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# Lively Backyard: Small outdoor space bursts with style

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Al and Mona Anderson have lived in their home at 1616 St. Johns for 47 years.

The original house was 1,000 square feet, and over the years the Andersons have added a family room, extended the kitchen, added a screened-in porch and built an outdoor patio area and deck.

The backyard has sense of informality with plenty of character, and is full of stunning flowers in all shapes and colors.

"It's just like our little bit of paradise without having to go to Hawaii," Mona said.

Enormous hibiscus flowers add a Hawaiian flair in varying shades of pink, yellow and orange.

A trumpet vine with brilliant orange blooms grows up a trellis off the patio. Clematis, a vigorous climbing plant with brilliant periwinkle blooms, hangs over another trellis leading into the backyard.

A second clematis is preparing to bloom with delicate snowflake-like flowers that make an appearance starting in late August.

Perennials spill from charming planter boxes placed on the deck railing.

Roses in a spectrum of yellow, white and pink add a fragrant path through the backyard.

A wide variety of fountains add a serene and peaceful atmosphere to the space, attracting neighborhood birds.

The patio has plenty of personality at night. A palm tree light illuminates the back corner, while a crescent moon shines down upon the deck. The umbrella is decked out with string lighting, and throughout the yard subtle lighting illuminates the dark spaces.

In the evenings, the Andersons enjoy sitting on the deck, watching the humming birds gather around the multitude of fragrant flowers.

## Creating a Oasis

Mona especially appreciates her outdoor space. For many years she could not even venture outside to tend to her flowers due to a severe allergy to yellow-jackets.

After enduring seven years of sting-allergy shots, she was able to return outdoors safely.

During this time the couple had a screened-in porch added to the side of the home, which leads out to the back deck and yard.

"It makes us happy," Mona said. "How could you not be happy when you're sitting out there and looking at all the little miracles? It's just too bad people don't learn that earlier in life."

The couple have utilized every inch of space on their 65x125' lot.

"I won't let her put anything more in the backyard; we're built to the max," Al said.

"My husband says he's really happy we don't have a larger lot - it would be too expensive," Mona said.

Instead of being limited by a small yard, the Andersons have utilized every inch of space.

"There's always something to do," Mona said. "I never seem to know when to quit."

## Planting with Color

Mona's thought on creating an outdoor oasis is "more is better."

"I don't think you can have too much," she said. "As long as it has room to grow, plant it."

She is a person who loves color, often pairing reds with pink and purple, placing orange roses next to pink ones.

She utilizes a wide variety of annuals to add eye-catching elements to every corner of the yard, mixing perennials and annuals. Many annuals only bloom once so adding zinnias, petunias, verbena and geraniums, to name a few, help keep color in the yard throughout the growing season.

"Don't be afraid to put a lot of color into it- If you don't like it you can always remove or replace it," she said.

## Room to Bloom

Her yard is full of easy-to-grow, reliable plants that require minimal care, and there is always something happening in the garden.

From the Hearty Hibiscus, whose blooms only last a few days, to the roses, ivy geraniums, and potted perennials, Mona's plants draw the eye upward, creating the illusion of more volume, which makes up for the lack of square footage.

The backyard has been stretched into additional living space through the deck, with seating, fountains, and plenty of plants to add ambiance.

A Virginia creeper grows along the back fence, offering a heightened level of privacy. Mona is careful to keep the plant trimmed, as it grows quickly. Started from one root, the plant is estimated to be 90-feet long.

Goldenrod grows from the ground up near the back gate. Yellow coreopsis acts as a flower border. This particular plant was taken from Mona's mother's garden in Roundup. She credits much of her love of flowers to her mother.

"My mom liked flowers, but could not afford to buy them like I do," Anderson said. Most of her mother's flowers were originally planted from seed.

After years of remodeling and trial and error, the Andersons are satisfied with their home.

"You see a lot of houses, but it takes a lot of inner feelings to become a home," Mona said.

"I love to come home to my home," Al said.

Mona agrees. "You can be having a bad day and go out there and sit and look up and say thank you," she said. "People should take more time to stop and look and smell the flowers."