

The Livingston Garden

Step Into the Shade

Frank and Brenda Livingston —
Overland Park

About the gardeners

The Livingstons moved to Overland Park in 1985 from South Carolina. Having trees was a priority, so their home is on an established tree line. At first, they only had grass and trees but soon began building flower beds with impatiens. Then they came across a plant, called hosta, which came back every year and could be divided. Thus began the couple's tremendous hosta garden!

In Kansas, grass is difficult to grow in the shade. The couple longed for the day they could have a garden with no grass. This inspired them to begin that dream. They designed as they gardened, adding beds and pathways. Once they had obtained enough hostas, they began to design with them. One example is the grouping of Krossa Regal Hostas, to form a wavy stretch running through the center of a garden bed.

One challenge the Livingstons faced is that the slope of the property creates water running along abutting yards during heavy rainstorms. Installing brick and slate paths along the route of the water and raised beds has kept the plants from being washed away.

There have been four graduations celebrated over the years with a tea party in the 'Secret Garden'. The first was held when a granddaughter was graduating from daycare. Dressed in their finest, including gloves, boas and hats, the girls enjoyed dancing around the Maypole and sipping lemonade in tea cups. This year they have requested another graduation tea party in the 'Secret Garden' to celebrate their college degree. These memories are sure to endure for years to come, just like the garden.

Frank and Brenda's tips

- ✓ Growing hostas could pose a problem when planted near trees, especially Maples. If your hosta seems stressed or is not growing, then you may have tree roots taking over. Time to dig up the hosta, remove the tree roots and replant.
- ✓ Stick with plants that grow best in this area and under your particular garden conditions.



Special things to notice about this garden

- Frank has learned the art of casting **concrete leaves**. See the **steppingstone paths**, a bench, and three **unique fountains** that illustrate his talent. Brenda enjoys painting hosta and fountain leaf castings, plus the concrete bench.
- Another feature is a not-so-secret **tomato garden**. This bed has a beautiful **metal** and handmade **wood structure** that defines the outline of the tomato bed, which happens to be in a sunny spot along the side of the front driveway.

Frank and Brenda's favorite plants

- **Hosta 'Sagae'** An attractive, large, upright hosta... short plants can grow under its canopy.
- **Hydrangea 'Fire Light' Tree**. This plant requires little upkeep and has upright blooms that turn from a pretty white to soft pink.
- **Dragon Wing Begonias**. Charming plants that provide continuous blooms in sun or shade. They are a dependable bloomer in pots or in the ground.
- **Ghost Fern**. A vigorous and easy to grow fern with a neat, formal, upright mound of rigid, silver-green fronds. It pairs well with hostas!
- **Jet Star Tomato**. Reliable, heavy producer and excellent flavor – what more could anyone want!