

Landscaper: Three cats that live with Fugitt were involved in his plan

Continued from Page B1

game, I just really enjoy putting my efforts into my own place. That's not to say that as a good neighbor, I'm not going to help somebody out or give them ideas or help them with something little. But as a business, I'm not really interested in that anymore."

He's discovering every day how gratifying it is to work at turning his formerly drab yard into an enjoyable paradise. "Before," he described, "it was just a fire pit and a whole bunch of grass. I had to dig up all the old lawn to make planting beds. For an old guy with a grub hoe, that's a lot of work."

Two years ago, Fugitt suffered a major heart attack, so he admits to not being able to accomplish tasks at lightning speed. He knows his limitations, so he decided it was all right to do small sections of the yard at a time and that's how he kept from being overwhelmed both mentally and physically.

He said it's an ongoing transformation and every time he walks outside in the morning to stop and stare as he sips a cup of coffee, he gets new ideas. "One of the things I've been blessed with is to see something that isn't there and to picture it not only as it looks now, but what it will look like in five or even 20 years."

And he stays flexible in his thinking. Nothing in his yard is set in stone. "I just watch it develop as it goes and I'm always changing things." One forgiving aspect about landscaping, he stressed, is "You put a plant in some place and that can change. Some are a little finicky and they don't like to be moved a lot," but he said that most will adapt to a location modification. If where you planted them doesn't work or you decide you don't like it where it is, Fugitt said, "Move it."

The arbor takes shape

In addition to digging up and removing the old lawn, Fugitt decided to go to work on an inviting focal point, an arbor at the front of the yard. The idea for this had been germinating long before the project even started. During walks to the beach and back, just a few short blocks from his Park Avenue corner house, he said, "I noticed that down on the approach to the beach, somebody had cut down some shore pines



His Three Musketeer cats (Henry, John and Milton, all teenagers) "helped a lot" in the whole landscaping process, according to John Fugitt. Here, Henry sits on a front porch bench and demands attention.

and left them stacked there in kind of burn piles. They never removed them."

Every time he walked by, he thought, "They have some nice lines to them." He saw endless creative possibilities, especially since he wanted to achieve a natural look in his yard project. And one of the perks was that these branches had been there drying for a couple years and probably wouldn't shrink or crack if he used them.

Fugitt doesn't like driving his vehicle on the beach, so one at a time on foot, he started dragging the branches home, up and over the hill by Pacific Pines State Park, after his beach visits. He neatly stacked them alongside the north side of his house.

"There was a method to my madness," he explained with a smile. "I was gathering for a reason and this ended up being the reason."

When he began using the gathered material on the arbor, he said, "I grabbed a couple of branches, clipped off some little pieces and put them on the sides." He stood back and looked, deciding

he really liked this. "It was support for the arbor and support for plants. Perfect lines. I did the same with the top and pieced it all together with little pieces of wood. I decided I liked it so much, I'd do the same thing on the fence."

He did use some screws for some attaching. He prefers those to nails. But as often as possible, to achieve that natural look, he relied on weaving the branches. "It's fun, because you play with how they fit together." He pointed to a branch on an upright post on the left side of the arbor's rail. "It has two little horns that interlock right there in front. They happen to lop right over each other and hold that (rail) together."

Around the bend

Still striving for the natural look, Fugitt created paths that curved. No straight geometric designs here. He said that curves, "are softer lines. Straight lines are hard. It's all about the effect you want to have." He finds these curved paths to be inviting and are, "always asking you to look around the corner."

compresses and is commonly used for paths and driveways. He purchased it locally, at Peninsula Landscape Supply.

Art everywhere

Fugitt likes the look of what he calls, "goofy garden art," and has used it a great deal. There is an old boot resting on top of a tree stump. It has plants inside. Alongside one of the paths is a mosaic birdbath created by Barger. She also made a little fairy garden and it is nestled in some plants near the same path.

Then, there are the big pieces, two metal steel balls in the plant areas. "They're actually 130-pound Russian fishing floats." He said he dragged one from a beach and the other is from a garage sale. He and Barger (who he also calls his perpetual fiancée) go to a lot of garage sales and keep their eyes open for yard art.

Just dig it

Fugitt's yard transformation is a motivation for others who want to try sprucing up their own landscaping. He encourages people to give it a try.

"Get yourself a book," he suggested, especially when it comes to choosing and locating plants. But he said to not be afraid to dive in and try. He said with designing a yard, there is no right or wrong way.

"You just need to real-

ize what you want to use the area for. That's the biggest decision in landscaping that you'll make. Is it going to be for recreation or family? Or are you just going to look at it through your window? Are you going to partake in it? You decide what activities are going to be involved and you design it accordingly."

Feline support

Three cats that live with Fugitt were involved in his plan. He put down hemlock bark in his flower beds. "I thought it might keep the cats from pooping in my garden, but no. They still love it. That's all right, because it's their garden, too."

Henry, Mike and Milton are all teenage kitties and set in their ways.

Reap the rewards

Landscaping and gardening, according to Fugitt, "are relaxing. People come by and it's a conversation piece. It brings community together."

Often sitting outside with his cup of java, Fugitt doesn't hesitate to answer questions of passersby. And one thing that Barger said describes his friendly demeanor? "He is so kind and has such a good heart. And he's so honest. He exemplifies all the good qualities that people should have, but that you don't see much nowadays."

And he sure doesn't mind getting his hands dirty.

For the surface of each path, he used three-quarters minus gravel. It's a crushed rock with fines. It firmly

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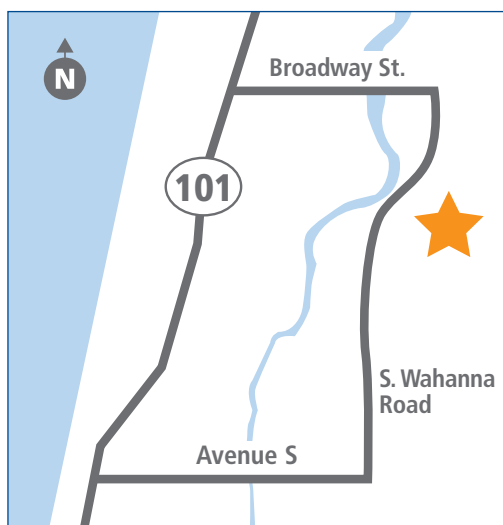
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