

**Gary Schuldt and Bryant Russell** have been perfecting this lovely oasis since 1991 when they started creating and shaping dramatic changes from a flat non-existent landscape to a dazzling plant collector's dreamland. The garden now has structure, form, and multiple levels through the use of curves, berms, and meandering pathways. It is a place to find peace and solitude or to be lured by the sheer excitement of what lies around the next bend.

Many of the trees that give the garden such a commanding atmosphere have been salvaged and painstakingly transplanted. A large Madrone was rescued from a construction site, a Japanese lace-leaf maple moved from under the eaves of a neighbor's house, and a large fir that long ago was purchased as a live Christmas tree. They aren't afraid to tackle any salvage job; often a plant that didn't work in someone else's garden becomes a stunning showpiece in their own.

A treat for those who just have to know the botanical name of each new or unusual plant is that Gary and Bryant label and keep track of their huge inventory. Gary created a system for using a database to describe the plant collection.

**How many hours a week do you spend in your garden during the growing season?** Gardening is a full time job for both of us, probably around 100 hours per week total!

**How do you water?** Watering is done on an as-needed basis. We use lawn for functional pathways rather than an element of beauty, and as such it never gets watered directly. We have many well-established plantings that can survive drought without additional watering. However, we also are constantly adding new plants that require water during their first two or three years, regardless of drought tolerance. We have nearly 200 rhodies and azaleas, many of which require watering during extended dry periods. This is necessary to avoid the effects of stress on plants, thereby keeping them healthy and able to fend off infestation. Deeper watering means that we don't have to water as often.

**How about compost and fertilizers?** Rhodies and azaleas are fertilized seasonally with alfalfa meal and commercial preparations. For perennials, planter boxes, and annuals we use time-released fertilizer and fish emulsion in the spring. Hanging baskets are fertilized every two weeks with a liquid fertilizer. Veggies are top-dressed with garden compost and organic soil amendments. New

plantings sometimes receive a root stimulant of Vitamin B. We recently began using a clay-buster soil amendment to top dress the beds. We are applying compost tea experimentally on plants that appear to need it. Our kitchen waste is processed in a compost bin. Yard wastes are shredded and composted in bins and berms. We're proud to say that nothing organic gets thrown away! This includes woody material that we chip and use as mulch and a compost ingredient.

**How do you control diseases?** We avoid plant diseases by watering the garden early in the morning and by careful pruning to improve air circulation. If we encounter a fungus or virus we prune the affected leaves or limbs and take measures to improve the health of the plant. For instance we use sticks of chalk to raise the pH for the Hellebores. Dormant sprays are used for fruit trees.

**How do you handle weeds?** Hand picking and digging out. We have applied corn gluten, mulch, newspaper, and landscape fabric to smother and deter weeds. We use ground covers and close planting techniques for the borders. We don't use any type of lawn maintenance or weed control for the grass other than mowing as needed.

**What about pest control?** For slugs we use a non-toxic slug bait (iron phosphate pellets) throughout the garden. For the vegetable garden we lift walking boards, find their hiding places and snip them with scissors! For handling aphids we use a steady stream of water or insecticidal soap to dislodge them. We're also experimenting with a hot pepper spray or a weak solution of alcohol dabbed on the infected plant. For deer we've used net bags containing Irish Spring soap, thin wire strung around certain small beds, and a hot pepper and detergent spray. Sometimes, the neighborhood dogs are the best defense against deer.

**What makes gardening fun or satisfying for you?** Being able to transform an uninteresting area into a beautiful spot. Having a place to showcase favorite and unusual plants and shrubs. Watching the garden change with the seasons. Having the gratification that comes from being able to raise a plant successfully. Watching the enjoyment and appreciation shown by our garden visitors and learning from them. Enjoying it through photography. Most of all it is a therapeutic and varied activity that we enjoy working on together.