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# HANDS IN THE DIRT

*A new design helped make this modest Atlanta backyard into a place to relax and enjoy the view—as well as a place to garden.*

BY RITA STRICKLAND / PHOTOGRAPHY VAN CHAPLIN

Pat Penn's love of flower gardening got totally out of hand a few years ago when her dogwood died. "It was a huge old tree and shaded the whole backyard," she explains. The shady conditions had limited Pat to playing around with a few annuals, perennials, and bulbs in a little side area of her yard in Atlanta's Morningside neighborhood. So when the dogwood died, the garden's insidious expansion began. "Pretty soon, flowerbeds just wandered all over the backyard in little squiggles and curves with no rhyme or reason,"



Daylilies

she says. "It was a do-it-yourself mess."

About that time, a friend pointed out one other shortcoming of Pat's garden. "It's a good thing you like to work," he said, "because there's absolutely no place to sit down out here and enjoy what you've done."

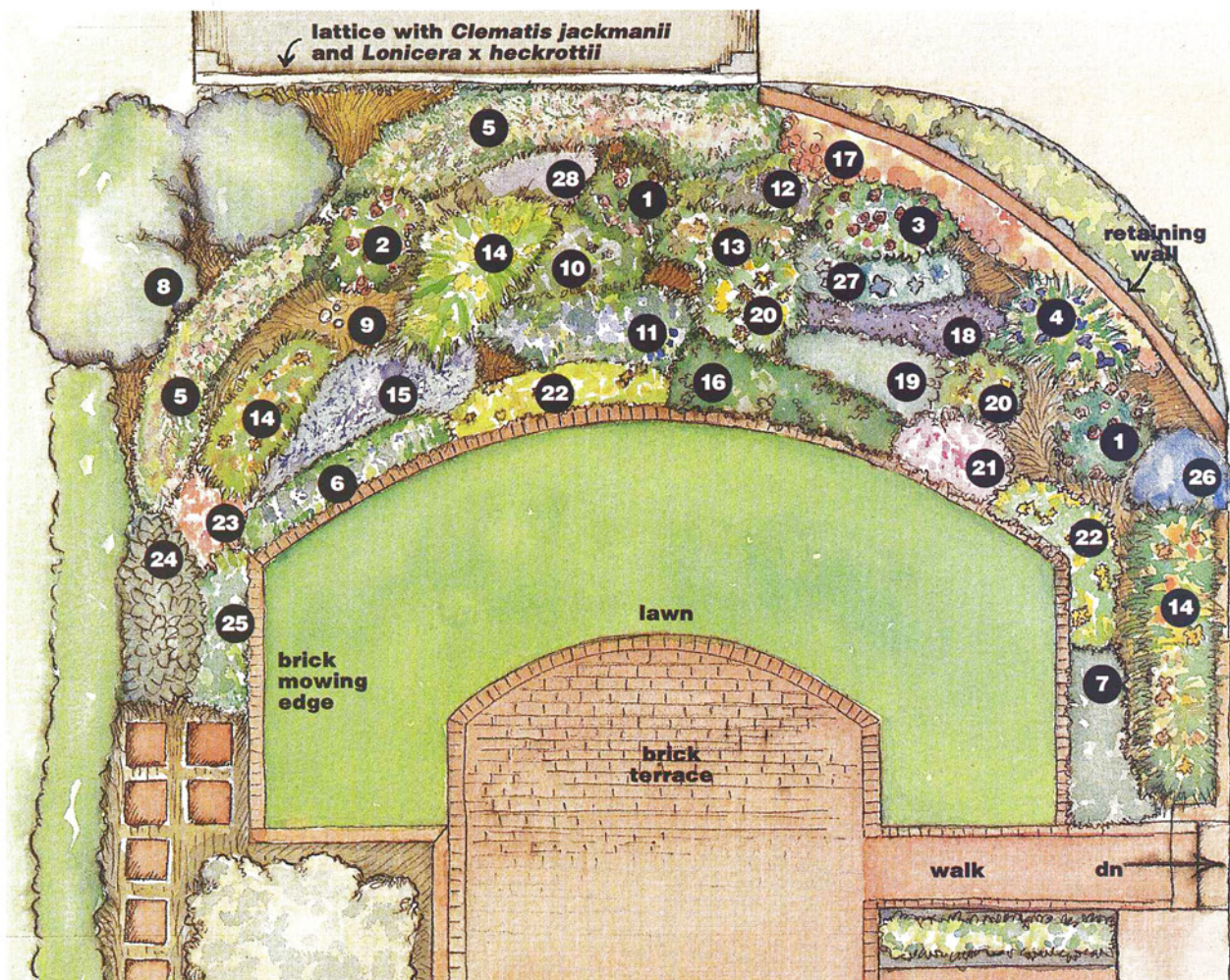
"He was right, of course," Pat agrees. "I did just go back there and work, which I totally enjoyed. But I hadn't even considered having a place to sit down and take it all in." To bring some order to the garden and provide a private spot where she could relax after the gar-

dening chores were done, Pat called on Landscape Architect William T. Smith, ASLA.

Smith's design features three main elements: a small brick terrace, a narrow band of lawn, and naturally, an extensive flower border. The new backyard is a good model for homeowners who want lots of garden in a little space.

For example, the terrace was kept small, which prevents it from rivaling the flowers for attention. "Pat wanted just a small terrace, for no more than two or three people," Smith explains. "Because of its size, the terrace doesn't visually dominate the garden as a larger one might."

There was also room for a small



**KEY TO PLANTINGS**

- 1. Rose Betty Prior
- 2. Rose Gruss an Aachen
- 3. Rose French Lace
- 4. Iris
- 5. Cleome
- 6. Veronica Goodness Grows
- 7. Veronica Icicle
- 8. Shrubs

- 9. Crepe myrtle
- 10. Purple coneflower
- 11. Salvia farinacea
- 12. Echinops
- 13. Solidago
- 14. Daylilies
- 15. Chrysanthemum Clara Curtis
- 16. Chrysanthemum pacificum
- 17. Hollyhocks
- 18. Salvia East Friesland

- 19. Lamb's-ears
- 20. Oxeye and Shasta daisies
- 21. Limonium
- 22. Dianthus
- 23. Astilbe
- 24. Hosta
- 25. Candytuft
- 26. Baptisia
- 27. Platycodon
- 28. Boltonia



More than just a place to relax, this new terrace is also a viewing area for Pat Penn's garden.

lawn, which repeats the shape of the terrace and wraps around it on three sides. The lawn provides overflow space if Pat entertains larger groups, and soaks up rainwater runoff from the terrace and flowerbeds. But perhaps most importantly, in contrast with the flat green lawn, the upright, gaily colored border gets even more attention. "That clear expanse of green sets off the colors of every flower in the garden," Smith says.

Of course, a garden isn't a garden without a gardener, and that's where Pat steps into the picture. Although the shape and structure of the flower border were Smith's design, the plants that flourish within it are entirely Pat's handiwork. Says Smith, "A lot of people want me to do a plan that calls for this perennial here and that one there, but I didn't do that at Pat's. She likes to experiment and learn, and has really done a wonderful job with the border."

Modestly, Pat credits much of her success to trial and error. "I have learned to keep moving things around until I find a place where they're happy. In some cases, though, that place is 'none of the above,'" she adds with a grin.

"Most people who are really into gardening know much more about it than I do," states Pat. "I just like the feel of the sun on my back and my hands in the dirt." ♦



Irish Eyes Coneflower



Pat likes to set out such annuals as petunias to keep her border colorful.