ursula reports. Initially, her small yard was barren, with depleted soil and limited sun during the growing season due to the tall trees and structures in the area. Small yards also tend to have water runoff due to grade issues, Ursula says, but this was solved by adding a stone bioswale, planting some groundcover plants, and mulching to slow down the water and protect the soil. She has many unique decorative items positioned around her garden, many from places she has lived or traveled to in the past, whether that is stateside or in Europe. Her favorite spot to view her garden is from the pergola seating area, where she can see the entire garden. She especially enjoys the water fountains and bird feeders. Her favorite plants are her peonies, roses, iris, lilac bush, asparagus ferns, and 'Royal Purple' smoke tree.

### **Cynthia & Cody Domenghini, 900 Fremont Street: Making the Garden Her Own**

The Domenghini's moved to this home and garden one year ago, and the "landscape was lovely" but some aspects weren't Cynthia's favorite. Therefore, she removed established plants to make this yard "her garden". She suggests you do the same: if something new in the landscape doesn't look right to you, dig it up and move it! Many upgrades to her current garden and additional plantings have occurred in the past year. It all started around the age of 10 when Cynthia's parents gave her a garden space in the yard surrounded by a white picket fence and she was bitten by gardening fever. She really enjoys designing the container planters on the front porch because they are a fun challenge for her creativity and she loves bringing plants into all of her family's living spaces. She reports that she's allowed her houseplant collection to "take over our home". Cynthia's favorite plants are purple coneflower, blue false indigo, bee balm, flowering dogwood, common yarrow, creeping phlox, 'Drinking Gourd' and 'Mouse Ears' hostas, 'Autumn Joy' sedum, "and a million others". Her favorite spots to view her garden are standing on the steps on the street corner to have a great front view, and sitting on the porch swing to view the backyard.

### **Jane & Rod Fox, 1905 Bluestem Terrace: A Literary Garden**

Jane and Rod will be presenting a Literary Garden, referring to plants mentioned by William Shakespeare, Agatha Christy, A.A. Milne, and more. Look for a mystery game related to the plants in the Literary Garden. Back in 2008 when the Foxes moved in, the garden was overgrown everywhere. Jane started moving plants based on their light needs. If a plant seems to be languishing in one spot, she moves it and hopes for the best, she says. Wanting to grow some vegetables in a mostly shady yard, Jane made a vegetable/flower garden on the corner by the street. The design of the house and garden seem to fit with Dr. van der Hoeven's "sense of place", in that each flow seamlessly together so when one is inside, it has an outside feel. The cedar siding on the outside ties the garden to the house. Rod's favorite spot is the path that runs beside the lawn and the herbs. Jane likes sitting on the lowest wooden terrace or lying in the hammock looking up at the hedge apple trees and the light filtering through the leaves. Other favorite plants are the hydrangeas, Solomon Seal, poppies, and the three begonias that Jane is sculpting into tree-like shapes. She was inspired by something similar she saw at the Chelsea Physic Garden in London last summer.