

Kunzang and Willis Brown developed the gardens at Bodhi House to complement the tranquility of the retreat center environment. The undeveloped woodland setting makes a stunning backdrop for kitchen gardens filled with tasty herbs and vegetables, vibrant flowers, and a lovely low-maintenance lawn. Wild areas spill into carefully maintained areas, creating lush edges and wonderful wildlife habitat. The gardeners utilize native plants in the landscape as much as possible to conserve water and energy in addition to promoting harmony between species. Kunzang believes in pursuing the creative impulses that gardening feeds as much as she is committed to working with what already exists. This organic landscape offers vitality to those who visit through fresh vegetables and herbs for eating and peaceful spaces for sitting. The meditative sounds of the fountain carry this wild peace well beyond the garden's gates.

How many hours a week do you spend gardening? Reflecting the cyclical nature of garden maintenance, these gardeners carefully break their timing up into seasons. Fifteen hours in the spring and fall take care of planning, planting, and maintenance and just 5 hours a week in the summer keep it looking great.

How do you control pests? For slugs, Sluggo works great along with “one-way flights into the woods.” They prevent large numbers of slugs by eliminating hiding spots in the garden and trying to keep things tidy. Aphids are washed away with a hose and if needed, Safer brand insecticidal soap is used to handle a serious infestation. Pheromone traps and sticky traps deal with apple tree pests while the resident cat helps keep voles, moles, and squirrels at bay.

What is your fertilizing strategy? Fertilizing is determined by what individual areas need. Ornamental beds receive an organic fertilizer in the early-spring, mid-summer, and fall. The lawn is fertilized in the spring with a slow-release fertilizer and lawn clippings provide nutrients all year. The vegetable gardens are fertilized as needed, sometimes monthly with an organic product from “Gardens Alive.”

Tell us about your watering strategies. A drip system and soaker hoses water about every other day during summer's heat for twenty minutes at a time. The vegetable garden is mostly watered by hand as a way to really observe the plants needs. The lawn is mostly moss and doesn't take much water!

What approach do you use for controlling diseases? Tidiness helps prevent problems. Worm tea is sprayed every three weeks from May to late-fall on the roses and, “it really works!”

How do you handle weeds? Weed problems are prevented with plenty of mulch and plants growing closely together. When weeds do show up, they are pulled, dug out, flamed with a weed torch, or weed whacked. When asked how they minimize weed problems, the answer is simple and philosophical, “Re-frame...What is a weed anyway?”

Do you attract wildlife into your garden? With so many natural areas, wildlife feels right at home here. Birds and butterflies enjoy early and late flowering plants, the beautiful running fountain, and scattered bird feeders. A six foot fence around the vegetable garden protects the food from deer, other than that, animals are free to come and go.

What are your biggest gardening challenges? Achy hips and backs are the biggest challenges for these busy gardeners! Clay soil with poor drainage is slowly but surely being dealt with by adding compost.

What makes gardening fun or satisfying for you? Eating out of the garden is a delight for those who grow their own food. Being in contact with the Earth, hearing the sounds of nature and being connected to the changing nature of the garden makes it all worthwhile!