

Kristin and David Gomez have spent the last six years creating an organic, Japanese-style garden on Hewitt Lake. Kristin grew up in Japan and her garden is an integration of Japanese and Pacific Northwest styles. This all-season landscape is full of colors, textures, and multi- layers that blend together into a lovely whole. A pagoda-like entrance welcomes visitors up the front steps lined with beautiful pots. A pond was created with some professional input and the family enhanced it to make it their own. The pond houses the family “pets” and also welcomes birds and butterflies for a quick sip. Watering is strictly on an “as-needed” basis in this garden, so plant selection is based on drought tolerance and pest and disease-resistance as well as beauty. The garden is seen as a whole and the sum of its parts are dazzling!

**How many hours a week do you spend gardening?** The Gomez family spends between five and eight hours a week in the garden during the summer months.

**How do you control pests?** Choosing healthy plants that are disease-and pest-resistant and planting them in the “right place” is the way these gardeners prevent pest problems. Slugs are dealt with using a non-toxic iron sulfate product while aphids get a hard stream of water or a mix of water and detergent.

**How do you fertilize?** The grass gets fertilized using a slow-release organic fertilizer once or twice a year. Perennial beds and pots receive a granular fertilizer twice a year. The Gomezes spread mushroom compost on perennial beds every other year.

**Tell us about your watering strategies.** The sprinkler system that came with the house is rarely used in the garden. During dry weather, the entire garden gets a deep soaking once a week. If things begin to wilt, they spot water as needed. Grass in the front yard is watered weekly in hot, dry weather while the grass in the back yard goes dormant in the summer.

**What approach do you use for controlling diseases?** There are three rose plants that are fairly resistant but they have had black spot in the past. These gardeners are thinking of removing the pesky roses, trying a non-toxic product, or learning to live with black spots!

**How do you handle weeds?** Hand pull or ignore! Weeds are minimized by hand weeding or, depending on the weed, learning to live with them. Plants are planted close together to help shade out weeds. A long-handled weed tool helps remove weeds from the lawn.

**Do you attract wildlife to your garden?** The pond attracts many “guests.” There are plantings specific for hummingbirds such as honeysuckles and fuschias and more for butterflies. Many plantings are designed to attract beneficial insects. One of the greatest joys of creating a beautiful garden are the frogs, birds, and butterflies that are attracted to it.

**What are your biggest gardening challenges?** Creating a four-season landscape that effectively and aesthetically blends colors, heights, textures and shapes together.

**What makes gardening fun or satisfying for you?** The beauty and artistic challenges involved make gardening fun for the entire family. The smells and colors of the garden and talking to other gardeners to share stories, tips, and ideas all make gardening a joy.