

MUST-HAVE TIPS for Beautiful Gardens Year After Year | 4

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**From Small to
Tall, There's
a Bearded Iris
for Your Border**

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Small Garden, Big Show

Fill a compact space with tons of spring flowers and foliage.

Container gardens, windowboxes, hanging baskets and rail planters are all creative solutions for adding color in a small yard. Barbara and Rex Sessions took advantage of all these ways to get more garden space around their home in zone 5, Chicago, Illinois, where a standard lot measures just 125×25 feet.

A SPECIAL EXPANSION But when the unique opportunity to purchase a vacant lot behind theirs arose, the couple decided to take it. The extra space gave them the chance to create an outdoor living room and areas for their children to play and spend more time outside, as well as the garden you see in photo 1.

This garden's not just for the family's enjoyment, though. Neighbors on the street this lot faces, who'd only known it as an empty lot for years, now get to enjoy the pretty garden, too.

On this end of the property, the garden also works to screen the rest of the yard from the street. This gives some privacy to the living and playing areas that lie beyond the arbors. For a better understanding of the yard's layout and how to tie any space together, no matter its size, turn the page.

STUNNING IN SPRING

The garden, while small, is filled with vivid-colored flowers and foliage, as well as a variety of textures and shapes. This way, it has the most impact, right beside the city sidewalk.



1 | This wrought-iron fence creates a boundary, but plenty of space between the pickets allows air to circulate and passersby to get a glimpse of the garden, which feels welcoming — not closed off.



2 | **Your choice in hardscaping** links your home and garden closely together, but their style and material can also bring harmony to the whole neighborhood.

Stepping into the garden

Creating a cohesive design and feel in the garden was important to the Sessions, especially since this area is separated from the house. To accomplish this, they worked with Jeff Goulette of Chicago-based architect firm Sullivan, Goulette & Wilson, Ltd., who also designed their home. He focused on hardscaping to make all the outdoor rooms, including the garden, a continuous space.

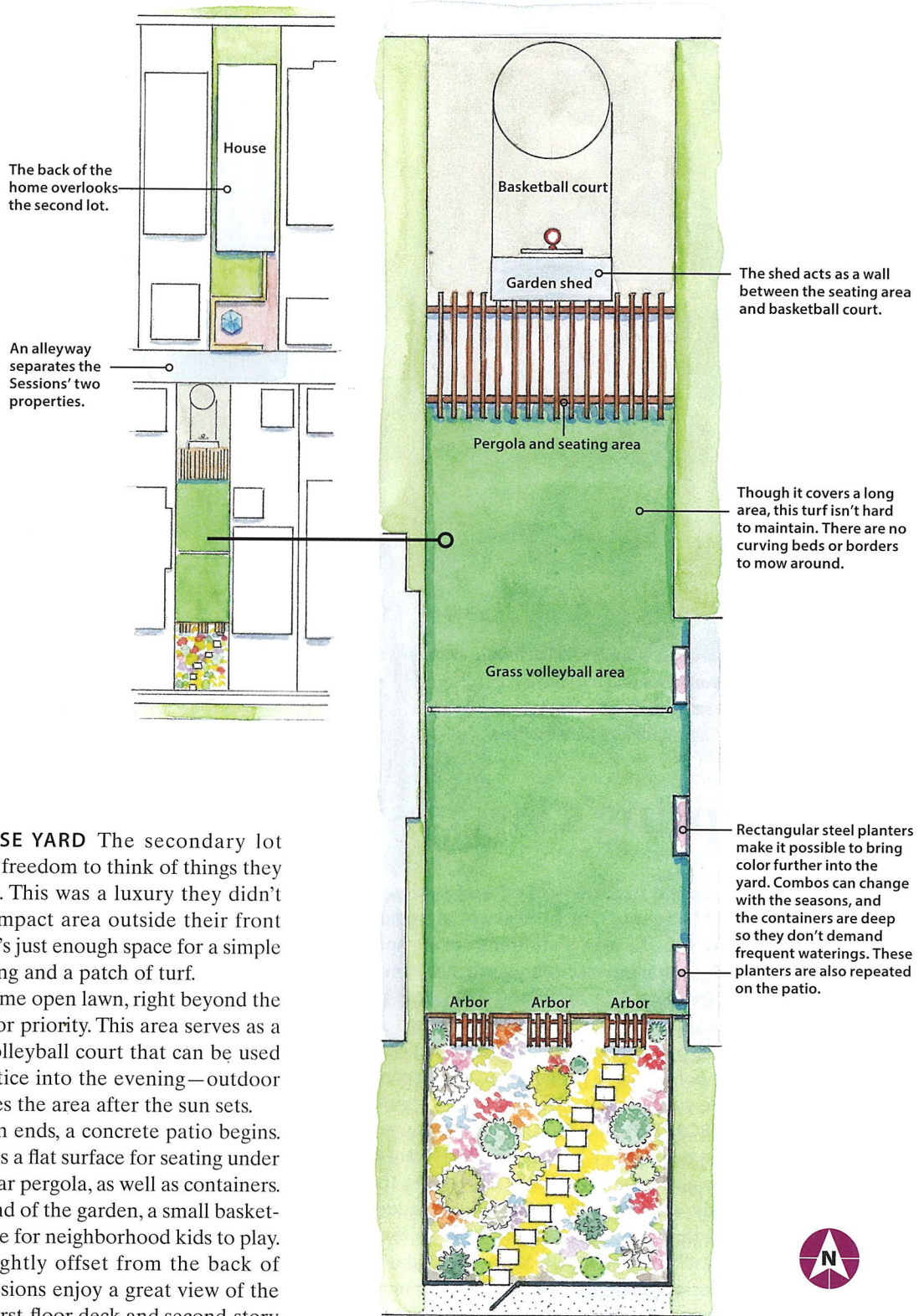
PRACTICAL (AND BEAUTIFUL) CHOICES To tie your yard and home together, start by selecting elements that repeat the construction of your house, whether it's through material, color or style. Here, most of the design details have a classic feel, echoing the home itself.

The garden doesn't look too formal or traditional, though. A path of concrete slabs is set into the ground diagonally, as you can see in photo 2. This walkway, a modern touch, is meant to be

casual and inviting. Its purpose, first and foremost, is to provide a relaxing passage through the garden and under the arbor. Instead of running on a straight line, the slanted path slows one's steps, encouraging awareness of surroundings. That its placement makes the garden seem deeper than it really is, 27×25 feet, is an added bonus.

Reliable, long-lasting hardscaping materials make for no- to low-maintenance additions over time because they don't require replacement or careful care. For example, the arbors, trelliswork and gates at the back of the garden are made of cedar, which is durable, naturally rot-resistant and will weather well with the seasons, graying gracefully. A gateway to the rest of the yard, the arbors add height that screens the back of the lot. To find out more about the layout of every room in this yard, check out the illustrations at right.

Garden at a glance



MULTIPURPOSE YARD The secondary lot gave the Sessions freedom to think of things they wanted in a yard. This was a luxury they didn't have with the compact area outside their front entry, where there's just enough space for a simple foundation planting and a patch of turf.

So including some open lawn, right beyond the arbors, was a major priority. This area serves as a regulation-size volleyball court that can be used for play and practice into the evening—outdoor lighting illuminates the area after the sun sets.

Where the lawn ends, a concrete patio begins. This room provides a flat surface for seating under the shade of a cedar pergola, as well as containers. At the opposite end of the garden, a small basketball court is a space for neighborhood kids to play.

Though it's slightly offset from the back of the house, the Sessions enjoy a great view of the entire lot from a first-floor deck and second-story back balcony. To get a better look at this garden's refreshing spring combos, turn the page.



3| Mix a variety of flower forms, even if you're only planting two types of bulbs. For example, doubles contrast well with blooms with small cups, as do pointed and rounded petals.



4| Repeat the same bulbs throughout your garden. These clumps of color, especially in a striking hue, like red, help pull the eye deeper into a bed.

Spring's sweetness

Botanical Names

Panicle hydrangea
Hydrangea paniculata
Viburnum
Viburnum spp. and hybrids
Weeping redbud
Cercis canadensis

Rex and Barbara worked with garden designer Marguerite Gluck, owner of Marguerite Gardens, Inc., to plan a stunning spring space with multiseason interest. Marguerite has been gardening for more than 20 years in compact, urban, zone 5 yards, which means relying on dwarf and miniature plants that can take shade and cold temps. Use her advice to get gorgeous spring combos and solve your garden problems in any region.

FROM THE GROUND UP Wherever you're starting a new bed or border, it's important to know your soil type. Marguerite prepares the area's sandy, alkaline soil for planting by adding compost that has a low pH. She likes to work Black Forest® Tree & Shrub Mix—a blend of organic materials, including sphagnum peat moss, bark, composted chicken manure and shellfish—into the soil. Find it at True Value®. Rice hulls, the protective coating of individual grains, are another

favorite amendment low in pH. Look for them, often used as a bedding material, in bulk at your local tack and feed store.

WHAT GROWS THERE There's no reason not to love every plant growing in your garden—in every season. And if you have a small yard, this is even more imperative. Look at deciduous anchor plants, such as the fernleaf buckthorn in photo 3 and the weeping Siberian peashrub in photo 5, when branches are bare, before leaves develop. This way, you'll pick plants based on other traits, like shape, branching or bark.

If you're only seduced by the blooms, you're falling in love with how a plant looks for what is, ultimately, a very short time in the garden. Evergreen trees and shrubs, such as the boxwood in photo 4, are essential for adding year-round interest, especially when they have distinct habits and shapes, such as this upright cone.



5 | Let durable, low-growing ground covers fill in between pavers. This makes for a carpet of color that helps highlight the way, especially around neutral steppers.

In smaller gardens, variety can be difficult to achieve unless plants also mature to a smaller size. ‘Green Mountain’, for example, is slow growing, reaching 3 to 5 feet tall over 10 years. Shop early and often because, where space is a concern, these plants sell out first at nurseries and garden centers.

In areas with cold-winter weather, where the season can start to feel long and challenging, the spring bulb show is something to look forward to. Planting large bulbs in fall is one time size matters. Because bigger generally means more flowers, don’t scrimp here and buy from unknown discount suppliers if you aren’t sure about quality. In addition to being large, bulbs should always be firm and plump.

MADE IN THE SHADE Whether mature trees line your street or grow in the yard, plants that tolerate varying degrees of shade are a necessity. Low-growing, shade-tolerant understory trees add big interest but not a lot of shade themselves. Try weeping redbud, as well as panicle hydrangea and viburnum standards—shrubs trained to grow as trees—in any shady nook or large container in a part shade spot. To see many of the plants we discussed and more in fresh, vibrant spring combos, check out the photos and list above.

Whether you have a sweeping yard or every inch in your garden counts, these plants will add welcome color at the start of every year! 🌸

—Shayna Courtney

Guarantee a colorful spring

- A Fernleaf buckthorn** *Rhamnus frangula* Fine Line® (‘Ron Williams’) Shrub; insignificant white flowers in late spring; green fernlike foliage turns yellow in fall; full sun to part shade; 5 to 7 ft. tall, 2 to 3 ft. wide; cold-hardy in USDA zones 2 to 7, heat-tolerant in AHS zones 7 to 1
- B Daffodil** *Narcissus* ‘Actaea’ Bulb; mid- to late spring fragrant flowers have white petals and small, red-rimmed cups; full sun; 12 to 18 in. tall, 4 to 6 in. wide; cold-hardy in USDA zones 4 to 8, heat-tolerant in AHS zones 8 to 1
- C Tulip** *Tulipa* ‘Best Purple’ Bulb; deep purple flowers in midspring; full sun; 16 to 18 in. tall, 6 in. wide; cold-hardy in USDA zones 3 to 7, heat-tolerant in AHS zones 7 to 1
- D Daffodil** *Narcissus* ‘Yellow Cheerfulness’ Bulb; soft yellow, fragrant, double blooms in mid- to late spring; full sun; 14 to 16 in. tall, 3 to 6 in. wide; cold-hardy in USDA zones 3 to 9, heat-tolerant in AHS zones 9 to 1
- E Viridiflora tulip** *Tulipa* ‘China Town’ Bulb; pink flowers have green flames in late spring; white-variegated leaves; full sun; 10 to 14 in. tall, 3 to 6 in. wide; cold-hardy in USDA zones 3 to 8, heat-tolerant in AHS zones 8 to 1
- F Boxwood** *Buxus* ‘Green Mountain’ Shrub; insignificant green-cream flowers in spring; glossy, dark green foliage is evergreen; full sun to part shade; 3 to 5 ft. tall, 2 to 3 ft. wide; cold-hardy in USDA zones 5 to 9, heat-tolerant in AHS zones 9 to 1
- G Tulip** *Tulipa* ‘Best Red’ Bulb; deep red blooms in midspring; full sun; 16 to 18 in. tall, 6 in. wide; cold-hardy in USDA zones 3 to 7, heat-tolerant in AHS zones 7 to 1
- H Weeping Siberian peashrub** *Caragana arborescens* ‘Walker’ Shrub; yellow flowers in late spring; full sun; 3 to 6 ft. tall and wide; cold-hardy in USDA zones 3 to 8, heat-tolerant in AHS zones 8 to 1
- I Creeping Jenny** *Lysimachia nummularia* ‘Aurea’ Perennial; bright yellow blooms in early summer; golden-yellow foliage; full sun to part shade; 3 to 6 in. tall, 12 to 18 in. wide; cold-hardy in USDA zones 3 to 9, heat-tolerant in AHS zones 9 to 1