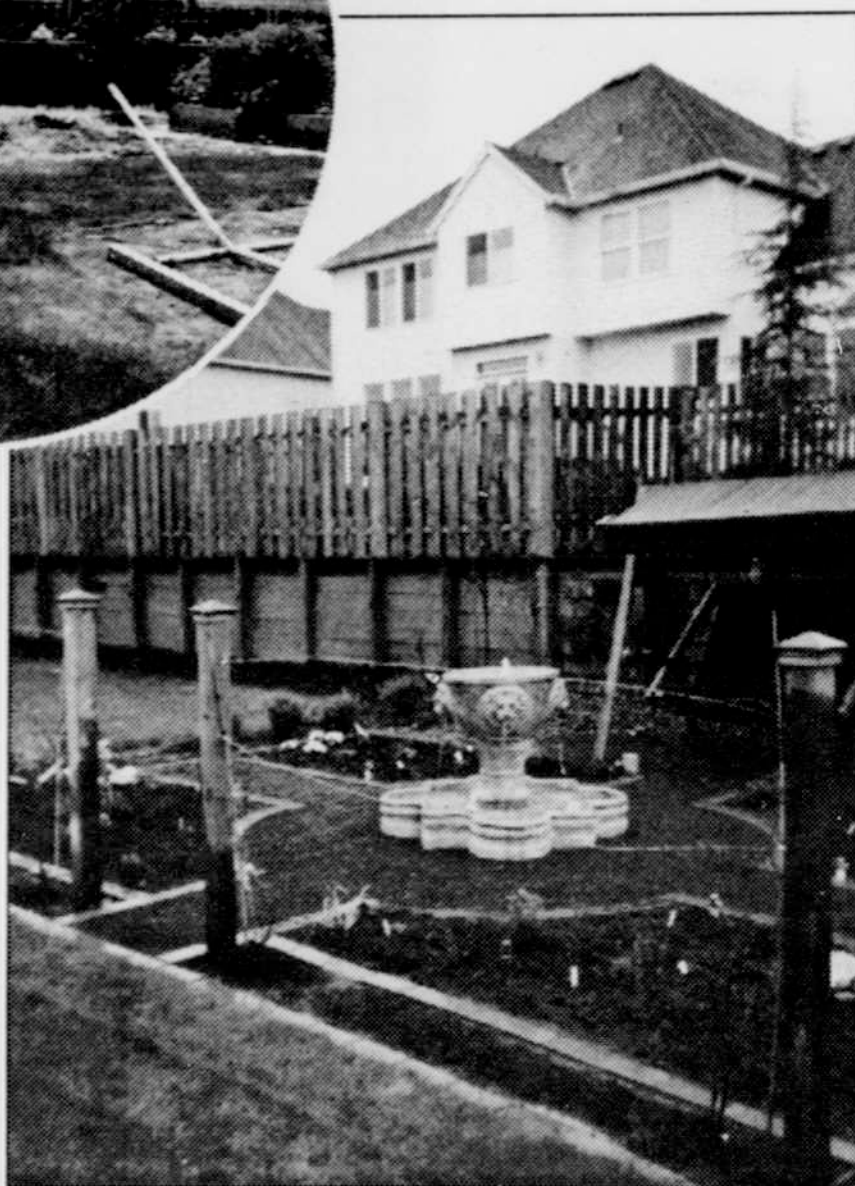


Getting Down and Dirty Continued from Page 23



Before (inset): The blank canvas that was Bob Mensel's back yard. After: Mensel and his partner wanted a Euro feel, so they hired Don Davidson to lay out a formal planting area surrounding a classic fountain. This is just the start of something big

TIP:
Recycle overgrown shrubs with careful, extensive pruning; it also revitalizes the plant.



PHOTOS BY DON DAVIDSON

Should your garden fantasies involve extensive "hardscaping"—masonry, water features, paths, fences and other structures—then Don Davidson might be your man. Now in his 20th season as a landscaper, Davidson does it all. He's an arborist and both a master gardener and a master pruner, but he really digs the butch stuff.

"I love construction and rock work, that's my forte," he says enthusiastically.

One way he keeps his work affordable is that he prefers to dry-set his rock walls. Each rock is handpicked and embedded in the soil. (Stone stairs are an exception; they are cemented.)

As another cost-saver, Davidson is happy to guide clients who want to be involved in the work themselves. He also provides a free consultation and estimate on the spot. And since his partner, Bill Dart, has a degree in construction engineering, he can do blueprints if needed for building permits.

Obviously a resourceful guy, Davidson says he "likes to recycle what's around." He also has a sensitive, spiritual connection to gardening, and says that when pruning he communes with a plant in order to reveal its true beauty.

He's also fond of extreme challenges. When one client complained of a bothersome streetlight that shined into her bedroom at night, Davidson hung a stained-glass window high up in a tree to obscure the glare.

Davidson likes saving his clients money. He'll take them plant shopping at nurseries, where they benefit from his on-the-spot advice and avoid costly mistakes. (Many gardeners have been seduced by expensive, showy tropical vines, only to see them die the same year because they weren't suited to the location.)

When it comes to sprinkler systems, less is more. Money can also be saved by installing a microsystem, which requires less digging, needs

no building permit and "is more earth-friendly," Davidson says.

TIP:
Save money by being patient. Select four-inch plants instead of larger, more mature specimens. Just be sure to space accordingly and allow room for growth.

"I like to work for our community," Davidson proclaims, adding that's why he calls his company Pride Landscape Maintenance.

He is happy to maintain the gardens he designs, as well as ones he hasn't, and is able to keep his charges at \$35 per hour because he has low overhead and a small crew.

"I expect to have my customers for life—I give great service at a fair price," says the fellow whose motto is: "Proudly serving the queens of the Pacific Northwest."

Perhaps you have a tangle of neglected trees and shrubs and all you need is some enlightened guidance.

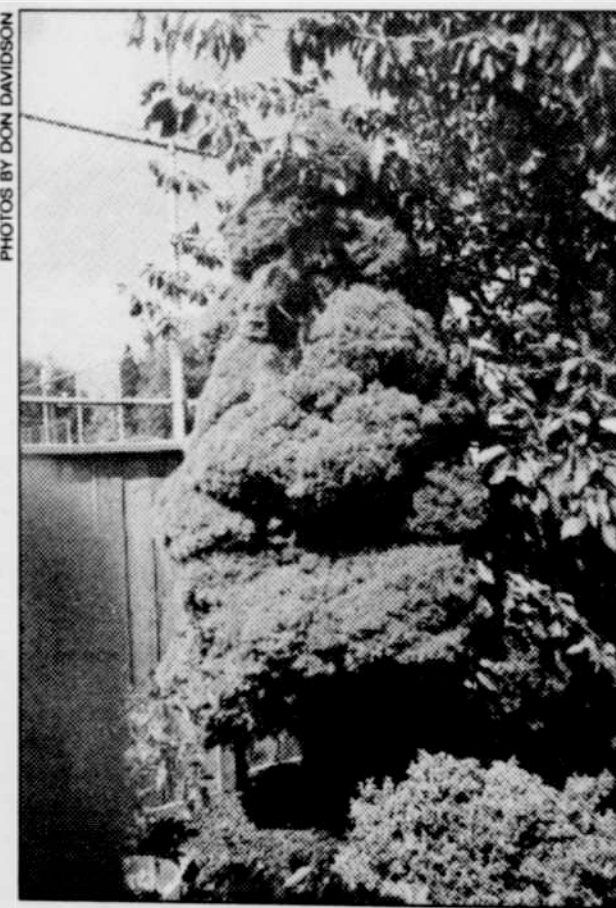
Julie Gates calls her company Garden Transformations, and her specialty is pruning. Best of all, she loves to

teach others to do it themselves. Gates, who has a degree in horticulture and is a certified arborist, has been pruning for 20 years and teaching for five. She gives both private and group lessons and teaches at Portland Community College and other locations.

Gates is particularly bothered by the insensitive hacking and topping that she sees people doing in an effort to control their landscape. Instead, she emphasizes the aesthetics of fine pruning and the health of the plant through preventive removal of dead or decayed wood. She feels her personalized instruction "helps one see, understand and enjoy working with the natural forms and rhythms of plant growth."

Julie Gates' Pruning Tips

- Prune from the inside out and the bottom up.
- Identify the growth pattern, reveal the natural form.
- Remove dead wood first.
- Make major cuts first, details last.
- Thin out crowded, redundant and crossing branches.
- Step back periodically and view your work from all sides.
- Use only sharp, clean, adjusted, oiled tools.



Before (left): Will the real Alberta spruce please come out? After: Newly pompommed by Don Davidson, this old tree went from marked-for-death to a specimen worth \$800

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