

Gardening Visions & Letting It Be

The garden I have now began 13 years ago, when my partner and I bought our Craftsman house in North Portland's Portsmouth neighborhood and put down roots—literally. The house had been on a double lot, and what had been the garden would eventually, over the course of a year, become our neighbor's house. Living next to a year of construction is not something I'd do again. But this first year gave me the opportunity to see how we traveled through the house, how the light shone on parts of the expansive lawn and where rain fell and puddled in areas around the house. I had big dreams. A garden full of blousy flowers, romantic scents and frosted with blooms. Green grass paths that wandered through a lush oasis, birds everywhere and space to play, entertain and relax.

I recently dug out those plans, pieced together with graph paper and taped-up photographs. The street trees we wisely planted that first year, thanks to Friends of Trees (friendsoftrees.org), are tiny, spindly things in those photos. We had planted them both in celebration of Portland's legacy of wonderful street trees and to be a part of the urban canopy, and because the majority of our garden could use a buffer from the hot, relentless exposure on the west side of the house. The only things that were surviving out that way were heat lovers like lavender, and the vision of oasis would need some help.



the sassy gardener BY LEANN LOCHER

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I look out the window today at those street trees, Pacific Sunset Maples. This time of year they are beginning to leaf out, and it looks like this is the year they'll become as tall as our two-story house. The grass pathways I had envisioned turned to mud as the shade began to creep in from our plantings, and this year they will all be gone, replaced with a cedar chip pathway. This pathway now leads through what I call "the woodland garden," and thinking about how it was originally the hot dry magnet makes me laugh a little.

Not being afraid to change it up some—whether if it's because your tastes and visions change or because there are changes in your landscape such as new buildings or growing trees—is something I've come to embrace more and more the past several years. It's so easy to hang on to a vision that's unattainable

and never be completely successful in the end product. Gardening requires flexibility because face it: You can't control nature. You can't control if the summer is going to top out at a few 80 degree days (oh lord, let this summer not be like the last) and you can't control a bad outbreak of powdery mildew covering your squash, cucumbers and roses. There are things about gardening that simply require patience, and an ability to "let it be."

I've been stepping back from the garden and looking at it with a new eye lately. Through time our garden beds have become garden rooms, built on year by year but disjointed from each other. This has come through a passion and excitement of trying new things but, in the end, it's not particularly pleasing. This year, the unifying aspect will be the winding woodchip walk, and flower beds with enough stepping stone pathways through them to allow me to get to the plants and weeds for tending. The lawn will finally be shaped into a beautiful oval, the front will finally have an entrance from the street to the front walk without having to tread across grass and errant dog poop, but everything else may be up for fresh thinking. What to put in the front corner? Either a crazy com-

bination of echiums from Cistus Nursery (cistus.com) or a wine bottle art tree? Who knows? My vision may change, and that is quite all right—I'm letting it be.

Get garden inspired:

This month brings a couple opportunities to get inspired in the garden. (You just missed the **Clackamas County Master Gardener's Spring Garden Fair**; learn more year-round at clackamascountymastergardeners.org.)

Visit an open garden: LoneSomeVille Studio Spring Open Gardens and Studio Sale. Portland's most romantic and private garden opens once a year. Stroll the acre garden and get first dibs on sales from their garden-inspired pottery. Sat., May 28, 10 a.m.-4 p.m.; 5006 SE Long St., Portland; lonesomeville.com.

Visit one of our amazing public gardens: Crystal Springs Rhododendron Garden. It's the time of year when azaleas and rhododendrons begin to scream with color, and there's no better place to take it all in than this Southeast Portland public garden. April 1-Sept. 30, 6 a.m.-10 p.m.; SE 28th and Woodstock Blvd.; \$3 admission from 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. Thurs.-Mon., March through Labor Day; 503-771-8386. ☐

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