

Jane Bell-Dolliver and James Dolliver have attended The Garden Rhapsodies Tour for several years. The tour has helped them to hone their own gardening styles, offering tools and inspiration to create their own garden rhapsody. With a steep, sunny front slope, plant selection has been experimental. Preserving some of the beautiful, old trees that were in the garden when they moved in has guided some of their planting and design choices. The sloped back yard was terraced to create distinct planting beds and is bordered by a lush, easy-to-maintain lawn. The lovely water fall emerging from the corner of the yard recycles water and attracts birds, bats, and butterflies.

What are your watering strategies? Plants are watered based on their individual needs. There is a sprinkler system set to zones that waters for 15 minutes at a time, every 3 days or so, as needed. Hand watering is also used as a way to keep the gardeners aware of individual plants' needs.

How do you control pests? Keeping plants healthy is the best pest way to prevent pests from getting established. Sluggo and the knife take care of slugs in the garden before they can damage any of the favored plants. Soapy water and a hard spray from the hose dislodges marauding aphids. In general, beneficial insects and birds keep pest populations fairly low.

How do you fertilize? Hungry tropical plants receive a dose of fish fertilizer about every 3 weeks. The lawn receives a slow-release fertilizer in the spring and fall. Compost used as mulch in the planting beds increases organic matter, improving the health of the soil and making nutrients more available to the plants.

What approach do you use for controlling diseases? The main strategy is to grow plants that thrive in this climate and keep them healthy. If disease problems creep in, affected leaves and branches are removed and the watering strategy is closely examined to see what went wrong.

How do you handle weeds? Diligent hand weeding keeps this garden tidy. Plants are allowed to grow together to shade out weeds and thick mulch keeps weeds from finding their way into the garden. A weed torch takes care of weeds in the pathways and sneaking into crevices

How many hours a week do you spend in the garden? Between the two of them, about 15-20 hours a week is spent working and playing in the garden.

Do you attract wildlife to your garden? Wildlife are definitely welcome here! Dense plantings provide shelter, feeders offer food, and with running water and scattered baths, many of their basic needs are met, inviting them to come in and stay awhile.

What are your biggest gardening challenges? The terraces in this garden provide a work out with every task! The challenge of maintaining all that is created trying to limit themselves to what they can gracefully maintain are a few of the challenges faced.

What makes gardening fun or satisfying for you? The joy of gardening is being a part of the beauty of nature. Touching the planet with bare hands and feeling the flow of the garden move you as you are helping to move it. Being involved in the abundance of the planet and the primitiveness of that connection are a few things that keep these gardeners hard at work and play in their own in-town sanctuary.