

AWARD WINNER | *Best Front Yard Garden*





Putting on a Good Front

A pocket-size yard is packed with charm that reflects a florist's touch.

There's always a surprise when you come upon John Hochadel's tiny front yard in a quiet old northwest Buffalo neighborhood. The harmoniously colorful displays catch your eye as quickly as the arrangements John creates at his Flowers Etc. floral shop two blocks away.

With help from his housemate, Jeff Tooke, John has devoted several years to revitalizing the 25-foot-wide, 10-foot-deep cottage-style garden into a showcase that's a must-see stop on the annual Buffalo Garden Walk.

"I like a lot of varieties and colors," John says. "It's important to me how they work with the house, complementing each other."

John and Jeff's little white-painted brick home with blue trim provides an idyllic backdrop for the soft, cottage-style garden John prefers. The lane out front was still a rough path when the home was built in the 1850s or 1860s, about a 15-minute walk east of Lake Erie. Over the years, a neighborhood embracing a variety of architectural styles has surrounded the house. Today, a tidy residential area unfurls from Elmwood

By GEORGE HENDRIX Photographer MATTHEW BENSON

Opposite Walled off inside by a previous owner, the original door of Jeff Tooke and John Hochadel's home now serves as a garden focal point. A container of fuchsia harmonizes with a pink Climbing Rose over a bed of pink yarrow, fuchsia-hue cosmos, and an elegant spray of white astilbe. *Above left* John's affection for roses and for the color yellow assured a prominent spot for 'Golden Celebration'. The David Austin English variety with big double blooms can be pruned as a shrub or a short climber. *Above right* The entire 25×10-foot front yard is devoted to a soft, cottage-style garden. The colorful sidewalk container is one of many in the area provided by the neighborhood block club.



Top left The narrow driveway and a small strip of grass between the sidewalk and street are the only areas of the front yard not devoted to garden. John's neighbor planted a few peonies for color. *Top right* Clematis and old-fashioned rose blooms mingle. *Above* John, holding his cocker spaniel, Ebbie, and Jeff both serve on the planning committee for the annual Buffalo Garden Walk. *Opposite* A pink Climbing Rose between the two shuttered windows produced a surprise. "Somewhere along the way it decided to add some red blooms," John says.



Street, where restaurants and shops (including John's) create a popular cultural center.

Jeff and John inherited their front-yard garden when they bought the house in 1997. The garden was approximately 15 years old and had been neglected for several years. "It was really overgrown," John recalls. However, it was planted on a good foundation—a previous owner had excavated the clay common to the neighborhood and replaced it with topsoil.

As John, the gardener in the household, set about reinvigorating the garden, he began changing the color palette. "I seem to like pink and yellow," he says. John tucked in a subtle layer of pink by careful selection of varieties of cosmos, fuchsia, yarrow, clematis, and roses. Additional varieties of clematis and roses added splashes of yellow.

John counts roses among his favorite plants. They're very needy, he concedes, requiring lots of pruning, fertilizer, and frequent treatments for leaf diseases promoted by Buffalo's moist climate. John considers the effort well-spent, particularly because his climbing roses provide such a strong vertical presence in the garden. A tall pink climber planted between the two front windows sprawls across the blue shutters and intertwines with a small dogwood tree.

Another climber splays across the front door, above a pair of potted ornamental conifers. There's no danger of a thorny vine scratching a visitor, though. Years back, the door was walled off on the inside and a new entrance added to the side of the house as part of an expansion. "The door does make a nice accent," John says.



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GARDEN AT A GLANCE | ZONE 5

SIZE 25x10 feet

AGE 15 years

SPECIAL CONDITIONS Short growing
season. Sun in morning and late afternoon.



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trial and error." —John Hochadel

The yard receives early-morning sun and then another burst in late afternoon. John constantly experiments to find which plants thrive in those uneven light conditions. "I always buy what I like, and then go by trial and error," he says. Shade-loving hostas and astilbes have thrived, along with pots of sun-loving geraniums. Although he plants mostly perennials, John has found that many varieties of impatiens, stalwarts of shade gardens, do just fine in partial sun.

"I do more annuals out back," he says. Except for a small patio, the entire 20×35-foot backyard is devoted to flowers.

Each July, as many as 4,000 people view John and Jeff's yard during the Buffalo Garden Walk. Some summer, there could be a new surprise waiting for tourgoers. Between the sidewalk and the street, John and Jeff tend a rectangle of lawn. "Maybe I'll try to do something about that strip of grass," John says. □

For more information, see the Buyers' Guide on page 99.

Opposite Even the neighbor's peonies complement the shades of pink that dominate the front-yard garden.

Right The garden sweeps around the side of John and Jeff's house and fills the entire backyard.



CREATIVE COLOR AND SHAPE

Color and shape are key components of John Hochadel's front-yard garden. He layers blooming plants in harmonious shades of one of his favorite colors, pink, and adds splashes of accent colors. Vertical plants help break up the strong walls of his brick home. You can follow a color palette that suits your taste as well as the style of your home. Experiment to find combinations you like, following a few general guidelines:

■ **Make a list** of your favorite plants and bloom colors before you start.

■ **Look at the mature size** listed on the label when you buy plants. Unless you like to prune, match plants to spaces that they will fill but not overflow. Ignore the rule if you're willing to let the plants ramble, as does John with his Climbing Roses and clematis.

■ **Use potted plants** to play with color combinations at the garden center.

■ **Create clusters** of complementary plants with approximately the same bloom time to maximize the impact in your garden's display.

■ **Look for secondary features** that you like, such as interesting foliage and stem structure. Keep in mind that most perennials bloom for only a portion of the growing season.

■ **Balance shapes.** For instance, John's tall, spiky white astilbes create a pleasing contrast behind the soft mounds of pink yarrow.

■ **Move plants** if you need to. Attractive gardens are generally the result of trying and trying again until you get it right.