

Nature Scapes

Kansas State University Gardens, 1500 Denison Avenue

The K-State Gardens is an invaluable learning laboratory for K-State students and a welcoming place for visitors of all ages. Besides the plant material, there are sculptures, water features, and numerous arbors and benches located throughout the Gardens. The K-State Gardens are open to the public year-round with free admission and parking. Proceeds from this 35th annual garden tour support the Gardens. A new feature this year is that Extension Master Gardeners will be stationed at the Rose, Butterfly, and Cottage Gardens to talk about the collections and answer questions.

Susan and Hank Nelson, 3001 Pinewood Circle

The Nelson's invite you to enjoy Susan's "Stress-Free Zone" where the landscape is ever changing and, in Susan's words, "anything goes". Garden conditions, such as drought and shade tolerance of individual plants over the years, sometimes require a new location for those plants. There are many perennials along the backside of their lot, with the goal of having something in bloom all season long. Family heirlooms of peonies are among those plants, and roses have always been Susan's favorite. Since her first experience in middle school of putting in a flower garden, Susan has enjoyed designing her current garden for the past 19 years. One favorite viewing spot is from the far southeast corner where the Globe Willow is best seen. Close to the deck is their small pond, another favorite feature of the Nelson's.

Barb and Ron Meitler, 1736 Westbank Way

Barb and Ron enjoy their backyard – all the way down to Little Kitten Creek, which flows on the east edge of their property. From the beginning, the Meitler's have battled heavy clay soil in the front yard, and vinca vine covering the rocks lining the ledge to the creek. During the shelter-in-place time, Barb and her daughter discovered perennials beneath the removed vines. After that, the backyard came to life with the planting of more flowers all along that ledge. The addition of peat moss and mulch has resulted in the ability to grow a fescue lawn and flower beds with annuals and perennials in front of the house. The trail down to Little Kitten Creek that Ron and his children created is open to anyone on the tour today.

Tim Lindemuth, 500 Denison Avenue

This is Tim's fourth time to be on the tour, but the plants and other features continue to evolve. The English colonial garden, a copy of the Custis-Maupin House Garden in Colonial Williamsburg, Virginia, was a 14-year project finished in 2000. This year the area was designed in the style of Monet's Giverny garden in France, with the planting of four flower beds of plants, each with blooms of the same color – white, burgundy, yellow, and royal purple (for KSU). Another favorite area for Tim is his courtyard between the house and garage, where he can enjoy the outdoors in a secluded spot. Finally, his south lawn is an area for playing croquet rimmed with many different shade-loving perennials.

Doris Proudfoot, 1739 Fairchild Avenue

Doris has lived here less than four years but has greatly changed the landscape in that time. She enjoys planting beds with native perennials with the goal of having something in bloom for most of the spring, summer, and fall seasons. Small annuals are added for more color season long. Doris credits her mother for teaching her everything she knows about gardening and has some of her mother's irises as a reminder of that. A troublesome area is behind the garage where a sloped area was planted in ground covers to keep the soil from moving into the alley. Doris also enjoys the Japanese maples, hydrangeas, peonies, roses, and mums at the front and back of her home.

Kitra Cooper, 302 South Manhattan Avenue

Kitra inherited a wonderful screened-in back porch but a wildly overgrown backyard when she moved in 6 years ago. The hydrangeas to the east of the house, the spireas, golden cypress shrubs, and viburnums in front, the clematis by the back gate, the native flower bed, her renovated studio, along with her vegetables in raised beds, are the result of that reclamation process. The water garden was enlarged this spring and a waterfall was added to the enjoyment of both Kitra and the koi and goldfish. Don't miss the fairy garden under the tree by Pierre Street, which neighborhood children also enjoy by moving the figures and pieces around to suit their imaginations.

Collins Lane Community Gardens (1435 Collins Lane) & Riley Lane Community Gardens (703 S. 9th Street)

This year marks the 50th anniversary of the original Manhattan Community Gardens on Riley Lane. Begun in 1974 and coordinated with UFM Community Learning Center, the land was designated as green space by the City of Manhattan. Over time, the plot configuration has changed, but currently there are 130 plots on this site. In February 2012, the Collins Lane Gardens were opened through an agreement with Riley County. There are 150 plots available at this location. Both sites are governed by the Manhattan Community Gardens Board of Directors and UFM, and use an allotment system whereby community members pay a small rental fee to use one or more plots assigned specifically to them. Currently, 181 families enjoy gardening at one or both sites, and are made up of KSU students, faculty and staff, and community-at-large members.

