



## EXCITING EVERGREENS

They offer year-round interest for the low-maintenance landscape

This beautiful focal point of the garden consists of a blue stone landing, cozy fountain softened by camellia, japanese dwarf maple, yellow columbine and pink geraniums.

With today's busy lifestyles, the homeowners I meet all have one goal in common, they are seeking ways to reduce maintenance in the home landscape. With proper planning a landscape design can be developed to produce low-maintenance gardens that offer year-round seasonal beauty.

The Newson's of Richmond wanted just that. Their private space in the rear yard was a blank slate, with a lone crape myrtle, turf and some old overgrown virginia cedars. A beautiful breakfast nook with a panorama of windows provided a fabulous view of their backyard, yet the yard held little interest and certainly was not an attractive setting. The creation of a low-maintenance backyard retreat was just what they needed.

The makeover needed a series of changes, and in the right order. The hard-

scaping elements of the project had to be approached first. The old fence was removed and then the cedars were eliminated. This opened up the yard and added instant freshness to the site. Next a new fence with scalloped curves to reflect the architecture on the house porch was installed. Formal copper finials were the finishing touches, added to the fence posts to give the structure a cottage feel.

As part of the design, a blue stone landing was installed to function as the focal point in the garden, to be enjoyed from inside and outside the house. As a focal piece, a contemporary fountain was centered on the landing for tranquility and vertical interest.

A blue stone walk and stepping stones were added for heavy foot traffic, providing

transition from the rear drive, rear entrance and through the side garden area to an adjoining gate. It's always important to make sure all access walks, paths and gates are wide enough for lawn-maintenance equipment.

Once the stonework was completed, the garden beds were laid out, the soil amended and raised several inches to add depth between the grass and landscape. The plants were placed and planted per the landscape design plan.

Privacy and seasonal interest were addressed by using a mix of conifers and evergreen shrubs with beautiful foliage colors and texture. *Chamaecyparis obtusa* 'Crippsii' (an upright evergreen reaching 15 feet or more) and *Leylandii* 'Gold Rider' (a slow-growing evergreen stretching to 15 to



'Gold Rider' leylandii (back left) with bright gold and green foliage, complements the nearby cotoneaster 'Goldmound' and white blooming viburnum 'Summer Snow'.



'Vintage Gold' cypress, gardenia 'Chuck Hayes' and cephalotaxus adorn the blue stone walk.

20 feet) both show off bright golds and greens with soft textures of fernlike foliage.

*Camellia sasanqua* 'Setsugekka' blooms in the fall, displaying late-season fragrant white flowers. Nearby, perennials white iris, blue salvia and pink geraniums were incorporated throughout the gardens. *Loropetalum* 'Zhuzhou Fuchsia', a favorite purple-leafed evergreen with a cascading habit and bright pink spring flowers, was a great complement to the garden. These were planted in a grouping of three in front of taller growing hollies.

For the part-shade nook of the side garden I selected the seldom-used *Cephalotaxus prostrate*, a low-growing, compact evergreen with a height of 3 feet and spread to 4 feet with soft yewlike

foliage and deep green color. This was a great selection for the part-shade garden.

*Chamaecyparis pisifera* 'Vintage Gold' was planted along the side foundation. The bright gold foliage set off the white painted brick, giving light and visual intrigue to the space. To complete the side garden, gardenia 'Chuck Hayes' was planted in a serpentine drift and mirrored along the rear porch area, combined with *Carex oshimensis* 'Evergold', a bright gold and green, low-growing evergreen grass.

The gardenia was perfect for the garden, not only being evergreen, but best of all blooming nonstop from late May to October. The extremely fragrant flowers could be smelled throughout the garden and inside on cool days with the windows open. Bringing just a few in for cut flowers

added a bonus the Newson's especially enjoyed.

The best place to begin the low-maintenance landscape is to develop a plan for your property. By using evergreens with varying foliage colors, textures, heights and bloom times, combined with unusual shrubs and perennial groupings, a low-maintenance landscape becomes a garden of year-round beauty and enjoyment. 🌿

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