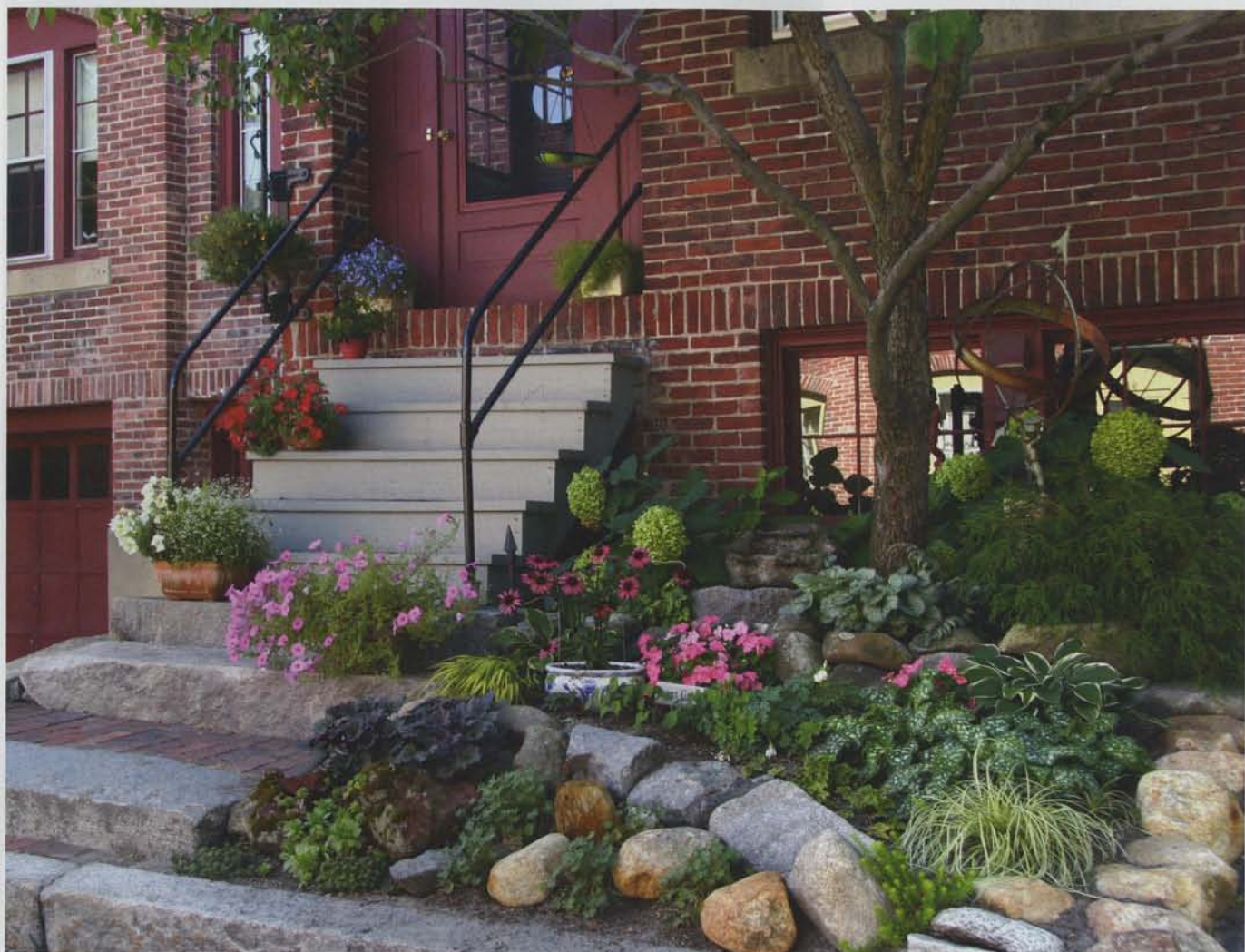


## GARDEN Rx



PHOTOGRAPHY BY MARY ANN RUEL

## Pockets of Paradise

BY ROBIN SWEETSER

PHOTOGRAPHY BY JOHN W. HESSION AND MARY ANN RUEL

A variety of plants in different sizes and shapes—along with some design savvy—combine to create beautiful gardens in small spaces.

THOSE OF US WHO DOWNSIZE OUR LIVES AND MOVE INTO SMALLER HOMES may find our space for gardening downsized as well. But don't let a lack of room cramp your gardening style. A well-designed small garden can be every bit as beautiful and fun as a large one. Plus, there's another benefit to a small garden: It can be more manageable.

Garden designer Ginger Wells-Kay of Garden Artisans in Belmont says whether your space is large or small, good design starts with function. "I always ask questions like 'How do you want to use your garden?' or 'How will the garden enhance your life?' We try to understand the spirit of the place, what makes it unique, and what we should emphasize or protect."



**THIS PAGE:** Maine coon cat Barrington keeps an eye on things in Priscilla Eames's garden where yellow lysimachia vies for territory with the pink bells of *Campanula punctata*.

**FACING PAGE:** This handsome city garden designed by Marion Jacobi proves that good things can come in small packages.

PHOTOGRAPHY BY JOHN W. HESSION

In the South End neighborhood of Portsmouth, these questions have been fully answered by two neighbors who are growing quintessential pocket gardens—one sunny, the other shady—but each an expression of its owner.

### SHADY SUCCESS

Priscilla Eames, a lifelong gardener and Portsmouth Garden Club member, was the originator of Portsmouth's popular Festival of Trees. She now lives in a restored farmhouse and barn complex that includes five condos, each with its own patch of ground. Eames says when she moved in, the area around her patio was like a black hole, without any sun. "We took down an overgrown arborvitae

and an old cherry tree to let in a little more light," Eames says. "Even so, it is still quite shady, but hostas thrive there."

A border of inkberries (*Ilex glabra*)—native shrubs that keep their leaves year-round—gives her added privacy. "I have a 'Miss Kim' lilac, a larger double white lilac and a nice big holly. There are cypress and cedar under the kitchen window for more winter color, and rhodies and clematis beside the front door," Eames says.

Though Eames's garden is small, it has color all season—starting early in the spring with lots of flowering bulbs. She prefers perennials to annuals, and her garden includes daylilies, phlox

that blossom for weeks, sedum 'Autumn Joy' and late-flowering purple asters.

One fun plant she grows is gooseneck loosestrife (*Lysimachia clethroides*). In a garden with more room, it could run rampant and become a nuisance, but here it has filled a shady spot between the driveway and stone wall, where it is contained and grows like a hedge. "It is wonderful in late summer," she says.

In the sunniest part of the garden Eames grows 'Knock-out' roses. "The colors are vibrant," she says, "and they bloom all summer long if deadheaded."

For a successful garden in a small space, Eames advises listening to nature and not fighting your site. "You have to



Next door to Priscilla Eames's Portsmouth house, Drake—a West Highland terrier who lives with Ursula and Philip Wright—enjoys basking in the sun on their patio. Apricot David Austin roses complement the purple and yellow violas.

PHOTOGRAPHY BY JOHN W. HESSON

work with what you have," she states matter-of-factly. "Keep it simple and don't overplant."

One of the advantages to her site is the water view. Making the most of "borrowed landscape" helps to visually enlarge any small space.

#### VERTICAL GARDENING

Ursula Wright says the garden that she and her husband, Philip, maintain is minute as a postage stamp. "When we moved in, it was just a small lawn with overgrown bushes and a crooked tree. People thought we were nuts when we ripped it all out to make the garden," she says.

To create privacy for their yard, the couple planted a mix of trees and shrubs along the street side to act as a green fence. The height and structure of beautiful flowering trees like 'Stellar' dogwood, 'Yellow Bird' magnolia and lavender lilacs draw the eye skyward. A variety of evergreens—including a spreading cedar and slow-growing mugo pine—adds winter interest.

Wright advises other small-gardeners to "go vertical." She has a

climbing hydrangea, four varieties of clematis and a Monet arch supporting two climbing yellow roses. She also warns against overdoing it. "You don't need a lot of annuals. Pick plants that you love and that will do well in your situation," she says.

Space may be in short supply but Wright's creativity is boundless. "Though it doesn't look like a designer garden, people are surprised by how much it feels like a larger garden even in such a small space," she says.

#### TIPS TO MAKE THE MOST OF SMALL SPACE

Award-winning garden designer Marion Jacobi of The Divine Gardener in Hooksett says: "When space is at a premium, every inch counts. Foliage and texture are even more important than flowers."

Although you might not think you have room for a meandering path, Jacobi says: "The shortest distance between two points is a straight line. So to create the illusion that the garden is bigger, have curving paths. If the walkway has to be straight, make it narrower toward the back, an artist's trick that



White roses and pink yarrow backed by ornamental grasses add color and dimension to a tiny garden spot. The vintage birdbath invites wildlife in for a drink while providing a focal point amid the lush plantings in Ursula and Phillip Wright's back yard.

creates the illusion of depth, so the path appears longer.”


Wells-Kay believes strongly in organic landscaping practices to make a safe place for your family and pets as well as for the birds, insects and other wildlife attracted to the garden. “I like to carefully choose plants for a pocket garden to ensure that each player does double- or even triple-duty in the landscape,” she says. Shrubs chosen as pocket garden centerpieces should give four seasons of interest with flowers, fruit, fall color and winter structure.”

Here are some other landscaping

tricks to help you maximize your small garden space:

- *Use dwarf plants whenever possible.* Jacobi uses them to pack more plant diversity into a tiny space. Dwarf conifers have the added benefit of looking great all winter, too. Jacobi prefers *Chamaecyparis*, which are not only evergreen but come in all shapes, sizes, colors and textures, giving a lot of variety within one species.
- *Pay close attention to plant heights.* Even a fairly narrow border has room for short, medium and tall plants. Wells-Kay encourages thinking of the garden

as a multi-layered community of plants.

- *Use colors to create an illusion of depth.* Warm, bright colors—such as yellow, pink, orange and red—at the front of the border leap out, making the plants seem closer than they really are. Cool colors—such as blue and purple—appear to recede into the background, creating a feeling of more space.
- *Use flowers, fruits and vegetables to create an integrated landscape.* Wells-Kay suggests incorporating herbs for cooking and scent as well as to attract pollinators to the garden. Many edible plants—such as red leaf lettuce or alpine strawberries—are decorative and tasty. Blueberry bushes make a nice hedge, giving you berries for your morning cereal and to share with the birds. Wells-Kay recommends the mid-height blueberries, such as ‘North Country’ and ‘North Sky’. For an even smaller area, she suggests a dwarf blueberry such as ‘Top Hat’.
- *Use containers to showcase plants on walkways, stairs, patios and porches.* Jacobi says this is an easy way to add a pop of color to draw the eye; since pots are portable, you can move them around as needed. Fragrant flowers or herbs in hanging baskets bring the scent up to nose level where it can be enjoyed. Hang window-boxes under every window, even on a garage or shed. 

## RESOURCES

### GARDEN ARTISANS

66 Cotton Hill Road  
Belmont, NH 03220  
524-8607  
gardenartisans.net

### THE DIVINE GARDENER

3 Alderwood Court  
Hooksett, NH 03106  
626-7729  
divinegardener.com

### ROLLING GREEN NURSERY

64 Breakfast Hill Road  
Greenland, NH 03840  
436-2732  
rollinggreennursery.com

## TWENTIETH ANNUAL PORTSMOUTH POCKET GARDEN TOUR

For small-garden inspiration, mark your calendars and plan to attend this year's Pocket Garden Tour in Portsmouth.

Homeowners open their small gardens to the public Friday, June 19, 5–8 p.m., and Saturday, June 20, 9 a.m.–3 p.m., rain or shine. This is the twentieth year of the tour, which began as a fundraiser for a renovation of the South Church's garden. The self-guided tour includes demonstrations by artists, performances by musicians and refreshments at selected gardens. There is a plant sale at the church, located at 292 State Street. Tickets are \$17 in advance or \$20 the day of the tour.

Call 436-4762 or log on to southchurch-uu.org for more information.