



AS SEEN IN THE APRIL 2012 EDITION  
OF *GARDENS CENTRAL* MAGAZINE



*This is a view through the stone orchard towards the new barn.*

## Fields of Dreams

 **By Shannon McKinnon Adam Gibbs Photos**

*In 2003 on the picturesque back roads of Otonabee-South Monaghan near Peterborough, Scott Andersen and Susannah Therrien found their country escape. A small farmhouse and an old tin barn on 50 eclectic acres (20 ha) of meadow, forest and wetlands planted a seed in the couple's fertile imagination that they have been nurturing along ever since.*

"It was important to us to protect at least a little bit of what was already here rather than just mowing it all down and redoing it," explains Scott of their dramatic makeover.

"We tore the old barn down, reclaimed all the beams and the tin and used them in different parts of the house, and then we built a new barn. We're from the city so the new barn was

not necessarily traditional. It has a small workshop in it, a dance floor, a mezzanine with a pool table and big screen TV. It's more like an entertainment stable than a barn. We've had several very successful barn dances there!"

And then there was the garden.

From the beginning, Susannah and Scott enjoyed long walks along a path winding through their forest, over bridges they've built and across their field. Since the property hadn't been farmed for several decades, the hayfield had reverted to a wildflower meadow. While walking, the couple

*While poppies and yuccas spring up in the path toward the vegetable garden the "dead tree" stands guard.*





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*The inner courtyard provides a shady resting place in the summer.*

was enchanted by the ever-changing seasonal waves of colour.

What Susannah and Scott witnessed in the wild was the same formula they wanted to repeat in their flower garden. They turned to Peterborough's famed landscaping duo Dirk Berghout and Gail Rook for help in bringing their plans to fruition. They soon discovered they couldn't have placed their vision in more capable hands.

For over 30 years Dirk Berghout has operated Berghout Construction and Landscape Contracting in Indian River. For the past 12 years he has also owned Florabunda Seeds, a company specializing in heirlooms and wildflowers. Gail has been designing, renovating and maintaining gardens for well over 20 years and runs Gardens by Gail out of Warsaw. Dirk and Gail have been teaming up on garden projects for

*Blue campanula softens and flows over the many stone boulders in one of the back gardens.*

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*Here we are looking down the dry streambed planted with dianthus, sedums, lilies and yuccas. (Or as Scott would probably write, "Not another fucking lily!")*

almost as long as they've both been in business.

Gail and Dirk filled the garden with masses of wildflowers and xeriscape plants that include day-

They planted 700 tulip bulbs that Susannah and Scott refer to as a gift they get to unwrap for three weeks every spring

lilies, hostas and sedums. Then they planted 700 tulip bulbs that Susannah and Scott refer to as a gift they get to unwrap for three weeks every spring. Each week the tulips

*This is the view looking through the garden towards the back patio doors framed with two of the many spectacular planters designed by Scott and Sue.*

Dirk Berghout

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*The circular vegetable garden melds perfectly into the surrounding landscape.*

The sense of movement within the gardens is heightened by the addition of ornamental grasses that mimic the sway of the meadow and animate the entire yard in every breeze

envelope the garden in a fresh haze of colour, moving from red to purple to yellow.

The couple loves the continual sense of movement the changing colours provide as they usher in the spring season. The sense of move-

*This view from our favourite balcony (where we view the all-too-short firefly show) looks toward our newest creation – the spa-firepit, complete with an outdoor shower.*

ment within the gardens is heightened by the addition of ornamental grasses that mimic the sway of the meadow and animate the entire yard in every breeze.

With demanding jobs and four children between them, Scott and Susannah are grateful to have Gail continue to work in the gardens two to three days a week to keep everything maintained, enhanced and evolving. However, they spend as much time as possible tending their garden, loving every minute of it.

"There's no watering system so it takes us three and a half to four hours just to water everything," says Susannah. "We're on a well so hand watering keeps us aware of our water use, but we also find it very relaxing. After a busy week at work it's the perfect way to slow down and spend time in the garden. The silence is wonderful!"

Scott confesses that sometimes he even sneaks out of his office and makes the hour drive just to cut the lawn, cutting down his stress as well as the grass.





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*Boulders are used in the landscape both dramatically and functionally. Here they are used as seating around the fire pit.*

The 400 sq ft (37m<sup>2</sup>) vegetable garden has become a bit of a passion for the entire family.

"The kids all participate, sort of unwillingly at first," laughs Scott. "But they all get into it and find their way with what they want to help with. And to pull a carrot or a radish out of the ground and eat it with some of the soil still on it... well, it provides a sense satisfaction and accomplishment.

"You never see anyone without a smile once we get working in the garden. And taking vegetables to the office or being able to hand out baskets of fresh produce to friends – that's pretty cool, too."

Near the vegetable patch stands a gorgeous dead tree serving as an architectural exclamation point. Gail spotted it in a farmer's field and knew it would be perfect for Scott and

Susannah's place. Dirk approached the surprised farmer for permission to haul the tree away.

"I thought it had great bones, would fit in with the southwestern feel of the place and most importantly it wouldn't shade the vegetable patch," explains Gail.

"It's a real focal point and I'm guessing it's the only time a dead tree has ever been planted! It doesn't take much water. It's very easy care," quips Scott.

Another distinctive feature is their stone orchard – a one-of-a-kind brainchild of Susannah's. A rectangle of dry-stacked stones was laid into place to replicate a time-weathered foundation complete with a whimsical window frame in the side, a doorway at one end and a fireplace in the back wall. Inside half a dozen fruit trees thrive. They include two cherry trees, two pear trees and two apple trees.

At New Year's flutes of champagne are lifted in front of a roaring fire in the functioning fireplace and in the summer the space is frequently utilized for sanctuary or just hanging

*A clematis climbs through the window of Sue's stone orchard from a perennial garden below where lavender and Russian sage shade its tender roots.*





*The elm affectionately known as the "Broccoli Tree" commands the western sky at sunset.*

out enjoying a glass of Chardonnay with friends.

Ash planks form a walled spa area complete with a hot tub. This area mirrors the southwestern flavour of the house. Yuccas and the standing dead tree planted nearby further reflect this theme.

A rooftop garden offers up the perfect palette for Susannah to indulge in her love of containers, along with breathtaking vistas of the gardens and meadows beyond. As stunning as these views are, for three weeks in early summer insects steal the show.

"Every year starting about mid-June, the entire 50 acres is covered with fireflies," says Susannah. "For about three weeks it's absolutely sensational. There are thousands of them. It seems unique to this particular spot. Even people who live in the area say they have never seen so many."

"We'll have dinner parties centered around watching fireflies and there's not one person who hasn't been blown away by the nighttime scene," adds Scott. "It's a natural event that resembles a rock concert when people are flicking their lighters. It's unique and we look forward to it every year."

By Canada Day the fireflies have started to fade and the garden reclaims centre stage.

After almost a decade of flowers, fireflies and finishing projects, Scott and Susannah are still brimming with enthusiasm and new ideas.

"The gardens will never be finished and that's a good thing," says Scott. "In the beginning I would get a little frustrated at how long things were taking to grow and flourish. Then one day Dirk said, 'Scott, I have one word for you... patience.'

"In a world where everyone is looking for immediate gratification, that single word had a profound effect on me. Dirk nailed it when he said that. Above all, this garden has taught us to slow down and enjoy the journey."✿



*The late summer sun illuminates a perennial garden with a view of the new spa in the distance. Here coneflowers, achillea, poppies, sages and barberry set the garden ablaze.*

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