

SECRET GARDENS OFFICE GARDEN

1698 Hanchett Avenue
San Jose, CA 95128

This 1939 garden has had two owners. The current owner's family has lived here since 1950. The current owner, Kathryn Mathewson, is an ecologist, botanist, trained landscape architect, former college professor, and has had her Secret Gardens garden design company since 1979 on Hanchett and formerly on the historical South Park in San Francisco. Kathryn has gardened in this garden all her life. This garden is located in San Jose's historical Rose Garden neighborhood.

The minute one enters this garden the air seems cleaner, the smells are crisper, and the sounds are like natural areas far from cities and cars. This approximately 10,000 square foot garden (one-quarter acre lot) has a path which connects many different garden rooms and garden themes. Some of the things one can see along the garden path are: strawberry and blueberry and raspberry patches, 23 fruit trees, a vegetable garden, herbs and flowers everywhere for all seasons and for a home pharmacy, lawn/meadows, four fountains, many sitting places, garden art from Kathryn's San Francisco garden store, a day bed and hammock for sleeping, unique pots and hanging baskets, perimeter plants for bird habitat and privacy, and a nursery in the back forty.

In its 70 year history no pesticides or chemicals have been used. It is a model of organic and sustainable practices which include:

1. Biodiversity with hundreds of different native and drought species;
2. Soil with an abundance of organisms to reduce water and to feed the plants naturally thus creating a better soil carbon sequestration environment;
3. Recycled tree chips for mulch which protects the soil organisms;
4. Habitat for 14 different bird species, compost piles designed into the garden;
5. Drip and on-line emitter irrigation combined with spray;
6. A filter to remove chlorine before irrigating, high tech irrigation timers to allow for different watering schedules to manage different watering needs and reduce water;
7. Shade to reduce water needs and reduce summer heat and glare;

8. Petrochemical reduction by selecting low growing grasses to reduce and/or eliminate mowing;
9. Selecting plants which fit each space thus reducing pruning needs;
10. Plants which reseed and can be divided to reduce nursery trips;
11. Clean air by not needing or using blowers;
12. Perimeter plants which take up the dust from the adjacent mow/blow gardeners;
13. Herbs and legumes which will improve compost/soil diversity and create a home pharmacy;
14. Garden clothes hangers to replace dryers;
15. Home grown food (23 fruit trees, blueberry and strawberry and raspberry patch, a place for greens).

The theme of the children's garden book, The Secret Garden, is finding and uncovering a garden that heals and brings a sense of peace. This Hanchett Avenue garden resonates with a similar theme. A visit to this garden should help those who visit find ideas for how they can bring these qualities into their own garden space or even into public spaces. Neighbor's houses, the street, cars, telephone poles, and wires are softened and, in most cases, hidden. From inside the house every window is a picture.