



# It Takes

HOW PARTNERS IN LIFE INTERLACE  
THEIR SKILLS TO CREATE REMARKABLE  
GARDENS.



*By MOYA ANDREWS, photography by JAMES KELLAR*

Gardening is a hobby that can be enjoyed as a solitary pursuit or as a collaborative activity. Large gardens often need more than one set of hands, but some people with small plots just enjoy working together to enhance the landscape they share. The dynamics likely are different in every gardening team: What is the division of labor? How are their individual talents and skills employed? How do they negotiate different objectives?

The three duos featured here, partners in life as well as in the garden, have answered those questions in unique ways that make for successful gardens and successful partnerships. Perhaps it is not a coincidence that one member of each pair is a woodworker whose handcrafted structures provide impact in the garden while blending seamlessly with the plantings. Gardens may be noted for their impermanence, but in each of these gardens — two in Bloomington's Elm Heights neighborhood and one in rural Spencer — their one-of-a-kind structures provide a sense of continuity.

**True teamwork is on display in Bob Brookshire and Kris Floyd's Elm Heights backyard garden. Bob's lush beds of flowers in riotous colors provide a backdrop to the potted plants and art pieces featured in Kris' carefully curated vignettes.**



A PASSION FOR FLOWERS CREATED A

# MAGICAL REFUGE

BOB BROOKSHIRE *and* KRIS FLOYD



(inset) Bob Brookshire (left) and Kris Floyd with two of Bob's handcrafted bird feeders.

The careful placement and clean lines of the garden's art pieces create a feeling of organization among the casual plantings.

Bob Brookshire and Kris Floyd worked together in the garden behind their English Cottage-style home in Elm Heights for 14 years and created a magical refuge. Although the space is relatively small and full of many different types of plants, it does not feel crowded because of the care taken with the design.

"Since Bob was retired he did most of the garden maintenance and large individual projects," Kris says. Bob, who died in January, was a high school biology teacher and a botanist at heart. He was passionate about flowers and loved masses of them. He preferred plants with showy blooms in warm vibrant colors and hybridized his own daylilies. He used to say, "Let the plants take the lead. Either allow them to do their thing or move them." He admired the vigor of native plants, and he also appreciated leaf colors and textures and grew a wide variety of hostas that he had collected for years.

A consummate teacher, Bob could explain plant characteristics succinctly. For example, he pointed out the differences in stems by saying, "sedges have edges, rushes are round, and grasses have joints." He made wooden houses for birds and grew plants with berries to attract them. He planted pagoda dogwood, which draws catbirds, mockingbirds, and robins, and a serviceberry tree that the cedar waxwings love. Organic gardening is practiced in this landscape except when war is waged on the dandelion. The Brookshire approach is to cut off the plant and then dab a bit of Round-up Weed Killer onto the cut stem.

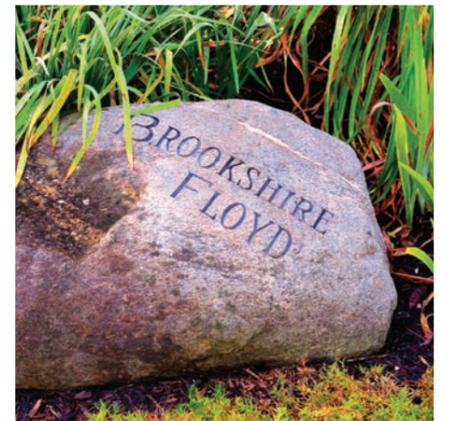
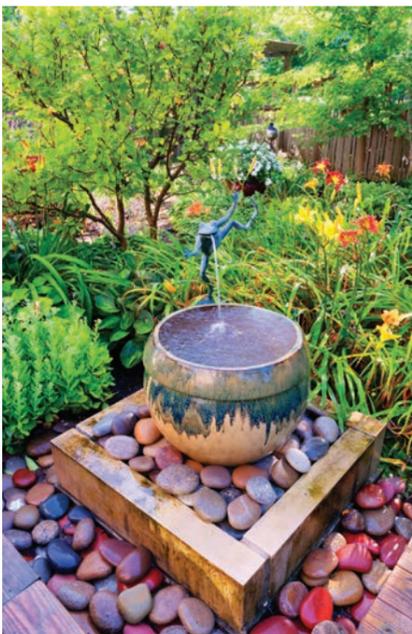
There is no grass in this garden, but Bob made boardwalk-style paths that allow for leisurely strolls around the plantings. He always said that a deck is best on the east side of a house so that the owners can eat dinner in the



shade every evening all summer. Of course, Bob built his own deck with an eastern aspect, and he and Kris enjoyed entertaining on it frequently.

Kris, an architect, enjoys creating the many small but striking vignettes incorporated into the overall landscape. After returning from work he unwinds by ensuring that there are crisp edges on the dwarf boxwood hedge and that all of the pots contain pleasing arrangements of plants that are pruned and deadheaded. Many of the large, handsome pots that either stand alone and contain a single plant or are part of strategically placed clusters of potted plants, were purchased at the Bloomington Arts Fair on the Square.

Kris is a master of the art of framing both the objects and the plants in unusual ways and trains the bittersweet and climbing hydrangea to soften the wooden privacy fence that Bob built. The tricolor beech tree is framed in an angle of the fence and glows when the sun hits its colorful leaves. Kris notes that the garden is an amalgamation of "Bob's swathes of riotous color and my need to control the minute details. We both had a lot of fun working on it together." ✨



(clockwise from top left)

In this grouping, Kris used small plants and containers to provide an interesting visual contrast with the large plant.

The garden shed is both functional and aesthetic — it stores garden tools and serves as an entrance to the garden from the driveway, often surprising visitors who have no idea of the beauty hiding behind the door.

On the street side of the fence, a stone carved with the homeowners' names identifies the residence.

Bob's trademark daylilies provide a colorful backdrop to a whimsical water feature.

Stones from Mays Greenhouse accent a garden fountain. The variety of colors adds visual interest, while the stones' uniform shape creates harmony.

