

Annie and Scott Cubberly have been creating their gardens for twelve years. Originally, the property they purchased in 1989 contained only grass, a small stone wall and a wild meadow that was mowed. After years of work, including digging all the front grass out by hand, the property is now transformed. Today it harbors a number of garden areas Annie has designed, as well as a pond, creek and waterfall she and Scott built together.

Annie says she has been fascinated by the natural world since she was a child. Growing up in Montana with a life sciences professor for a father, she learned early to pay attention to life forms springing up around her. "Our family always looked for the first flower to bloom along the roads in spring. It was usually the wild buttercup," she laughs, "the scourge of all gardeners."

Annie's personal approach to gardening is evident. For example, with the specific goal of enjoying scented blooms throughout the growing season, she has planted many perfumed species. The Asian spice tree growing above the pond gives out a lingering clove aroma in March. A scented evergreen clematis follows, with a fragrant honeysuckle blooming in later spring. Two other clematis varieties bloom at different times. The large rose garden scents the whole back yard in early summer. "Roses are an impulse purchase for me," she says with a smile.

How many hours a week do you spend gardening? Annie: It varies. In spring, I spend many hours cultivating my gardens. By mid-summer, after most of the work is over, I may only spend four hours a week watering and pulling weeds.

How do you control pests? Annie: I've tried everything with minimal success. Our back garden is fenced to protect against deer, but our front gardens are open. I have problems with moles and shrews. We provided rock overhangs in our pond for the fish to hide under, away from the blue heron which frequents it. I patrol for slugs and use slug bait in the spring. For aphids, I either pinch them or spray with an organic insecticidal soap.

How do you fertilize? Annie: I use compost and manure. We got a barrel from the City of Olympia that we use for our kitchen waste. Worms called "red wigglers" break down the scraps into useable compost. We also have two wooden compost bins

for our yard waste. I amend the soil in spring with our compost, manure and purchased mushroom compost. I also use compost to mulch our gardens in the fall.

Water conservation is important. What is your approach to watering? Annie: For me, watering is an intuitive activity. I watch the weather and provide water accordingly. To conserve, I water deeply less often than in the past. But in a hot spell, I monitor the soil moisture carefully and apply water as needed to save the plants. We use soaker hoses for our roses and blueberries, also an overhead sprinkler early in the morning. I generally hand water individual sections of the garden when they feel dry.

What approach do you use for controlling diseases? Annie: I try not to buy plants that are susceptible. In general, if a plant is diseased, I either get rid of it, or move it to an area where it won't contaminate the rest of the garden. I've done this with my roses, which are not disease resistant. They usually develop black spot by mid-summer. I don't spray for black spot, but have learned to live with it. We decided to remove most of our fruit trees because they were disease prone.

How do you handle weeds? Annie: I don't use herbicides. Instead, I dig or pull them regularly in the gardens, paths and lawn. It takes constant vigilance. Throughout the summer, I probably weed every day I'm home. Also, my use of ground covers helps prevent weeds.

Gardening is an intuitive process for her, Annie says. Sitting at her windows with a cup of coffee in the mornings, she relishes thinking about what sort of new garden might contribute to the overall feel of the place. She says she tries not to work with straight lines, but prefers to let one planted area "drift" visually into another. Because she doesn't want to "over manage" the land, she lets a number of plants, including English daisies and forget-me-nots, seed wherever they land. Since groundcovers deter weeds, Annie uses a lot of them, blending for a variety of colors and textures. "Gardening is a wonderfully relaxing pastime," Annie says, "because it's completely non-competitive. I can do whatever I want out here and simply enjoy the process."