





a fresh start

A Kirkwood family makes lemonade out of lemons at the first sign of spring.

BY LUCYANN POSTON PHOTOGRAPHY BY MICHAEL JACOB

"When it rains, it pours," has never been more apt than for Kirkwood homeowners, Kerri and Greg, who bring their love for the Seattle area to their historic and newly renovated St. Louis home. For the couple, a front yard filled with hyacinths, daffodils and tulips is proof positive that every cloud has a silver lining. With the home's extensive transformation, the spacious front yard lost its original identity. From late October when the yard was cleared (through Christmas, when the couple moved into the home) until





Clockwise from top left: White 'Kaiser' and purple-cupped 'Aestiva Mystery' tulips align with the spring garden's elegant color scheme. A 200-year-old wrought-iron fence from a former estate eventually encloses the front yard. 'Mount Hood' daffodils and 'Blue Magic' hyacinths make the breathtaking spring garden display.



late February, when the ground thawed, the family's front "lawn" was a mass of mud. "I don't even know how the mailman got to the door," Kerri admits. "We were getting notices from the City of Kirkwood asking us what we intended to do with our front yard."

But with the advent of spring, the dark clouds began to part and reveal the silver lining under all that mud. "What had seemed a total mess actually turned into a blessing," Kerri says. "Because we found ourselves with a clean slate for a front yard, we could literally do anything we wanted."

For the landscaping project, they selected Rex Rieger, who

heads Rex Rieger Landscaping. "At the time we talked, Kerri didn't even have a front porch, but she already knew she didn't want traditional foundation planting," Rex explains.

Kerri admits, "I didn't want landscaping up by the house. I know it's the reverse of how people usually envision their yard and garden, but I wanted to be able to sit on the front porch and look out at the beautiful landscaping." Kerri also wanted a landscape plan that was as low maintenance as possible. "Someday I will be able to spend hours in the garden, but right now I have kids," she adds with a laugh.

Incorporating those directives, Rex designed a garden that flows along both sides — and across the front — of the yard. A flagstone walk ties the planting to the porch. Most of the landscaped space is occupied by small trees, flowering shrubs and easy-care perennials, with four areas reserved for spring bulbs and flowering annuals. “Those four areas can pop in color and change with the seasons,” notes Kerri. “It looks like we’re doing much more work than we actually do.”

With an eye toward year-round interest, Rex used numerous multi-trunked, spring-flowering serviceberry trees, azaleas and viburnums along the sides of the property. All three also provide good fall color and winter interest. A line of diminutive ‘Green Velvet’ boxwoods stretches across the front of the property, and two male-trunked ‘Whisper’ birch trees mark the beginning of the walk and will continually arch over it. Rex also added a purple-leaved ‘Forest Pansy’ railroad to the mix and planted numerous

lark green, ‘Royal Standard’ lonicas and grass-like liriope plants that act as ground cover.

Kerri had her heart set on a wrought-iron fence to enclose the entire front yard and fortuitously came across the perfect 100-year-old fence at an estate sale in Ladue. “The fence really ties everything together,” Kerri notes. “We did it, and we did it right,” she adds, thinking of the landscaping that perfectly complements her historic residence.

And then comes the idea of making “lemonade out of lemons.” Kerri explains, “Greg grew up in Alabama and knew of a wonderful woodworker there. He took logs from the maple and dogwood trees from our home’s previous landscape and created beautiful bowls that we truly cherish and display throughout our home — and we’ve given others to friends.” The precious keepsakes are among the unexpected treasures that grace the family’s voyage. As their home’s landscape blossomed, what was once old became suddenly new.

Opening page: Kerri’s vision for the welcoming front porch that now spans the front of their home was realized with the remodeling expertise of Agate Construction Company, a Design and Build Firm. **Below:** According to landscape designer Rex Hoyer, the multiple trunk on most of the trees gives the planting a three-dimensional, vertical aspect that makes it look as if the house sits further off the street than it actually does. The front porch’s peaceful setting provides a bird’s-eye view of the blossoming spring garden, beginning with spring-flowering serviceberry trees. [See page 48 for more.](#)

