

July 2014 Beauty Spot

Summer is in full force, and despite the hot weather, Country Club Hills neighbors have been busy working in their yards. We are delighted to award the July 2014 Beauty Spot of the Month to Georgia Laxton and Laura Downey of 3500 Spring Lake Terrace, whose hard work is evident all over their “work in progress” corner lot.

When we were selecting this yard for July’s Beauty Spot, Laura happened to be letting their dogs out into their fenced-in yard; she took some time to chat with us. We learned a bit about the sustainability principles that are so very important to both Laura and her mother, Georgia. They use organic compost as plant fertilizer and do not use any chemicals on the lawn. Laura commented that the lawn may have a lot of clover in it, but at least there are no chemicals running off into the Chesapeake Bay. (From a sustainability standpoint, the clover is drought resistant, has the ability to convert nitrogen into a natural fertilizer, and if allowed to grow produces small white flowers that attract pollinators such as bees, butterflies, and beneficial insects that prey on garden pests.) Everything in this yard has a practical purpose.

One of the first things we noticed is how neatly the beds are groomed. This is accomplished with a combination of brown mulch and white river rocks. The mulch helps protect the plants and keeps the weeds at bay, and the river rocks provide definition to the shape of the beds, add contrast and texture to the garden, and help slow water runoff on the hills.

The driveway (on Spring Lake Terrace) is flanked by well-established maple trees that provide some much-needed shade on these hot summer days. Around the roots of the maple tree to the left of the driveway, there is a bed with a large pottery urn and a lariope garden. The urn provides a lovely focal point, and the lariope provides a grassy spot that does not require mowing, thereby protecting the lawn mower from the exposed tree roots.

At the top of the driveway there’s a good bit of shade from overhanging trees—a perfect spot for a hosta garden featuring several different varieties combining to create lots of visual interest with minimal effort. There is also a row of three small rhododendrons that will eventually grow tall enough to provide a beautiful privacy screen.

To the left of the driveway and around the front of the house, there are white river rocks against the base of the house and assorted shrubbery including English yew and azaleas, as well as lariope and fern plantings in the beds.

Continuing around toward the Cornwall side of the property, along the fence, there is a burst of orange provided by the blooming daylilies swaying in the breeze. At the corner of Spring Lake Terrace and Cornwall, a beautiful rose bush covered in lush red blooms is the centerpiece of a forthcoming cutting garden. (The stakes in the ground on either side of the rose bush indicate the parameters of the bed.) There are several beds along the fence on Cornwall, including a berry garden with fruit ripening on the vines of the strawberry plants and blackberry brambles; in the north corner, a group of red twig dogwoods with variegated leaves grows.

Probably the bed that is the most interesting and unique to passersby is the small garden shaped like a square along the fence on Cornwall. This is called a Knot Garden; it is a formal garden pattern dating back to the Renaissance period and very popular during the reign of Queen Elizabeth I of England. Georgia is growing her square with an outline of dwarf boxwoods and firepower nandina. She is very knowledgeable about this form of gardening and can tell you much more about it.

Whether you are a beginning or experienced gardener, this yard has something for everyone to appreciate. Everywhere you look, there is a different gardening idea expressed, making this yard an inspiring lesson for all of us.

Respectfully Submitted, Jennifer Judelsohn with Joyce Skoglund for Country Hills Garden Club