

Water & Whimsy

Christopher Renner, 508 Valley Drive

Christopher is a lifelong gardener. His parents maintained a large vegetable garden, which became part of his childhood “chores.” Their garden later included typical Kansas farm flowers. As a 4-H'er, Christopher did botany and forestry projects. He still has a collection of his mother's original peony plants.

After college, he moved to a rural village in southern Italy, where he rented a 10-acre farm with olive trees, various fruit trees, and grape vines. He also grew a vegetable garden and had a large collection of flowers. When he returned to the U.S. in 1998, he looked for a city lot to develop a garden. Luckily, he found a property that had been owned by a gardener. The patio is his favorite area. The upper terrace garden benches afford a great view of the south garden and the Kansas River Valley.

Il giardino dei sogni (Italian for the garden of dreams) is a national display garden for the American Hemerocallis Society with about 350 varieties of Hemerocallis (daylilies), along with iris, hostas, peonies, and other perennials.

His garden is built on a hillside. The south garden is easily accessible from the driveway. At the west end are three stone terraces – first terrace is peonies, second and third are daylilies. A stone stairway goes to the upper level with another daylily/iris bed, then walk north to another daylily/iris bed and down a short flight of stairs to the north garden, which is accessible from the street. It has a fairly steep incline, but there is beauty every step of the way.

Woodland Hills Neighborhood Curb Garden, 1013 Brierwood

The Woodland Hills Neighborhood Curb Garden at 1013 Brierwood shows what can be accomplished when friends and neighbors work together to beautify a neighborhood.

In 2008, Larry and Kay Weigel hired a professional landscaper to design a Xeriscape curb garden on their property. Adjacent property owners, Brandon and Michael Hoffman, didn't have free time to garden but offered their curbside for the project. Larry's friend, Andy Deckert joined the project in 2009. They spent many hours hauling in rock, amending the soil, and planting.

Andy planted 1,000 irises on the Brierwood side the first year. Next, they headed west on Sumac, which required lots of compost to enhance the soil. They planted

potatoes the first two years then added hundreds of ditch lilies, sedum, more iris, grasses, and catmint. Most of the plants came from the Deckert's garden on Amherst Circle. Others were donated by neighbors.

Just when they thought the project had become too large, Jeff Petersen moved into the neighborhood. As a retired chemistry professor and Riley County Extension Master Gardener, Jeff brought many enhancements and improvements to both the Sumac and Brierwood sides. Now the garden has taken on a new look that is maintained daily.

Whimsical items include a Triangulate Corner honoring Coach Tex Winter's triangular offense and items tucked away as surprise features, including a small Harry Truman statue and other knickknacks. Larry's favorite feature is the huge glacial erratic rock, and Kay has a fairy garden. They also have a waterfall feature with a fern garden nearby.

Linda and Don Glaser, 1510 Wyndham Heights

Linda inherited her love of gardening from her parents and grandparents. The Glasers grew their first vegetable garden in 1974. They now have four raised beds and enjoy growing the Kansas basics of tomatoes, herbs, beets, and cucumbers.

They built their current home 4½ years ago, so all the landscape is fairly young. Rothwell Landscape, Inc., worked closely with them on the design and construction, along with their youngest daughter, Deon, a K-State landscape architecture graduate. They are still learning what plants will be successful with the Manhattan weather patterns and climate.

Linda says she is inspired by the sense of calm that comes over her when working outside. "I literally lose track of time as I discover new shoots emerging in the spring, or delight at a challenge that was successful."

Some of their special collections include hydrangea, roses, and daylilies. Many of the plantings are specifically to support pollinators, including Russian sage, Goldsturm rudbeckia, butterfly milkweed, yarrow, autumn fire sedum, purple coneflower, joe pye weed, moonbeam coreopsis, may night blue salvia, gallardia, drift roses, Little Henry sweetspire, and lantana. they also have a wide variety of ornamental grasses throughout the landscape. They enjoy sitting on the patio and looking out at the lantana when they are covered with painted lady butterflies.

Linda volunteers as a “Purple Thumb” at the K-State Gardens, and Don serves on The Gardens Board.

Roger and Kathy Lanksbury, 5508 Enclave Ridge Circle

Roger says his mother instilled his interest in plants. She always had a garden and particularly liked lilacs. He has designed landscaping for his homes for about 50 years and installed hardscape and plants, but he doesn't consider himself a gardener. Lately, he has become interested in photographing the flowers and pollinators attracted to their garden.

Their property had basic landscaping when they bought it four years ago. Their vision included taking advantage of the slope from the front yard to the backyard by installing a meandering stream with waterfalls and a pond with fish and lily pads. Blueville has helped them achieve their vision. To allow access to the deck from the yard without going into the house, they designed a stairway and had the deck expanded. They also sketched out what they wanted for a new patio. A collection of sculptures (mainly bronze, stone, and wind) enhance the garden aesthetics.

Their favorite part is the stream with the waterfalls and the pond. The view and sounds are very peaceful, and they enjoy watching the fish in the pond from the seating area by the fire pit.

Originally, they had the area behind the fence cleared of vegetation and seeded with prairie grass and wildflowers. Last year, they added a winding path down into that area and included several sitting stones and a flowering tree. This year, they are adding some additional plants to the area.

Kirk and Betty Wilson, 2151 Blue Hills Road

The Wilsons have been gardening for as long as they can remember. They began with vegetables and started growing flowers about 30 years ago. They moved into their current location in 1997.

Kirk had always wanted a pond. Betty was apprehensive but agreed to him starting the project. As the project developed, she got enthusiastic. When their children started leaving the house about 2000, they decided they needed a hobby to share and chose to take took the Master Gardener classes together.

They decided on a water garden in their backyard surrounded with annual and perennial flowers. To make sure the yard looked natural, they collected rocks in the area for two years before starting. It took many years of trial and error to find plants that suited their conditions.

Betty planned their garden to have new plants blooming throughout the summer. They enjoy having something different all the time. Even though the project started more than 20 years ago, they still get excited about gardening every year. Their garden is handicap accessible.

“We tried to arrange everything so we could enjoy it from our patio,” said Kirk. “They enjoy all the seasons but especially the spring. A stream connects the two ponds with plants growing next to and into the stream. We enjoy it all--the birds, bees, frogs, Koi fish, and flowers.”

Steve and Jane Amy, 611 Adam Drive, Wamego

Steve and Jane have created a collector’s garden, which includes more than 800 different daylily cultivars. When they moved there in 1986, they planted shrubs and trees. The trees matured and shaded the garden, so they purchased the adjacent lots to devote space to sun-loving daylilies, iris (tall bearded and Siberian), peonies, liliium and many perennials plus a few annuals.

As a National Display Garden for daylilies, every daylily has a name label containing the registered name of the plant, hybridizer’s name, and the year it was registered. They grow daylilies from hybridizers around the United States. Most of the daylilies in the front yard were introduced within the last few years.

The backyard has more than 200 hosta and shade-loving perennials plus three water features. The original water garden was recently converted to a hosta bed. There are 11 Lyman Whittaker wind sculptures, numerous bird houses, and decorative peace poles throughout the yard.

You enter the south lot through an arbor to find hundreds of daylilies, liliium, peonies, and perennials. The center contains a daylily bed devoted to the plants hybridized in Kansas, Missouri, and Oklahoma, which is their region of the American Hemerocallis Society. The miniature daylily collection is around the fountain. They also have a bed dedicated to Oz-themed plants. The entire yard contains almost 200 different liliium including martagons, orientals, asiatics, and orienpets. In the spring, they have more than 100 different peonies and hundreds of daffodils in bloom.

Kansas State University Gardens

The Gardens are an invaluable learning laboratory for K-State students and a welcoming place for visitors of all ages.

The southern end includes three separate gardens. The Cottage Garden near the Quinlan Visitor Center is modeled after an 18th century English country garden. The Adaptive/Native Garden mimics natural areas throughout Kansas and the Great Plains. The Butterfly Garden creates a habitat for butterflies and caterpillars. The Insect Zoo in the old dairy barn offers an interactive experience for visitors to get up close and personal with live creepy crawlies. There is an admission fee for the Insect Zoo.

The Conservatory Garden on the northern end features four perennial collections that bloom at different times: Iris (April – June), Peony (May – June), Daylily (June – July) and Rose (May – June). Annual flowers, trees, flowering bushes and vines, herbs, fruits and vegetables guarantee continuous color and visual interest throughout the seasons. Flint Hills Daylily Society members will be hosting Daylily Daze at The Gardens that day from 9 a.m. to noon.

In addition to plant material, The Gardens also have water features, native limestone, sculptures, with arbors and benches dispersed throughout. A kaleidoscope on the east side of the Conservatory is a recent addition. Visitors can view plants through its two mirrored tubes that turn and create different patterns and colors. It was purchased with proceeds from previous Manhattan Garden Tours. The Gardens are open to the public year-round with free admission and parking.