

Plant This Easy Garden Bed

Keep blooms coming through summer and into fall with this 5×5-foot corner bed designed with the late season in mind.



Transforming a bare suburban corner into an inviting place for plants requires little more than providing good soil and structure in the form of a fence.

WRITTEN AND PRODUCED BY **LUKE MILLER**
PHOTOGRAPHERS **MARTY BALDWIN** AND **KRITSADA**



Many suburban front yards are like shy kids at a prom: *They stand in the shadows*, afraid to draw attention to themselves. That's a shame, because a front yard can become a handsome complement to a home with just a little effort.

This suburban front yard had foundation beds and multistem birch. Those were a good start, but they didn't go far enough. Combined with the driveway and sidewalk, they made the large swath of lawn seem like an afterthought. The solution: a tidy corner garden anchored by a corner fence, made from a mail-order kit, that mimics the style of the porch railing and blends the garden bed with the house.

After assembling and painting the fence, we moved it around on the lawn to find where it looked best. This also helped us determine how far from the driveway and sidewalk to locate the fence for safety.

Once the fence was in place, we removed sod. You can skim off the turf with a flat-edge spade or a foot-operated sod remover from a rental supply company. If you're working on a slope, as we were, use the sod to raise the fence level. Otherwise, compost it or use pieces to fill bare spots in the lawn.



Get your bed ready for plants

A quick way to give structure to an otherwise flat part of your yard is to buy and assemble a fence kit. Sure, you can build your own structure, but a kit makes the job a snap. Then it's just a matter of deciding on a shape for the bed and improving the soil.



Step 1: After painting the sections and assembling the corner fence, move it into position, staking it in place with metal rods provided in the kit. Adjust until it is level.



Step 2: Use a garden hose to determine the shape of the bed. In this case, the sidewalk and driveway provided straight lines, so we softened them with a curve to complete the triangle shape.



Step 3: Remove sod with a flat-edge spade or rented sod remover. You can use the sod to adjust the level of the fence or to fill bare spots, or you can compost it.



Step 4: Amend the soil. Gypsum is good for heavy clay or areas where road salt can accumulate. Potting mix, compost, and composted cow manure are useful for all situations. Mix the amendments in well, then rake smooth.



Step 5: Plant. The amended soil will allow you to dig easily with a trowel. In general, put taller plants in back and shorter ones in front, but sprinkling a few tall ones in front will help break up a rigid pattern. Sprinkle on a slow-release fertilizer. Water deeply at least once a week if it doesn't rain.

With the sod removed, it was easy to see the soil needed conditioning. Thick with clay, it was nearly impossible to dig with a trowel. We broke up the packed soil with a spade fork, then added gypsum, potting mix (perlite and peat moss), compost, and composted cow manure.

The well-aerated, heavily amended bed was now ready for plants—ornamental grasses, flowering annuals, foliage plants, perennials, and vines. The fence provided the perfect backdrop, making plants such as butterfly weed visible from a distance.

Although it peaks in late summer and early fall, this bed looks good all summer thanks to annuals and grasses. Weekly watering and occasional deadheading are about all that's required to keep it looking great—a small price to pay for a garden that will please for many years to come. □

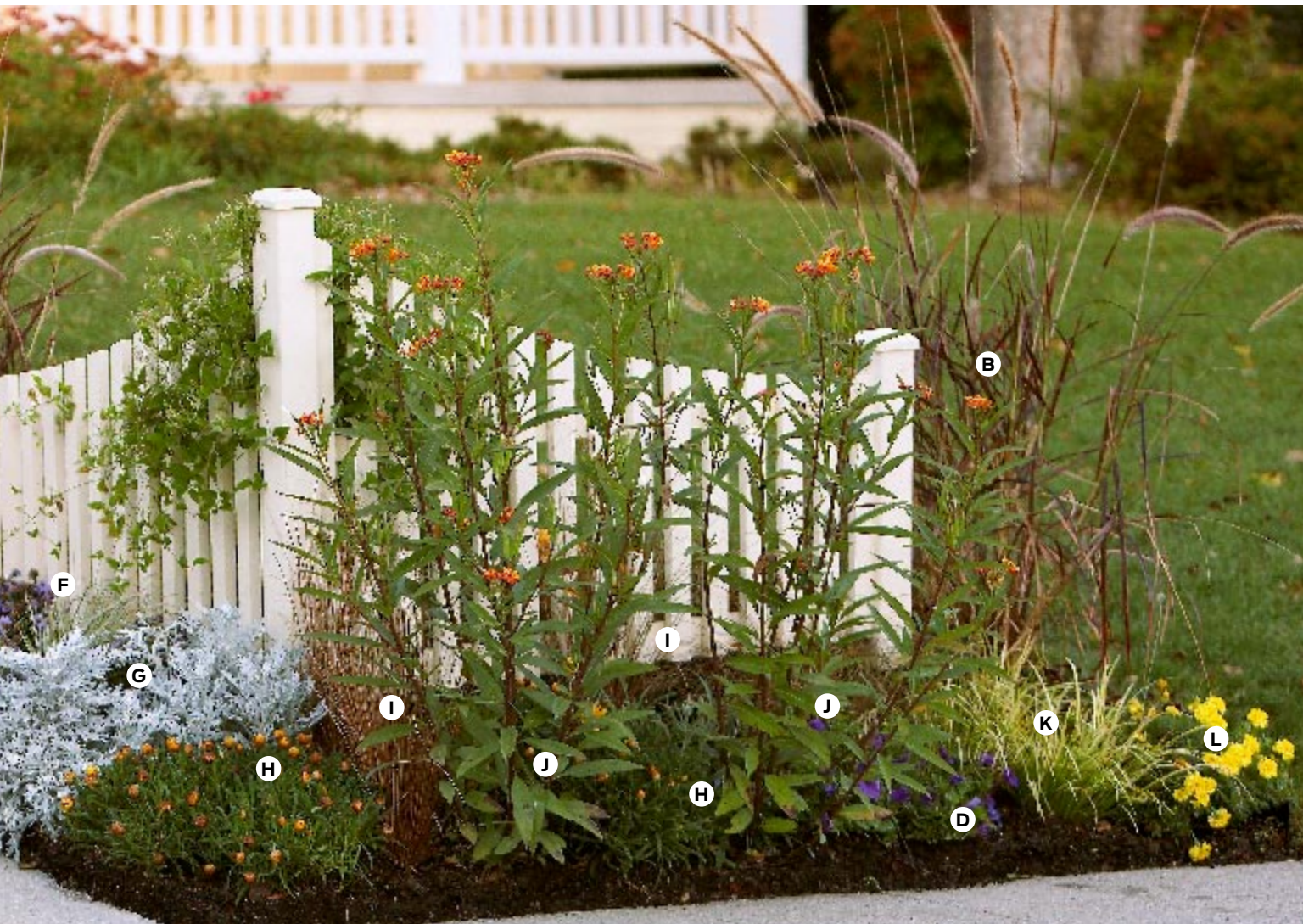
FOR RESOURCES, SEE PAGE 116.

Plant List

- A** Blue salvia (*Salvia farinacea*), annual
- B** Purple fountaingrass (*Pennisetum setaceum* 'Purpureum'), Zones 8–11 or annual
- C** Orange mums (*Chrysanthemum*), Zones 5–8 or annual
- D** Superbells Blue *Calibrachoa*, annual
- E** 'Ogon' *Acorus gramineus*, annual
- F** Sapphire Aster *dumosus*, Zones 4–8
- G** Dusty miller (*Senecio cineraria* 'Silver Dust'), Zones 8–11 or annual
- H** Sundaze Flame *Bracteantha bracteata*, annual
- I** Toffee Twist sedge (*Carex flagellifera*), annual
- J** 'Butterfly Red' butterfly weed (*Asclepias curassavica*), Zones 9–11 or annual
- K** 'Overdam' *Calamagrostis* × *acutiflora*, Zones 5–9
- L** Marigold (*Tagetes*), annual
- M** 'Frosty Morn' sedum, Zones 4–8
- N** Flowering kale (*Brassica oleracea*), Zones 7–11 or annual

Inside the Fence





ANNUALS COURTESY OF
PROVEN WINNERS
(PROVENWINNERS.COM)
PERENNIALS AND VINE
COURTESY OF MONROVIA
(MONROVIA.COM)
SOIL AMENDMENTS
COURTESY OF FAFARD
(FAFARD.COM)