

Vicki Scannell considers herself “a binge gardener.” Many of us with full-time lives can relate to the amount of gardening that can, of necessity, be done in a short amount of time, whether a weekend or a few hours. For the last several years, this garden has received its creation and care through bursts of energy followed by periods of unchecked growth. The garden started out as a way to create privacy on this corner lot. As shrubs grew together to create screens, the trick has been pruning to keep a feeling of openness within the cloak of privacy. Vicki has a few gardening tricks up her sleeve. For example, she hasn’t purchased vegetable seeds in years, relying instead on the vegetables’ regenerative powers. There remains a sense of wildness in this garden, attracting beneficial insects and small animals that make their home within the cultivated and wild spaces.

Water conservation is important; tell us about your watering strategies. The garden only needs water 1-2 times a week during the hottest parts of summer. The vegetables sometimes receive water more often if they need it to produce well. The grass doesn’t receive any watering.

How do you control pests? Slugs are really the only pest of concern in this garden. Less-toxic bait is used in the spring, after that they are speared as found. A strong spray of water is used to control the occasional aphid.

How do you fertilize? Compost takes care of all of the fertilization needs for this garden. After purchasing compost that contained morning glory seeds, Vicki is seeking an on-site composting system that will produce compost for the garden and work in her compact space.

What approach do you use for controlling diseases? Selecting hardy, disease-resistant plants is the foundation of disease prevention. Roses are the only disease-prone plants in this garden and they are pruned heavily at the first sight of black spot.

How do you handle weeds? Weeds are pulled, picked, and dug out regularly. The lawn is mowed often to eliminate the chance of lawn weeds going to seed. Heavy mulching and close plant spacing doesn’t leave much room for weeds to sprout in the planting beds.

Do you attract wildlife to your garden? Flowers, berries, apples, and bird feeders draw in the neighborhood wildlife to relax in this refuge.

What are your biggest gardening challenges? The biggest challenges in this garden are balancing visions of what the garden could be with the realities of available time and energy!

What makes gardening fun or satisfying for you? The garden provides lessons in slowing down, paying attention, and simplifying. It offers ever-changing spots of color and life, offering food all year long! The physical grounding of hands in the dirt helps bring this gardener from a busy head, again and again, to an open heart.