

VIRGINIA GARDENER

VIRGINIA'S OWN GUIDE TO GREAT GARDENING & LANDSCAPING

**CREATE
A SPACE-
FRIENDLY
VERTICAL
GARDEN**

**12 PLANTS
TO BEAT THE
SUMMER HEAT!**

**GROW VEGETABLE
GARDENS THAT ARE
AS BEAUTIFUL AS
THEY ARE TASTY**

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On the Cover

Vertical gardens have recently become a popular way to garden, although they are not a new idea. They come in all shapes and sizes and can be placed nearly anywhere, adhering to appropriate plant combinations. Featured on page 32. Photo courtesy of Woolly Pocket Corporation.

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A GARDEN WITH

Where inside and outside are one



ENDLESS VIEWS

Story and photos by Beth Burrell



Spiral arborvitae (*Thuja occidentalis* 'Emerald Green'; syn. 'Smaragd') enhances the welcoming entry, along with the four-season interest from variegated boxwood (*Buxus sempervirens* 'Elegantissima'), 'Frostproof' gardenia (*Gardenia jasminoides* 'Frostproof'), 'Biokovo' cranesbill (*Geranium x cantabrigiense* 'Biokovo'), *Heuchera* 'Obsidian' and 'Evergold' carex (*Carex ohsimensis* 'Evergold').



C

ozy, elegant and refined are the words that best describe the beautiful gardens gracing the Toliver home. After living 10 years in Richmond, the family started to

focus on creating more outdoor room for their daughters and more family space to slow down and relax. In 2006, the family moved to their roomy new home and grounds. By 2010, after several years of interior renovations, Tasha was ready to pump up the landscape, taking advantage of the openness of the house, which reveals several great views of the landscape. "Although the grounds looked fine when we moved in, several years later, after minimal enhancing, everything seemed to be quite a mess," Tasha explains. "The grass was dying, the gardens had a personality disorder and were unruly; even the wild areas were too overgrown. We didn't know the difference between what was intentionally planted and what was just undesirable overgrowth. We were afraid to mess it all up, so we did nothing."



▲ The perfectly placed "Vista Garden" may be viewed from indoors or out. *Heuchera* 'Citronelle', hellebore (*Helleborus*) and Japanese tassel fern (*Polystichum polyblephorum*) add color, texture and interest to the composition surrounding this three-tiered fountain.



▣ Quiet serenity is the essence of the "Romance Garden." The bench and birdbath, surrounded by autumn fern (*Dryopteris erythrosa*), 'Heart Attack' sweet William (*Dianthus barbatus* 'Heart Attack'), golden coral bells (*Heuchera* 'Citronelle') and pink-flowering Chinese foxglove (*Rehmannia elata*), creates a favorite spot for Tasha to enjoy downtime.

← 'Heart Attack' sweet William (*Dianthus barbatus* 'Heart Attack') (left) steals the show, while Chinese foxglove (*Rehmannia elata*) nods gracefully (right). Ferns, columbine (*Aquilegia* spp.), Icelandic poppy (*Papaver nudicaule*) and hellebore (*Helleborus* spp.) nestle alongside the reading bench in the lower garden.

With a mission in mind, Tasha and husband Raymond McKinney focused on adding structure to the front landscape, with relaxed formality. Cottage-style plantings work nicely with the Cape Cod style home, contributing four-season interest at the front entry. 'Woodside Golden' columbine (*Aquilegia vulgaris* 'Woodside Golden'), 'Obsidian' coral bell (*Heuchera* 'Obsidian') and variegated boxwood (*Buxus sempervirens* 'Elegantissima') add symmetry to the front beds with the added bonus of fragrance from 'Frostproof' gardenia (*Gardenia jasminoides* 'Frostproof'). Spiral

arborvitae (*Thuja occidentalis* 'Emerald Green'; syn. 'Smaragd') enhance the corners with a formal, yet whimsical, flair. Their oldest daughter Izzy loves playing in the front yard with their dog Polo. "It's pretty now, and it feels cozy and tucked in," she smiles, as Polo enjoys the lush, cushy turf.

To the right, the "Vista Garden," sited under billowing crapemyrtles, can be viewed when entering the house from the opposite side door to the other end of the home's big glass door. "It's such a treat," points out Tasha from the open-concept hall. The outdoor views are equally

stunning from the front entry and the rear veranda. The golden coral bell (*Heuchera* 'Citronelle'), lush Japanese tassel fern (*Polystichum polyblephorum*) and white-flowering hellebores (*Helleborus* spp.) are stunning. A three-tiered, English-style fountain, carefully chosen for both its allure of soft trickling water and its vertical elegance, completes the space.

In the home, the recently added veranda not only is an extension of the surrounding wooded landscape, but it is also the favored place for family downtime and al fresco style entertaining. The veranda looks down



← Through the side glass door, the pink-flowering camellia is a joy to behold. Tasha gathers flowers to enjoy indoors.

➤ Ava (left) grooms the speckled leaves of spotted leopard plant (*Farfugium japonicum* 'Aureomaculatum') as her older sister, Izzy, (right) tidies up the "Romance Garden."

➤ Izzy engages Ava in a game of cards. The daughters enjoy the "Vista Garden," cool shade and quiet splash of water from the fountain, while Mom and Dad enjoy the view from inside.

➤ Ahhh! The joy of cool, lush grass! Polo, the family dog, loves the side garden. A vibrant 'Crystal Palace Gem' geranium (*Pelargonium* 'Crystal Palace Gem') dresses out in green-gold splashed foliage, highlighted by coral-red flowers all summer long.







The rear veranda is both an extension of the home and offers a plethora of garden views. Upper-level windows offer an entirely different view of the landscape.



↑ This repurposed fountain is now a captivating planter. Variegated English ivy (*Hedera helix*), Angelwing begonia (*Begonia hybrid*), purple shamrock (*Oxalis triangularis*) and lavender-blooming cape primrose (*Streptocarpus* spp.) overflow the vessel.

onto the lush yard where Ava and Izzy enjoy badminton with Mom and Dad. Beyond the veranda, a once drab bed, originally occupied only by several trees and an overgrown boxwood hedge, cozies up to the turf.

As a career photographer, Tasha wanted the landscape to be a quiet retreat, yet also provide a natural organic setting for her camerawork; the result was the conception of the “Romance Garden.” With an enticing birdbath, Virginia dogwood trees and a reshaping of the boxwood backdrop, a new, expanded serpentine bed unifies the spot. Benches and a rare selection of perennials and shrubs were a must to create a peaceful reading area. ‘Heart Attack’ sweet William (*Dianthus barbatus* ‘Heart Attack’), Chinese foxglove (*Rehmannia elata*) and ‘Snowcap’ Shasta daisy (*Leucanthemum x superbum* ‘Snowcap’) are some of Tasha’s favorites. Views from the home’s upper level are a family delight. Walking upstairs, Tasha talks about the second story’s picturesque views, “The biggest surprises I get are from the views upstairs. I open the shades in the bedrooms and see the gardens a totally different way. I know they’re there, but somehow, they just always surprise me from upstairs. I’m constantly telling my daughter to appreciate the garden view from her bedroom window!” I agree; the sight is awesome from the elevated position.

The “Hydrangea Cove Garden” is hidden farther back in the garden, beyond the boxwood hedge and massive heirloom ‘George L. Taber’ Southern Indica azalea (*Rhododendron* ‘George L. Taber’). A grove of over 30 ‘Big Blue’ mop-head hydrangea burst into deep sky blue colors during July, followed by drifts of white-blooming oakleaf hydrangea (*Hydrangea quercifolia*) and *Hydrangea paniculata* trees, encircling the wooded inlet. Rustic steps lead up to a natural knoll for a yet another interesting perspective – looking down into the rear yard and side gardens. Ava, the younger daughter, enjoys the creek nestled here; she says it is as if she is on an adventure, completely taking her somewhere else. It is easy to understand that feeling; the house and neighboring homes become invisible, creating a secret garden tucked away in the forest.

During last year’s Historic Garden Week, all of Richmond joyfully experienced the lovely home, incredible garden venues and memorable, enchanting views of the Toliver home and gardens.

Beth Burrell, plant specialist and owner of Giving Tree, Ltd., concentrates on four-season garden design and is an educator for Lewis Ginter Botanical Garden and University of Richmond Continuing studies.