



LIFE AT HOME

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EDITOR: LISA MONFORTON 235-7428 FAX: 235-7379

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RENOVATING OUTDOORS

It starts with a plan

Creating a home-grown great garden makeover

YVONNE JEFFERY

FOR THE CALGARY HERALD

I have a confession. I'm a homes and gardens writer whose own home and garden is... well, sort of neglected. It's not that I don't know how to do the umpteen jobs on my to-do list or even that I don't want to do them — I really do. But there never seem to be enough hours in the day.

Take my garden. I dutifully laid out a list last year of all that I wanted to accomplish: Build a deck, build raised veggie beds, finish the gap in the fence that was left when the garage was built, set up my rain barrels, restart my dried-out composter... let's just say that it was long and detailed at the beginning of the summer, and pretty much the same way at the end.

To be fair, I did finish off the fence, which involved saws, levels, cement and me wearing my tool belt. It was a great weekend, and an even better sense of accomplishment, but then time evaporated in favour of two book manuscripts that had to be written to unforgiving deadlines.

Not this summer.

The list strategy didn't work last year, so I'm thinking that what I really, really need (aside from a month off work, but that's a whole other article) is a clearly laid out plan with even clearer goals that I can publicly commit to. I do so love a plan. (I love it even more when it all comes together.)

So, a few weeks ago — in the brief spring that we had between winter in February and winter in April — I asked the Herald's gardening columnist Donna Balzer to help me out. I had ideas, but I wanted an expert's opinion on them: Would they work in Calgary, would they complement the house, what kind of plants would flourish?

Donna and I quickly realized that we had a similar, no-nonsense approach — I would draw out my yard to scale, putting in only the permanent, immovable features such as the house and yard, and collect pictures of the plants and garden-scapes that I liked. She would assess what I had, and make suggestions based on the space, time, money and sunlight that I

More garden planning information

■ Garden consultant Donna Balzer can be reached at donna@gardenguru.net; her rates are \$120 per hour.

■ Garden and landscape designers and do-it-yourself help can also be found at the Calgary Horticultural Society (calhort.org); local garden centres and building stores; and classes or workshops at places such as Mount Royal College (conted.mtroyal.ca) and the Calgary Zoo (calgaryzoo.org).

■ The City of Calgary also offers a range of nature-oriented hikes and workshops through the summer, for inspiration — look for the annual Parks Program Guide (calgary.ca).

had available. Since she charges by the hour, my advance planning would equal money saved for me.

The night before her arrival, I hauled out the graph paper (one square on the paper equals one square foot), the original land survey and the survey version that I'd created for my garage permit. Some artful additions and subtractions and one Scotch later (math never was my strong point), I had the property lines, fences, garage and house marked.

The next morning, I quickly ran down my priority list: I love the English cottage garden look, but have lived in Calgary long enough to know that native plants — or at least those suited to drought, wind and minus-30 winters — are the answer. I like practical plants — those that earn their keep, such as fruit trees and herbs. I adore the scent of lavender, roses and peonies. I have a minuscule budget, but a generous friend who's about to divide her perennials. And last, but certainly not least, my house is all about vertical lines and edges, and the garden is my solution for softening the facade.

Donna and I first walked my yard (which, being all of 32 feet wide, didn't take very long). She assessed the plants that I already had, and the space — an un-shaded east-facing front garden with two small beds in front of the house and two smaller ones on each side of the path where it connects with the sidewalk. I really like those two patches of drought-resistant flowers — lamb's ear, snow-in-summer, thyme and juniper — but even leashed dogs find them an irresistible temptation for territorial marking.

SEE PLAN, PAGE G2



Yvonne Jeffery tussles with an 80-kilogram sod cutter at the beginning of "the great garden makeover" of her southwest home, below.

Ted Jacob, Calgary Herald

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ONLINE FEATURES
FOLLOW THE WORK:
Learn more about the project through Yvonne Jeffery's blog



Ted Jacob, Calgary Herald
Susan Yuzwak rolls the sod off Yvonne Jeffery's property to transplant into her own yard.



Yvonne Jeffery, Calgary Herald
The front yard in early summer before the makeover had a few sparse shrubs and flowers.

AROUND THE HOUSE



Looks that grill

GRILLS • Fans of renowned barbecue chef Ted Reader should take note: The entertaining chap with the "have no fear" grilling attitude has partnered with Napoleon Gourmet Grills to produce two new grills, available at Canadian Tire stores.

Both of the Ted Reader Signature Series barbecues offer roll-top lids, stainless steel temperature gauges, wrap-around condiment trays, a Jetfire ignition system and optional rotisserie kits and infrared bottom burners.

You can choose between a 675 square inch, 63,500 BTU version or a larger 845 square inch, 79,500 BTU model.

Check out tedreader.com for more.

— Calgary Herald

Stop the ants in their tracks

PESTS • Ants in search of food and water often find ready supplies in homes. Here are some tips from the makers of Combat pest-control products for keeping ants out of your house:

■ Ants often enter via tiny cracks and holes in the walls, such as the gaps around utility lines and windows. Fill those openings with caulk.

■ Keep vegetation away from the house, and avoid placing mulch close to the structure.

■ Fix water leaks and insulate cold pipes and appliances on which condensation develops. Ants need water, and they'll enter your home to get it.

■ Leave pet food out only at feeding time, and store it in airtight containers.

— Herald News Services

At home on the web

ONLINE RESOURCES • Check out "The World's Biggest Show & Tell" at www.instructables.com, a fun website packed with functional and silly advice. Learn how to make a Japanese gate for your garden. Find out how to dye fabrics with Kool-Aid in your microwave. Make a radial drill press using only spare parts.

The site is entertaining, but do remember that the instructions are sent in by readers. Enter at your own risk.

■ Get the buzz on products at the home and garden blog at www.consumerreports.org. This thorough blog has categories that cover the whole house and the yard, too. Recent postings told us how to make our kitchen safe and all about the Fuego O2 gas grill. Topics include advice, shopping, vacuums, heating and cooling, paints, product previews, tools, yard and garden.

— Herald News Services

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appliances. Master bedroom hosts a 3 piece ensuite with stunning marble flooring & coordinating shower surround. Also on the main floor: 2 additional bedrooms & beautiful 4 piece bath. Enjoy the spacious media room, family room, large den, 4th bedroom & bath found in the beautifully developed basement. A stylish sophisticated home with a convenient, inner-city locale this newly renovated bungalow awaits you...welcome home!

