

spruce up a tight spot

Small spaces like this one trapped between a garage, the house and a concrete sidewalk can be difficult to deal with. The buildings and concrete all hold heat and the light is limited. And because it's so close to the entry, you'll want something attractive and colorful to greet visitors as they arrive. Taking care of the soil and getting rid of the rock mulch was a great place to start. And adding trees and shrubs for structure and seasonal interest all along the foundation was the next step. Now it's time to focus on what you can plant in the tight spot by the door. Annuals and perennials add that punch of color that creates a knock-out garden. The original planting didn't have much, so there was lots of room for improvement. Now the show starts in spring with pink bergenia blooms above red-tinged foliage. Later, bloody cranesbill, purple coneflower and chrysanthemums emerge. Annuals between the shrubs provide a steady supply of color all season.

MULCH MATTERS With the rock mulch gone, you need to cover the soil in some way to help conserve moisture in this hot spot. Don't throw the rock mulch away, though — it can come in handy. Check out "Saving stone" below for a great recycling idea. Organic mulch, such as shredded bark, is a good solution because it keeps weeds down and feeds the soil as it decomposes. Another organic solution is to plant a ground cover like the vinca in this garden. It shades the soil, keeps weeds



(3) A good-looking ground cover, such as the vinca here, softens the hard sidewalk edge, keeps weeds down and has pretty purple flowers in spring.

down and, to top things off, it blooms, too! As this spreading ground cover grows, it creeps out over the sidewalk, softening that hard concrete edge.

GET PLANTING The area above started out with a few yews and some hostas with crispy leaves. And since the soil needed some work anyway, it was a good time to remove one of the yews that was struggling and assess the situation. With a south exposure, those hostas were getting too much sun. If you notice that happening, move them to the more hospitable east side of the house. Start with structure plants, like this Japanese maple. It provides height, and those burgundy leaves are beautiful from spring to fall. Even after you put plants in the ground, don't be afraid to make changes. For example, the first rose, which was pink, just didn't go with the other colors. Now, a yellow-peach one is much better.

It pays to keep different perspectives in mind while you're planning the garden. While you can't see these yews from the street, you wouldn't want them too tall or they'd block the view in and out of the window. Plus, when visitors come to the front door and stand on the porch, that spot under the window where the yews grow is very obvious. Give the yews a quick clean up with an electric hedge trimmer every year to keep them the right size.

Whether you have a new home or not you can use these ideas to revamp your foundation planting so you have a landscape that stops traffic. □

— Sherri Ribbey

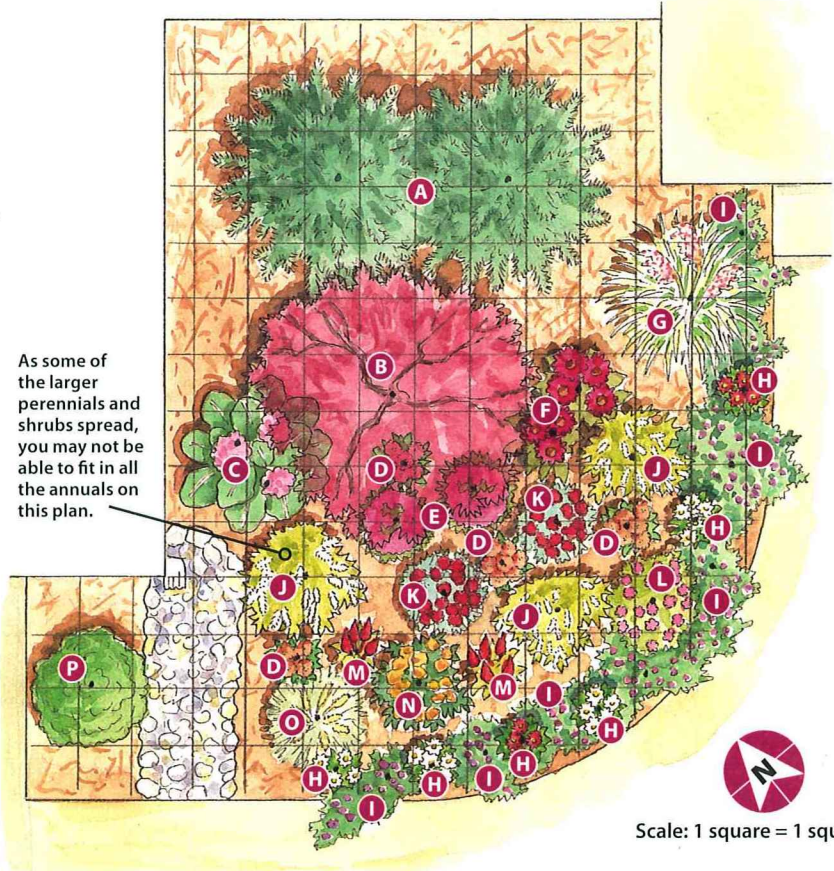
Saving stone

Most of the rock ended up under the deck in the back yard to keep weeds down. But this little ribbon of stone makes a mini dry-stream bed that directs water away from the foundation when it rains. It looks a lot better than a plastic downspout out to the walkway would. To do this, just make sure you build up the soil and rocks so you have a slight slope from the house down toward the sidewalk.





As some of the larger perennials and shrubs spread, you may not be able to fit in all the annuals on this plan.



WARM, SUNNY CORNER

Code	Plant Name	No. to Plant	Blooms	Type	Cold/Heat Zones	Height/Width	Special Features
A	Spreading yew <i>Taxus xmedia</i> 'Densiflora'	2	NA	Shrub	4-7/7-1	3-4 ft./4-6 ft.	Needled evergreen; responds well to annual shearing
B	Japanese maple <i>Acer palmatum</i> Emperor I® ('Wolff')	1	NA	Tree	5-8/8-1	15-20 ft./15 ft.	Burgundy foliage all season; late to leaf out in spring; more cold-hardy than other varieties
C	Bergenia <i>Bergenia cordifolia</i> 'Winterglow'	2	Pink; spring	Perennial	4-8/8-1	12-18 in./12-18 in.	Evergreen foliage develops a red edge in cooler weather
D	Zinnia <i>Zinnia elegans</i> 'Dreamland Mix'	4	Mix; spring to fall	Annual	NA/12-1	10-12 in./8-12 in.	Water at soil level to prevent powdery mildew
E	Aster <i>Aster novi-belgii</i> 'Alert'	2	Red-violet; late summer	Perennial	4-8/8-1	12-15 in./12-15 in.	Dwarf variety won't flop; covered in flowers
F	Purple coneflower <i>Echinacea purpurea</i> 'Fatal Attraction'	2	Purple-pink; summer to fall	Perennial	3-8/8-1	18-24 in./12-18 in.	Fragrant; dwarf variety; petals won't droop; goldfinches feed on seedheads
G	Maiden grass <i>Miscanthus sinensis</i> 'Variegatus'	1	Red-pink; late summer to fall	Perennial	5-9/9-1	5-9 ft./4-5 ft.	Variegated foliage; red-pink flowers turn silver in fall; plumes last into winter
H	Zinnia <i>Zinnia</i> 'Profusion Mix'	6	Red and white; spring to fall	Annual	NA/12-1	12-18 in./9-12 in.	Water at soil level to prevent powdery mildew; attracts butterflies
I	Vinca <i>Vinca minor</i> 'Atropurpurea'	6	Purple; spring	Perennial	4-8/8-1	4-6 in./6-18 in.	Deer-resistant; can be invasive in some areas
J	Sweetspire <i>Itea virginica</i> Little Henry® ('Sprich')	3	White; late spring, early summer	Shrub	5-9/9-1	18-30 in./24-36 in.	Compact form; fragrant flowers in late spring; needs consistent moisture; red fall foliage
K	Chrysanthemum <i>Chrysanthemum</i> 'Five Alarm Red'	2	Red; late summer to fall	Perennial	5-9/9-1	14-24 in./20-36 in.	Cut plants back by half in early summer to encourage bushy growth
L	Bloody cranesbill <i>Geranium sanguineum</i> 'Vision Violet'	1	Magenta; summer	Perennial	3-9/9-1	1-2 ft./1-2 ft.	Cut back spent flowers for a second bloom
M	Celosia <i>Celosia plumosa</i> 'Castle Scarlet'	2	Red; spring to fall	Annual	NA/12-1	12-14 in./12-14 in.	Drought-tolerant; pest- and disease-free
N	Rose <i>Rosa</i> Flower Carpet® Amber ('NOA97400A')	1	Yellow-peach; spring to fall	Shrub	5-10/10-1	24-30 in./24-30 in.	Remove dead or damaged canes in late winter; deadhead to encourage more blooms
O	Fountain grass <i>Pennisetum alopecuroides</i> 'Hameln'	1	Buff; summer	Perennial	5-9/9-1	18-30 in./18-30 in.	Leave foliage standing for winter interest; cut back in early spring
P	Dwarf Alberta spruce <i>Picea glauca</i> 'Conica'	1	NA	Tree	2-8/8-1	8 ft./5 ft.	Slow-growing evergreen; provides winter interest; rarely needs pruning