

# The Patton Garden

## A Meaningful Collection Dennis and Laura Patton — Overland Park

### About the gardener

The Pattons had their home built 34 years ago. With a builder-grade landscape and a row of large hackberries from back when the property was a pasture, the couple began with nearly a blank slate and loads of opportunity. Dennis's experience as the Johnson County Extension Horticulture Agent has made him uniquely qualified to understand what it takes to make a garden come alive and thrive!

Plants inspire Dennis. He shares that there are two types of gardeners: plant collectors and plant designers. He categorizes himself as a plant collector. He enjoys as much diversity as possible. He often breaks the rule, 'Don't purchase a plant unless you know where it will be planted.' Like many, he will buy the plant and then find it a 'good home' in his garden.

Overcoming high clay and compacted soil has challenged the Pattons. Being the first owner, they learned the hard way how constructing a new home can destroy the soil. Having no idea what happened to the topsoil in much of the yard, they have amended the soil as the years have passed, making it much more hospitable for the collection of plants they enjoy.

### Dennis's tips

- ✓ *"Life is too short for ugly plants."* If the plant does not bring you joy, replace it with something you love.
- ✓ Concentrate on growing great roots. Without great roots, there will be no great 'top.'
- ✓ Add mulch at least two inches in depth. I believe you should spend more on soil improvements and mulch than on your plants.
- ✓ Avoid overfertilizing and applying too many pesticides. This leads to more pest problems. Keep your plants 'lean and mean' for best results.
- ✓ When dividing plants, it is ok to throw away the extras.
- ✓ If a plant or groundcover spreads faster than you can keep under control, it's best to remove it!



### Special things to notice about this garden

- Notice the valued **family heirloom plants**, particularly the **iris**, given by Dennis's maternal grandparents and the **peonies** from his paternal grandparents. They and other plants represent a treasured memory of special people in his life.
- Several **bargain plants**: a **Japanese Maple 'Bloodgood'** was purchased for \$3, and the **Standard Blue Spruce** was purchased for \$5. These are proof that a bargain plant can really pay off.
- **Plants that attract butterflies and hummingbirds** are placed strategically around the patio area for 'close-up' enjoyment.

### Dennis's favorite plants

- **Nepeta**. Blooms April until frost. Who cannot love this plant! Highly recommended by Dennis; you see it thriving all around town.
- **Panicle Hydrangea 'Quick Fire'**. It is the first hydrangea variety to bloom, and they hold their beautiful blooms throughout the season.
- **'Harry Lauder's Walking Stick'**. Twisted branches screen the view and provide cover for birds who use the nearby feeder.
- **Peony 'Bartzella.'** This elegant semi-double peony has a sweet fragrance and an irresistible bright sunny yellow color.
- **Weeping Norway Spruce**. Lovely dark green color with a graceful, free-flowing habit. It is a great focal point for year-round interest.