

The Birmingham News

SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 3, 2007

SECTION E

# spa es

## GARDEN REDO

Birmingham homeowners  
Sonny Williams, left, and  
Jeff Johnson create two lush  
landscapes with flowing  
fountains. **4E**





# gardenredo

Birmingham homeowners go way beyond gutters to create 'great escape' in lawn and garden.



BEFORE

SPECIAL

The outdoor project started simply enough.

Jeff Johnson and Sonny Williams wanted gutters for their home.

The two had plenty of ideas for sprucing up the 1960 brick rancher, which sits in a neat-and-trim neighborhood bordering Avondale and Forest Park on Birmingham's Southside.

But Johnson, a teacher, and Williams, a computer programmer, intended to take things one step at a time.

"Keep in mind, we're not millionaires," Williams says.

They found, however, that millions weren't required to update the house's exterior and create two lush landscapes with flowing fountains. Under the guidance of Troy Rhone Garden Design, the outside of their residence was transformed.

It went from mundane to marvelous after the exterior was painted, a new driveway was poured, the front porch and steps were reconfigured, lights were installed and a limestone walkway to the side garden was laid.

"Small things turned into bigger things," Johnson says. "We bulldozed everything."

Both men believe water can provide a soothing decorative element, so they added a sleek fountain in front (with a copper pipe for a spout) and made an existing fountain in their side garden a focal point.

The front lawn received TLC with a thick carpet of emerald zoysia grass and an irrigation system.

Johnson and Williams are enthusiastic gardeners; they paid special attention to the layout of plants and trees. Although the front lawn remains minimalist, the side garden pops with a profusion of flowers, shrubs and ferns. These cradle an old-world fountain in a semi-circle, creating a "mini-piazza," Johnson says. The property line near their carport is landscaped, as well.

Names of plants come easily to Williams and he ticks them off with pride: Sasanqua camellia, Endless Summer hydrangea, needlepoint holly, Deodara cedar, Bracken magnolia, Japanese red maple, white impatiens, autumn ferns, Carolina jessamine, Japanese anise and more.

He and Johnson appreciate the sights and scents their healthy green spaces provide, and say relaxing amid the blossoms has become a daily ritual.

"This is just a great escape," Johnson says.

"We both love Rosemary Beach (in Florida)," Williams adds. "We tried to make Rosemary Beach in our own yard."

Mary Colurso

Want to show off your renovation, redecoration or landscaping success? E-mail [sbrooks@bhamnews.com](mailto:sbrooks@bhamnews.com) or write to Spaces/Room Redo, The Birmingham News, P.O. Box 2553, Birmingham, AL 35202.



AFTER

**Metal bench**

Perfect place for the homeowners to enjoy the scenery and have a morning cup of coffee.

**More flower power**

White impatiens and other plants create a thick, semi-circular border. This frames an existing fountain and makes it even more eye-catching.



AFTER

**Raised flower bed**

Greets visitors at the front door with a profusion of lantana and fragrant four o'clocks.

**Rectangular fountain**

Holds 100 gallons of water and has a ghostly shine, due to effective lighting and an occasional dose of blue dye.

NEWS STAFF/MARK ALMONI

**Sizes before and after:**

Two sections, 125 ft. by 42 ft. and 30 ft. by 42 ft., plus a 40-ft. driveway

**Cost:**

About \$45,000

**Time:**

The first stage took three months; the second, three weeks