

Zia garden design adds to eco-friendly garden in Boulder

By Cindy Sutter Camera Staff Writer Boulder Daily Camera

Posted:

DailyCamera.com

Ken Regelson and Judy Wong had been organic gardeners for about 30 years. As such, they made the most of the small piece of land attached to their Boulder townhome, using raised beds in which they raised vegetables and flowers.

The beds were productive, but not all that attractive, so they decided to hire landscaper Susanne Thorne of Innovative Outdoor Designs in Lafayette.

"We thought we wanted general paths with berms and raised areas," Regelson says. "We had a long list of requirements."

Thorne met those requirements for organic, low water use gardening, but came back with a design that uniquely reflected Regelson's and Wong's commitment to sustainability. She proposed a stonework Zia, a Native American sun symbol, similar to the one on the New Mexico state flag.

The Zia was particularly appropriate, since Regelson is a passionate advocate of solar energy, who founded the startup nonprofit EnergyShouldBe.org, which uses videos and facts to encourage renewable energy.

The raised beds in the Zia contain mostly vegetables, while xeric plants and flowers make up surrounding beds. In addition to plant choice, drip irrigation keeps water use low, and the use of raised beds with good soil means that a small space can produce a lot.

Thorne says the carefully planned 40-by-18-foot space provides ample space for raising edibles and flowers.

"We created a really interesting space that's productive to garden in," says Thorne, who is a member of the Associated Landscape Contractors of Colorado. "Half is devoted specifically to vegetables and herbs, the other half to drought-tolerant flowering plants that draw bees and butterflies."

Herbs include basil, thyme, rosemary, sages and lavender. An asparagus bed and a sour cherry tree add to the usual annual vegetables such as tomatoes, eggplant and peppers. In addition to food, the garden provides fresh cut flowers all summer long, Regelson says.

As it turns out, the Zia is more than just beautiful and symbolic. Last year, Regelson and Wong weren't able to plant their vegetable until later in June. Yet they were able to harvest a bumper crop -- close to twice as much in less space as their previous raised beds had yielded -- at close to the same time in the season.

"All the stonework makes it warm," Regelson says.

The stonework also makes the garden attractive in winter.

"It's a lovely place to entertain in," Thorne says.

