

Crayne Horton & Mary Sue Wilson's yard is an amazing example of creating opportunity out of a challenging situation. The garden started with vegetables and perennials about four years ago framed by a deteriorating rock wall. When a drunk driver hit and destroyed the wall, creating a disaster out of the garden, Crayne brought in large rocks and a new look was created. The rocks create a dramatic entrance to the garden as well as different views of the landscape, covered with low growing, lush ground covers, they take you up to the home's entrance and the winding garden paths.

By removing lawn, Crayne is reclaiming more planting space. Even the parking strip has become a home for this gardener's plants! It offers color and texture, allowing the sidewalk to be a path through their personal garden. After remodeling the house last year, the Horton/Wilson family removed an old concrete slab on the north side of the house. This area is now being transformed into a kid-friendly shade garden. This space offers ideas for shade plantings that are durable enough for playtime, too. The Horton/Wilson yard is a completely organic landscape. Concerns about the health and safety of their family dictate that no pesticides are used.

How many hours a week do you spend, on average in the garden? Crayne is in his garden at least five hours a week, including the rainy winter months. This regular maintenance makes this garden practically worry-free all year.

How do you deal with pests in the garden? Crayne kills slugs as he finds them. They are just about the only pest that pesters this garden. At one time, there were black aphids on a pear tree that the ants were farming. Tanglefoot has controlled both the ants and the aphids, and a spray of water is an easy immediate solution when the occasional aphid moves in.

Weeds are hand pulled as part of the regular garden maintenance. Weeds in the lawn are simply mowed and the grass is becoming less of a focal point in this garden. The two to three inches of organic mulch applied in the spring keep weeds to a minimum.

What is your watering strategy? Five yards of organic mulch each year helps to retain water in the planting beds. Four rain barrels provide water through mid-summer. Soaker hoses are used once the rain barrels are emptied for the summer. The only plants that receive specific watering attention are those that are not quite established. Other than that, there is a drought tolerant landscape for a reason.

Does compost play a role in your garden? Mushroom compost is layered under the dark bark mulch. Kitchen waste is dug into the vegetable beds.

What is your fertilizing strategy? With all of the rich mushroom compost brought in yearly, Crayne doesn't worry much about fertilizing. He fertilizes on an as-needed basis—"when he remembers to"—and uses only organic, slow-release fertilizers. The fruit trees receive fertilizer spikes so that the fruit is able to mature before winter hits.

Do you attract wildlife to your garden? The passionvine—one of the most striking plants in the garden— attracts all kinds of birds, especially those fast-moving hummingbirds that we rejoice about in spring. In general, flowering plants, and those with thick foliage, attract wildlife in this garden.

What are your biggest gardening challenges? Crayne says his biggest challenge is not overspending on his unique plant passion.

What makes gardening most satisfying to you? Eating from the garden is a pleasure that the entire family loves. Crayne enjoys watching the neighborhood kids as they munch vegetables from the garden—foods that would go uneaten at the dinner table are delightful when "stolen" from your neighbor's garden! The family also enjoys bringing flowers inside as a reminder of the many rewards of gardening.