HOW I MADE MY GARDEN:
BY KATHERINE KOUPAL PERRIGO

HAVING paid rent for a number of years, and having nothing to show for it, we decided to buy a place in one of the suburbs of a large city. The opportunity came sooner than we contemplated. We were told of a row of new frame houses built to sell, and as we had not the money to build our own, we made an early inspection and decided on one of the square, well-built dwellings, the rooms of which were laid out much like those in the two floor plans shown on page 335 of THE CRAFTSMAN for December, 1914.

Across the street was an eight-acre tract of land with a number of large shade trees. This land has since been laid out into a beautiful district playground and park. In this we count ourselves very fortunate, as it might have been subdivided into lots and built up solidly in flat buildings. Such is the chance one takes when buying property in a new, sparsely settled locality.

No time was lost in making the change from our flat to the new house. Notice, I do not say home—that developed later.

The lot on which our house stood had to be filled and graded before any planting could be done. There was not a tree or shrub or fence in connection with any one of the houses in this long half block.

When Jack Frost begins to make his visit in the fall, and the cold rains begin, there isn’t much one can do out of doors. However, with the help of an old garden man who made every turn of his spade count, about half the filling and grading was accomplished that fall. The rest was done in the spring, when the front yard was gently sloped to the back alley line. As there was no fence at the back or sides, stakes were driven and a one-foot chicken wire stretched to define the limits of the property. A lot the shape of ours—50 by 125 feet—did not give much chance for irregularity of design, which is more pleasing than a symmetrical arrangement; but we managed to avoid too many straight lines, and
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to give the place a friendly and informal air.

To keep strangers from tramping over the newly graded lot, an irregular path—as seen in one of the pictures—was scooped out with a barrel stave. Over this path were strewn coal ashes, carried out from the furnace. This gave emphasis to the path even at night time, and helped to keep out a good deal of mud that would have been tracked into the house otherwise. The ashes were later covered with crushed stone, but this proved very unpleasant to walk upon, and was changed later.

At that time of planting we did not dream of owning a machine in the near future, building a garage and driveway. Still, when this all came with business located in the home city, a plan was soon evolved without disturbing much of the planting.

By the time a year had rolled around, we had a good lawn and two seedling elms established—the latter transplanted from the open lots in the neighborhood; and I had started a vegetable garden, a few flowers and a vine or two. (You will notice that I am interested principally in the back yard, because most of my work and pleasure lies there, away from prying eyes.) The next year a city landscape gardener set out the shrubs and shade trees in the front. Two of those young trees had to be moved when the driveway was put in. This same year my flower border—mainly perennials—was planned and planted; at least, a good beginning was made. The wild garden with ferns near the south fence has not been disturbed since it was started, though many new bulbs and roots have been added from time to time. On the grassy side of the stones bounding the wild garden, I put in clumps of scilla Sibirica, snowdrops (single and double), ranunculus and blue wild violets. The lawn mower is not apt to run over them, so there is a chance for their tops to mature.

The next year the back and side fences were put up, and with a few improvements to the house inside and out, the place began to take on the coziness of a real home.

Two years after that came the car, garage and driveway. At first the former was kept at a public garage, but when business demanded the constant use of the car we decided to make room for it in our own yard. So again I planned and figured on the space of the backyard. Only part of the vegetable garden had to be given up. The back gate was moved to the other end of the garden, the crushed stone taken to

FLOWER GARDEN SEEN FROM THE BACK PORCH, AFTER REMOVAL OF STONE PATHWAY.

Looking from east end of hardy border toward the back porch.

VIEW TOWARD HOUSE FROM ORIGINAL BACK GATE, BEFORE THE STONE PATHWAY WAS REMOVED.
the front for a ground cover under the porch; the original path was sodded with sod taken from the spot where the driveway was to be laid. The original cement walk close beside the house leading to the front was moved to the south side of the garage around to the back gate.

In this way we secured a very exclusive backyard flower garden, and I gained a spot for a rose garden—south of the house where the cement walk used to be. However, the conditions that any plant would have to endure here were such puzzling problems to me that I availed myself of the Service Department of The Craftsman. I made a rough sketch of the location, stating conditions, and naming the class of plants I desired to use. Shortly after I received a very fine list of plants suitable for such a location, together with an explanatory letter. For unavoidable reasons, the bed could not be prepared until this past spring, 1914, so I am carefully watching the new plantings in their growth.

While the backyard is not extensive, it contains two dwarf Bismarck apple trees, one of which is being trained over the wire fence, two plum trees and a cherry. The cherry gave us half a bushel of excellent fruit in the summer of 1914. The plum trees blossomed, but yielded nothing that year. There is a seven-year-old black walnut tree that I raised from seed; a linden and an elm tree that I planted in 1908 when they were seedlings one year old. These three trees will be of much comfort when the present plum and cherry trees have outlived their usefulness. Grapes we have had for four years, also strawberries, while gooseberries and currants have been plentiful. The asparagus plants I raised from seed, so the bed is fairly established now. Last year I put in some peach stones and now have two seedlings well on the way.

There are eight climbing roses, twenty hardy perpetual roses and five hardy teas. A good many of my roses are in the sunny border with the perennials because that is the best location where I can enjoy them.

The soil in this locality is mostly clay—a little top black soil—so all plants I might select from a catalogue would not grow well in my garden, unless I chose those that liked that kind of a soil. I have added five or six new perennials yearly.

While progress in development of our home was not without annoyances and hindrances, it was well worth the years of struggle—financially and otherwise—and we now have a home of our very own that is much to our liking. And probably the very fact that it developed slowly, and that each detail was the result of personal thought and effort, has given the place a far deeper significance than if we had left it to expert care. As it is, every tree, shrub and flower is a pleasant reminder of the enthusiasm with which we gradually evolved our simple, homelike grounds. And our interest is one that grows with each passing season.


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