

By Susan Camp

In February 2014, I wrote about a new garden that my husband, Jim, and I decided to develop from scratch to replace beds in front of our house that had become messy and scraggly over the years. I determined that we should follow a systematic, logical process and since I was familiar with the six-step Nursing Process, used to solve patient problems, I decided to use it as a guide to develop the new garden.

Initially, we assessed the condition of the hardscape and the soil and diagnosed several problems, including a dying Juneberry tree, poor soil nutrition, and uneven pathways. We dug up and potted every salvageable plant, then began developing short and long term outcomes. We recognized that the entire plan would take a minimum of three years to complete and that we wanted a garden design that would offer color for every season without endless hours of backbreaking labor.

We discussed raised beds, but opted for parterres, or symmetrical beds, on either side of a central walkway to the front steps. I borrowed heavily from Colonial Williamsburg garden plans, which suited our small cottage perfectly. A white picket fence already formed the outer boundaries of the garden and we decided to install beds of daylily and iris for the borders on the sunny side and astilbe, hosta, and Solomon's seal for the shady borders.

We removed the oyster shell and brick paths and selected stone that complemented the brick on the house. After hours of reading and viewing YouTube videos about replacing walkways, my husband and I realized we were neither experienced nor energetic enough to tackle that monumental task ourselves. We hired a local landscaper to install the walkways. We then planted the borders and selected shrubs to serve as the foundation plant of each parterre. We planted dwarf cherry laurel (*Prunus caroliniana* 'Chestnut Hill') and upright rosemary (*Rosmarinus officinalis* 'Tuscan Blue'), both evergreens, and four old garden roses, one of which proved an adventure to locate.

We began to implement our plan last fall with the installation of the foundation plants along with verbena (*Glandularia canadensis* 'Homestead purple') and hydrangea macrophylla 'Blushing Bride.' This spring we started planting in earnest, adding dwarf gladioli and various lilies to the sunny border, Joe Pye weed to the shade border, then carefully selected perennials that we hope will serve us well for several years before they need to be replaced. This is where we veered away from the strict Colonial Williamsburg look and opted for a variety of colorful flowers that are already doing a great job of attracting several species of bees, butterflies, and fly pollinators. We planted many herbs, including lavender, oregano, yarrow, sage, catmint, and lemon balm. Several beds are edged with alternating English and lemon thyme. Other perennial choices include native milkweed, phlox, coreopsis, dianthus, Russian sage, meadow sage, dwarf goldenrod, New York asters, blue-eyed grass, purple and yellow false indigo, and echinacea.

We had a lovely spring showing and the summer plants are blooming profusely. The roses, ordered from Oregon and California, seem to have settled in nicely and all four rosebushes bloomed the first season, a pleasant surprise. They have quadrupled in size since we planted them in mid-April.

As fall approaches we may need to add more color. The first winter will be the real test, but the garden is sheltered from strong winds by the surrounding trees and the stone pathways retain daytime warmth. Next spring we will evaluate our plant choices for success or failure, the final step of the process. If some plants don't survive the winter we will replace them with hardier varieties. The process has been tedious at times, with plenty of hard work and aching muscles, but we are reaping the rewards of color, fragrance, and many pollinators.

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