

Two Gardens Are Better Than One

Shared Garden Space Doubles Options for a Hill Garden

GARDEN PROFILE AND PHOTOS BY DEREK THOMAS

Most Capitol Hill gardens vary in length but the width is pretty predictable, often matching that of the house; the usual exception would be those corner gardens that take advantage of the extra wraparound land. Another exception to the rule can be found at 1007 and 1009 Massachusetts Ave. NE. The two homes and their gardens were once owned and maintained by one family, who, after making cuts through the homes and gardens, created a doublewide, magnificent structure and gardens.

When the former owners decided to sell, they listed the houses, both structures date circa 1895, as one property. Sarah Henn discovered the property and fell in love with 1007 Massachusetts Ave., but it was joined at the hip – er, through the firewalls – with the property next door.

Enter Mom and Dad. Sarah’s parents saw the other half, decided to purchase 1009, and moved in next door to their daughter and son in law. Now most parents would think twice about living next door to their children, but Fritz and Suella Henn say it works beautifully. In fact, given their background, the Henn’s residency on Capitol Hill makes sense. The couple fell in love with Washington during their graduate studies at Johns Hopkins, where they met, and though they have lived in phenomenal places, the return to Washington was inevitable.

The unique structure and gardens fit with the varied and fascinating homes and gardens of their past. Fritz Henn, of German decent, and Suella, a native Texan, lived in unique spaces all their lives. The couple has lived in, and still owns, The Heidelberg House in Germany, which sits atop a wonderful flowing hill with a vista of the entire village below. They have owned a 200-acre working farm in Iowa, with fruit trees, beehives and a dairy farm. The couple most recently owned a sprawling residence on Long Island. So this Washington garden and home gives new meaning to the words downsizing, yet the couple says it makes sense since their children and grandchildren live in Washington. Fritz still works in the New York market for a research lab where he specializes in life sciences, but he says Suella has made the switch back to Washington without a glitch. The home has been returned to two residences, but the center opening in the garden has been maintained. This gives the garden two distinct garden rooms connected with a central courtyard. The family turned to Paula Manchester of Garden Places, a design firm located in New York, to take on the challenge of designing the space. Paula had to create a design for two families, though related, that made sense while fitting within the principles of good garden design. She was challenged with two different ideas of what their gardens should be and had to keep an overall flow in the space.

Mission accomplished.

The garden has two distinct rooms. Daughter Sarah’s garden was created



These photos show the wonderful flow of the double wide gardens of 1007 and 1009 Massachusetts Ave. NE.

The two distinct garden rooms compliment and contrast each other.



around a wonderful old native dogwood. A flowing border of azaleas brings color to the spring garden, and a large hedgerow of boxwoods was recently added, lending privacy to the garden. There are hydrangeas for informal summertime blooms. Vinca groundcover wraps the base of the Dogwood, and seasonal flowers always spill over and fill the borders. Two planters filled with seasonal plants flank a bench, and the garden's brick path maintains the 19th century history and charm while adding structure to the informal flow of Sarah's garden room.

Suella's newly-renovated garden is built on the concept of a formal English garden space, yet she wanted the plants to add informality to the formal design. Overgrown roses and smoke bushes were removed, and a hedgerow of yews was taken out and replaced with formal English boxwoods. Dwarf burgundy barberry divides the formal rows of wintergreen boxwoods. There is a grafted blue spruce that has claimed center stage.

Pink roses will be installed in the spring, and a Sioux crape myrtle will be the background height and color during summer months. The rear wings of the garden have been softened with dwarf miscanthus and blue star junipers. The intersections of the wintergreen boxwoods are illuminated by the color of seasonal flowers, and the overall flow of Suella's garden room is that of relaxed formality.

The two spaces are connected with a brick patio that gives visitors a wonderful vista of both spaces. The tranquil and the formal, the compliment and contrast, the doublewide dual garden that flows and ebbs as one beautiful tribute to both homeowners, their tremendous property, and their past and present garden passions.

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