

THE CUMMINGS GARDEN



The Cummings have a lovely, steeply sloped corner lot with a beautiful view of the mountains from their elevated screened porch. Their home was built five years ago and the only existing plantings were a row of hemlocks to screen out the road and a mature magnolia. They also inherited a massive drainage trench on the downhill side of the sidewalk. Water from all neighboring lots drains through this ditch, sometimes in a torrent.

Joan started gardening in the early 70's while raising her family in Massachusetts. "For many years it was only a small vegetable garden. I really began planting perennials and shrubs much later and became a Massachusetts Master Gardener when I retired from the post office in 2005." She and her husband Phil have been guests on many garden tours over the years, and learning from other gardeners has been a source of inspiration.

Since the yard was a blank slate of weeds, Joan started with the hardscaping elements of pathways and pond, stone entryway and stairs to help define the natural terracing defined by larger plantings and trees. "Some of the native planting worth mentioning are Vernal Witch Hazel and Fothergilla which are two of my favorite shrubs. I particularly like the Japanese maple overlooking the pond." A dry creek bed borders the hemlocks and diverts the water while creating visual interest thanks to the way they feature groups of plants. Details in the form of planters and pots, bird houses, and yard art harmonize with the landscape, accenting the plantings and pathways.



The drainage trench has been Joan's greatest challenge... and success. Filled with native plants that drape and draw the eye, pops of color with sedums and hosta, and height with milkweed and Joe Pye weed, the rock-lined expanse has been transformed from blight to bouquet.

"I am someone who figures things out as I go," Joan says, and points to the still growing magnolia that has changed the light conditions in the short time they've been planting. Clearly it is a joy. Joan advises, "Enjoy the work, because it is a lot of work. And soak up the beauty of your garden every day."

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