

KAREN BESS LANDSCAPE NARRATIVE

The Site and Soil

This 1940's frame cottage sits in a bed of lawn between two older, larger homes on Main Street in downtown New Castle. The site I have inhabited and observed for one year was once part of the "dooryard" of the 1850's brick, Italianate "Valentine" house next door to the south. At various times the lot may have contained a stable, a corn crib, coal bin, and kitchen garden.

The ¼ acre patch of ground is mostly flat and slightly elevated, with short, gentle slopes down to Main Street on the west side, and Valentine Street to the south. Main Street runs north and south; the front of the house faces almost due west. The soil composition is a deep, well-drained, silty clay loam; Lowell series soils (B: 2-6% slopes) will grow about anything. My house rests on a ridge where two watersheds touch: those of the Kentucky and Little Kentucky Rivers.

New Castle (county seat, population 1000) is a 35-minute drive northeast of Louisville. The town sits at the center of Henry County, which is still one of the top ten counties in the state for agricultural production; tractors and hay wagons are still common sights for Main Street, and the farms still surround the town on all sides. However, the traffic on Main Street during the weekdays is NOT that of a sleepy town: dump trucks, concrete mixers, and tractor-trailers of all kinds pass all day—cutting across from interstates 71 and 64, squealing their brakes as they approach the center of town two blocks away.

Design Directions

Phase 1: Buffering the impacts from Highway 421 traffic and increasing privacy are currently the most pressing design issues and the focus of this design plan. This will also dramatically reduce the **wicked** and **weary** task of mowing so much lawn every week.

Phase 2: Develop the rear kitchen garden with new patio and walkways; oil prices and the distance to shopping centers dictate that I must grow more of what I need, in addition to supporting my local farmers' market. Future phases may add: a stairway and upper deck or terrace above the rear patio (allowing separate access to the 2nd floor; a new double doorway, stairs and patio from the living room to the side yard; and simple, re-circulating water features made from very large colorful ceramic pots for enhancing habitat and masking traffic noise.)

Design Goals:

- Reduce requirements for power mowing, watering and spraying as much as possible.
- Buffer the air pollution, dust, noise and commotion from a busy thoroughfare (Highway 421).
- *Create opportunities for many layers of life:*

- Plants: a mix of natives, edibles, and a few choice ornamentals for color and cutting.
- People: a landscape designer’s retreat; a new “public” entry and gathering space for clients (individuals and small groups) friends and family, and teens that I mentor.
- Animals: a fenced-in area for an older dog; many niches for birds, butterflies, etc.
- Reflect the patterns of diversity found in nearby farmsteads, hedgerows, woodlands, open fields and agricultural production.

PLANTS, BUDGET, ETC.

I’ve designed landscapes for 17 years. I would never, ever have done a site plan for myself without this kind of right-minded, regional “competition.” Thanks for the inspiration (and deadline.) As a planner, designer, and busy citizen, I sure appreciate any incentives toward cultivating a garden of my own, for weeding, pruning, entertaining friends, welcoming clients and relaxing—**NOT MOWING!!**

In my work, the initial plant list is always somewhat preliminary. Plant selections and costs are lumped together as rough estimates, and it is budgeted as if a landscape contractor were doing the job. I will, however, likely do much of the work myself, and beg/borrow/steal from the gardens of friends and clients.

BUDGET

Shade Trees	2	x \$150 = \$300
Understory Trees	6	x \$100 = \$600
Shrubs:	88	x \$30 = \$2640
Grasses/Groundcovers	150	x \$12 = \$1800
Grading & Topsoil:		\$ 350
Bed Preparation & Mulch		\$400
Total Estimates		\$6,090