



Garden-In-A-Box Revives Average Boulder Landscape

By Heather Hansman and Kathryn Lisk

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When Beverly Dacanay and her husband Daniel Martin decided to re-landscape their yard they didn't do it halfway. "We didn't want to preserve any grass," Dacanay said. "We didn't want to use so much water; it didn't make any sense to have that kind of landscape when it really didn't fit the environment."

Martin admits that in their effort to save water they had neglected their land.

"Our place was an eyesore compared to the neighbors," he said. So, they ripped out the bluegrass that covered almost their entire quarter acre in South Boulder, and went to work creating a landscape that was both sensitive to the local climate and visually appealing.

They laid out paths that curved through the old lawn. Martin built waist high planters to house vegetables along the back fence, and they converted the front and side yard into a xeric garden.

Xeriscaping is a method of conserving water through using native and drought resistant plants. To convert their yard Dacanay and Martin, who said that they had not been big gardeners before, attended xeriscape classes put on by the Center for ReSource Conservation (CRC), and used three of the CRC's "Garden-In-A-Box" kits, akin to plant by numbers where customers get a flat of water-wise plants along with instructions for how and where to plant them for ideal results.

"They have professional designs, which is really neat," Dacanay said.

The couple's plans started, literally, from the ground up. After getting rid of the grass they designed and built 500 linear feet of stone paths. Martin estimates that they moved 22 tons of rock, and noted, proudly, that they did all the work themselves with only minimal help from their 18-year-old son. "It was a lot of physical work," he said.

After the paths were built, they went to work putting in the vegetable garden and planting the Garden-In-A-Box kits. Dacanay said that they were out in the garden every weekend and that everything they did taught them something different.

Martin installed the micro drip watering system over the past two summers. "When I turned it on and it worked it was one of the best moments of my life," he said. The watering system—hidden under a layer of mulch—waters eight different zones. They said that this summer they plan to water even less than they did last year, because they may have killed some of the xeric plants with too much water.

After a year of adjustment, Decanay is thrilled with the success of the project. Many of the plants were able to come back this spring, making the workload a little easier this year. "Just as expected, some things didn't grow back. We had to replant them. But overall, it's been great."

"We have a lot to do still," Dacanay said. "But, it was so successful that we want to increase it!"

In addition to new plants in the yard, the Decanay family has enlarged their vegetable garden which includes an abundance of vegetables including eggplant, squash, peppers and tomatoes.

"I get lots of compliments from people," said Decanay. "We've got beautiful blooms throughout the spring, summer and fall."

If, like Beverly and Daniel, you'd like to replace your thirsty, dull grass with a vibrant, water-wise landscape, the Center for ReSource Conservation (CRC) can help. For more information on Garden-In-A-Box, visit http://conservationcenter.org/w_Garden-in-a-box.htm The 2010 designs will be posted on February 1, 2010. •

Dan Martin works as an RN and manager in the OR at Boulder Community Hospital. Beverly Decanay works for the Boulder Valley School District as a Special Skills Aide in Special Education. Dan and Beverly live in the Table Mesa area of South Boulder. Their front yard faces south, the backyard vegetable garden faces north. They moved to Boulder from Berkeley, California and have lived at the same house for the last 16½ years. They have two young adult children, raised in Boulder, and will have an empty nest in the next few days!



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