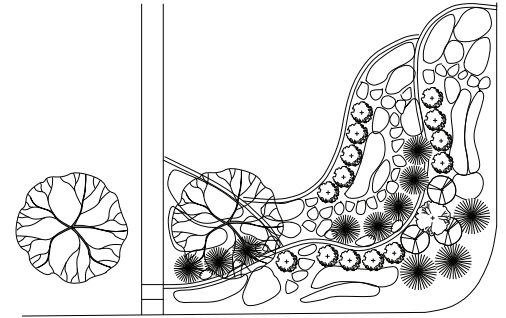






→ Always start with a plan!
↓ The completed front corner garden.



Limitations **CHALLENGE** DESIGN of Front Corner Garden

Story and photos by Judy Nauseef

This front corner garden marked the beginning of a long collaboration with a homeowner who was in the process of becoming a gardener. After buying a home in an older neighborhood, she began to make the yard her own. A large corner lot with mature trees and areas of sun and shade provided endless opportunities.

Excited by the promise of perennial catalogues, she started to order plants. Soon, she realized she needed someone to take a larger look at the garden and called me.

We began on the front corner of the lot where a large tree had come down. The owner was aware that a large portion of this garden was in the right of way, but since there was no sidewalk, wanted to take advantage of the space for a garden. A contractor had built low stone walls, curving around the corner. Good garden soil filled beds exposed to sun all day. This would be the showcase garden for the landscape, visible as people drove or walked down either street. It would frame the house and the rest of the yard.

The greatest issue was the sight distance required by the city for drivers coming from all directions. Their view



A photograph of a garden bed. In the foreground, there are large, light-colored rocks. To the left, there are several large, dense bushes of pink creeping phlox. To the right, there are several large, dense bushes of Japanese garden junipers with dark green, needle-like foliage. The garden bed is mulched with dark brown wood chips. In the background, there is a paved area and a tall, thin metal pole. The sky is not visible.

↓ In spring, pink creeping Phlox (*Phlox subulata*) nestles between Japanese garden junipers (*Juniperus procumbens*).

of the intersecting street could not be obscured. All plants near the corner could grow no higher than 3 feet. An employee from the city forester's office did allow one larger shrub, if it was kept in shape.

The greatest challenge of the project was designing a garden without the variety of heights and shapes of the plants. Working with low rounded and spreading forms meant finding dynamic design in other ways. By contrasting the rounded shapes with the flat spreaders, and using brilliant colors and bands of plants across and up the slope, I created a garden that could not be missed.

The owner was willing to do the required perennial and shrub maintenance. She installed soaker hoses to make watering simple. Pine bark mulch keeps the soil from drying out and slows the growth of weeds. Over time the plants filled in, greatly reducing the need for weeding.

The site required tough plants, due to full sun and the proximity to the street and therefore, snow, salt, sand and vehicle tires. I incorporated a large number of shrubs so when the perennials are dormant, the garden would still read as a garden. Many of the perennials are long bloomers. Two small ornamental trees frame the walk and tie together two parts of the landscape. Both 'Ivory Silk' Japanese tree lilac (*Syringa reticulata* 'Ivory Silk') and 'Autumn Brilliance' serviceberry (*Amelanchier x grandiflora* 'Autumn Brilliance') are hardy and require very little maintenance. The serviceberry is a native plant.

Two junipers, blue rug juniper (*Juniperus horizontalis* 'Wiltonii') and Japanese garden juniper (*J. procumbens*), create carpets of blue and green needles. They have done well in this sunny, well-drained location and need no pruning. Crimson Pigmy barberry (*Berberis thunbergii* var. *atropurpurea* 'Crimson Pigmy') provides vibrant color and, due to its thorns, discourages people from cutting the corner. These are pruned (wearing gloves), because over time, they would grow beyond their bounds. Cheery Yellow Gem potentilla (*Potentilla fruticosa* 'Yellow Gem') blooms all summer and needs pruning once a year for best growth. The large groups of shrubs lend substance and structure to the bed.

↓ In this larger view, the summer garden shows the curving beds of repeating plants in yellows, greens and bronze.



↑ Brilliant *Ajuga reptans* blooms in front of Bath's Pink cheddar pinks (*Dianthus gratianopolitanus* 'Bath's Pink'), Crimson Pygmy barberry (*Berberis thunbergii* var. *atropurpurea* 'Crimson Pygmy') and Japanese garden juniper (*Juniperus procumbens*).

↓ Two companions used in the garden are 'Sapphire' blue oat grass (*Helictotrichon sempervirens* 'Sapphire') and East Friesland sage (*Salvia x superba* 'Ostfriesland').





↑ Dwarf fountain grass (*Pennisetum alopecuroides* 'Hameln'), black-eyed Susan (*Rudbeckia fulgida* var. *sullivantii* 'Goldsturm'), beardtongue (*Penstemon barbatus* 'Navigator'), and 'Blue Charm' veronica (*Veronica spicata* 'Blue Charm') provide summer blooms.

Among the perennials, black-eyed Susan (*Rudbeckia fulgida* var. *sullivantii* 'Goldsturm'), Baby Sun coreopsis (*Coreopsis grandiflora* 'Sonnenkind') and 'Blue Wonder' catmint (*Nepeta faassenii* 'Blue Wonder') bloom all summer. The first two are native plants, as is Goblin

gayfeather (*Liatris spicata* 'Kobold') which sends up violet-purple spikes in summer. East Friesland sage (*Salvia x superba* 'Ostfriesland') will rebloom if cut back after the first flush of flowers, and the daylily will rebloom without removing spent blooms, called deadheading. Carpets of

'Bath's Pink' cheddar pinks (*Dianthus gratianopolitanus* 'Bath's Pink') and the ground cover *Ajuga reptans* adds color in spring with their blooms and throughout the season with their foliage.

After completing this garden, I designed mixed shrub and perennials gardens for all parts of the yard, incorporating existing trees and favorite plants. The gardens definitely kept the homeowner busy, but also gave her great joy. 🐾

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↑ The front corner garden before.

