

How does your garden grow

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The Kroes' half acre in Cedar hills is a yard act to follow

By Ashley Dickson

Steve Kroes is a businessman for Utah Foundation by day, gardener by night and weekend.

Raised by a flower-and-vegetable-gardening mother, Steve helped in the yard and designed a few flowerbeds as a teen. But he says it didn't become a full-grown passion until he and his wife bought their first condo.

"It had little strips of dirt in front and I started going crazy, planting whatever I could," he says.

Since then, Steve's hobby has grown like a good weed. And it has spread to the Internet in the form of www.ValleyGardens.com — a budding source for gardening ideas, articles and places to shop. It's also the home of the gardening blog he updates regularly with tips and photos from his yard.

But his true devotion goes to the 21,780 square feet he has taken from raw land to an alfresco oasis.



Expert gardener Steve Kroes values a hobby that allows him to create. "To dig into the dirt and feel something tangible and substantial is a relief from working in concepts and ideas at the job," he says.

Although Steve beautifies his half acre, he says gardens work in all plot sizes. "Wherever you are, whatever your circumstance, you can garden — whether it's a little container or a half acre. Having a garden that is lush and active and growing and beautiful rings a sense of peace into our lives."

Steve utilizes garden structures to add a visual focus. "They look really nice and can change the image of your

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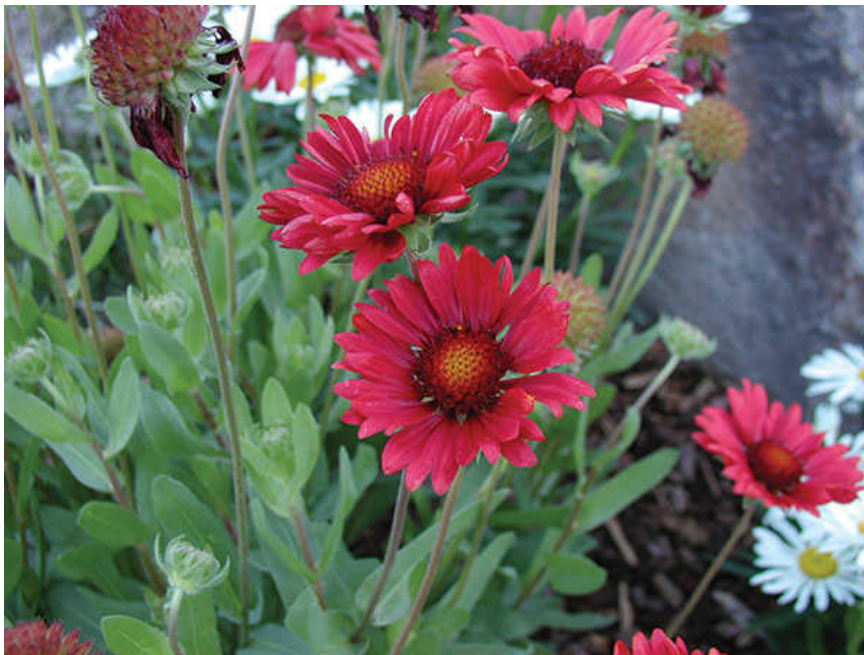
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garden," he says. "The arbor is a lot of fun. It gives us a shady spot we can sit in during the summer. I have a row of roses on both sides of it and they form a crescent shape, leading you to the arbor. It's a passageway that separates two areas of the garden."



Eight-year-old twins Emma and Eliza Kroes are gardeners in training.

"The kids definitely don't like weeding — that usually has to involve a reward," Steve says. "But they do like eating the stuff. Sometimes I find kids will eat vegetables if they've helped grow them — they're invested in it. It's a way to expose them to new things."



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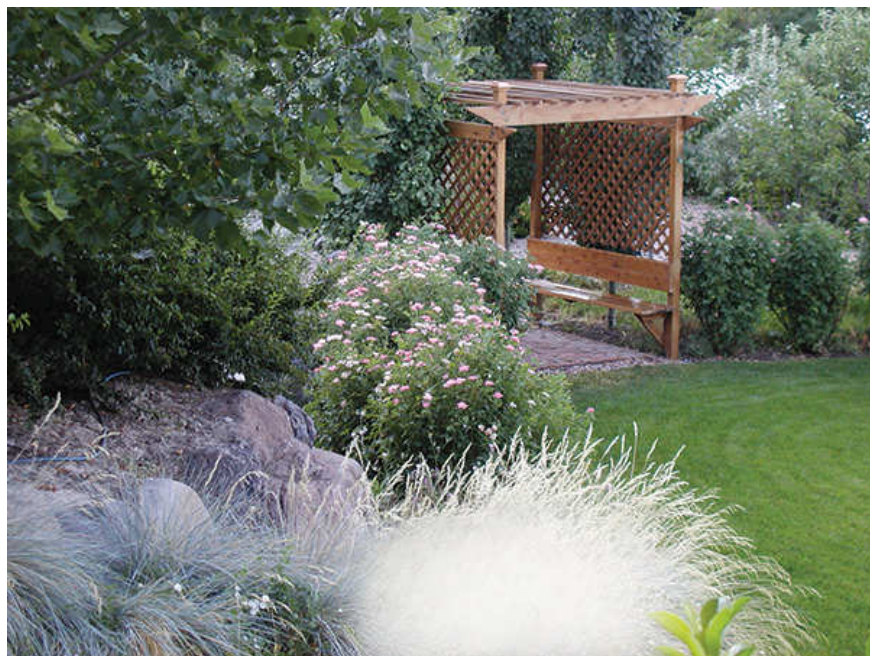
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Utah Valley's climate is ripe for growing fruit. Steve's neighborhood used to be a cherry orchard, and he's had success with apple, cherry, peach and nectarine trees. His raspberries and strawberries also do well.

"You can have a bunch of different seasons of fruit," Steve says. "It's your own home-grown food all summer long."



When the Kroes family moved to Cedar Hills in 2001, they made landscaping a priority by setting a garden budget.

"I bought 40 trees, 200 shrubs and about 300 perennials," Steve says. "And the next spring I bought even more flowers. I decided to install everything myself. When I look at my garden, I have a sense of sacrifice for it."

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Home & Garden Part 1



Ashley Dickson

Ashley Dickson is a Virginia native now living in Boston. She graduated from BYU with degrees in journalism and home and family living, then spent three years writing and editing for Utah Valley Magazine. She left the mountain West to earn a master's degree in library science and now splits her time between motherhood, editing for a financial research firm, and keeping a connection to Utah by writing for UtahValley360.

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