

The Back Yard

I love getting a peek into gardeners' back yards; it's like watching the behind-the-scenes reels from a movie set. For lifetime gardeners, the back yard is where the magic happens: compost is decomposing, plants are being divided and their favorite tools are stacked up against the side of the garage. Newer gardeners are experimenting, trying new plants and different design styles.



For many the front yard is all about curb appeal and usually some effort is put into fitting into the neighborhood. Back yards are more often the place to relax, play and entertain. The relative privacy of the back yard gives gardeners a place to try out new plants, wilder design styles or simply designate a low-maintenance zone where they can be outdoors without feeling the pressure to weed or fix something.

The back yard is a garden of opportunities (pun intended); here are some to consider:

- Is this a low maintenance relaxing zone or a well-groomed entertainment area? Or somewhere in between?
- Is this a deep shade woodland retreat or a sunny wildflower bower?
- Go ahead and grab that beautiful plant you've never heard of and see how it does!
- Backyards are great for habitat; sheltered from the busyness and grime of the street with less pressure to keep things groomed for the neighbors.
- Release yourself from the need to specify a "design style" and put your impulse purchase plants wherever they fit.
- Seating areas can be planted with fragrant herbs, especially things like geraniums, mints and lemon grass that could help discourage mosquitoes.
- Want to plant a nut tree but worried about having them drop on your driveway? Maybe the back yard is the right place for that hickory or bur oak.
- Get wild with your play spaces! Plant interesting textures and leave room to dig in the dirt.
- Start a tradition of sharing plant divisions with neighbors and discover new species.
- Create a pet retreat, I plant a bunny garden for my pet rabbit every year and place a chicken wire run over it so she can nibble and explore.

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