



KATHERINE BISH

The Butlers pause in a shady spot of their own design, at the back of their garden.

The Butlers cleared the back to their property line, "opening up the yard," as she says. Bob planted a swath of emerald-green grass, and the couple added an airy patio and small entrance garden there, with an arbor that's now covered with 'New Dawn' rose.

But they also hired a garden designer for the front and side yards.

Bob Butler had seen and liked work in University City by Hilary Daniel, of the Shrewsbury-based company called Gardens by Hilary.

"Hilary pulled everything out," says Jill, except for a large pink dogwood (*Cornus florida*) in the front lawn, a redbud (*Cercis canadensis*) at one corner of the house and assorted evergreen hollies, including Japanese (*Ilex crenata*) and blue (*Ilex meserveae*).

Other original plantings, Daniel says, were "very old-fashioned, very overgrown, and they dated the house. The Butlers wanted something more colorful and contemporary and more attractive."

The result — or reveal, as they say on Home & Garden Television — is a yard that's moved from boxy, sterile and suburban to cottage-garden lush.

"I wasn't going for any particular effect," Daniel says. "I just wanted something hardy, attractive, relatively low-maintenance and colorful. But I wasn't going for a particular style."

Key to her low-key design was the building of an undulating perennial border out from the house's original narrow beds, to encompass a mature dogwood fronting the dining-room win-



Hilary Daniel,
the Butler garden's designer, operates a business in Shrewsbury called Gardens by Hilary. Photo by Steve Engelhardt

dow and a redbud at the opposite corner of the house.

Daniel added more red in a little Japanese maple (*Acer palmatum dissectum* 'Crimson Queen') even closer to the dining-room window, plus a dwarf crab apple (*Malus* 'Pink Princess') out from a window on the opposite side of the front door.

This pleased Jill Butler very much, in that the plantings complement the beige-and-

pink stonework around the entry.

Filling in new beds to the sides of these scene-setting trees are substantial massings of such shrubs as the rose-pink spirea (*Spiraea x bumalda* 'Magic Carpet'), dwarf lavender-pink Korean lilac (*Syringa* 'Palibin'), creamy-blossomed Virginia sweetspire (*Itea virginica* 'Henry's Garnet'), red-fruited Japanese barberry (*Berberis thunbergii*), red shrub rose (*Rosa* 'Knock Out') and white-spiked dwarf fothergilla (*Fothergilla gardenii*).

Smaller perennials add more color — burgundy from coral bells (*Heuchera* 'Stormy Seas'), yellow from tickseed (*Coreopsis* 'Moonbeam') and blue from salvia (*Salvia* 'May Night'). All the while, in summer, a handsome pink climbing rose (*Rosa* 'Cécile Brunner') fills a ground-to-gutter trellis that helps give the garden its wilder look.

"Jim's the turf guy," Daniel says, so she leaves the lawn to him. "I also gave Jill room to get her hands dirty," says the designer, "to put in more plants here and there."

The property, measuring three-quarters of an acre, is



HILARY DANIEL

AFTER By last year, the sterile front's uniform foundation plants had given way to a lush cottage-garden look, complete with the climbing pink 'Cécile Brunner' rose, dwarf crab apple 'Pink Princess' and the roses 'Knock Out' and 'Nearly Wild,' among other perennials, around an existing red bud tree.

much larger than the Butlers' previous digs in Clayton.

"Something I want to tell you about this garden," says Jill, a retired schoolteacher, "is that my husband has Alzheimer's. And the garden has been a god-send for him." He's retired from banking.

"You asked us about our move to a larger place when most retired people are doing just the opposite," she continues. "This space allows Bob to be outside and moving. In the heat of the summer, he might mow two or three times a week. He likes to

dig, and he stays right with me, digging.

"He's confused about some things, such as the watering system. But he does most of the gardening. In the end, he's so proud of it. The garden has just been wonderful for both of us."

The process of it all has been interesting, as well.

The Butlers decided to have the heaviest planting done in three stages: front first, then sides, then back.

"It was expensive," says Jill, "and Bob was getting concerned. So we did it as a three-

unit process.

"We did it that way so that we could manage it financially," she adds, laughing. But when the front-side plants all finally arrived, there were so many that the neighbors asked, "'Are you starting a nursery there?'"

Daniel adds this, on cost. "A project of this scale could be installed for under \$20,000. But I want to stress to people that they can get something for a lot less. The majority of our jobs are under \$5,000."

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