

Our Experimental Garden by Vivianne Hanke

Last fall I had four big problems in my garden: too much shade, lack of space, unproductive soils and hungry wildlife. Volunteering to be a host for the Cable Natural Museum Garden Tour was obviously the next step.

Tackling the shade problem was simple enough-cut a few trees. My husband usually helps me with my crazy schemes, but it took some convincing because he planted the trees 40 years ago. We agreed to cut four red pines and some brush, thereby solving the shade problem and gaining 1000 square feet of new garden space.

We are experimenting in the new space with two gardening methods. First, lasagna gardening, which consists of layering hay, compost, leaf mold and soil that decomposes as the plants grow. We built two raised-beds containing the lasagna layers. The second experiment involves hay bale gardening in which one plants directly into the bales, adding a small amount of soil at the time of planting. The bales decompose, releasing nutrients as the plants grow.

So far, wildlife has been kept out of the garden with a deer fence. But I recently heard horror stories about woodchucks too!

We are also experimenting in the original garden space with the height, size and location of plants to create container gardens, a fairy garden, a children's garden, a tea garden and a butterfly and bee garden.

Is it possible that I solved my problems of shade, space, poor soils and wildlife? Come and see the results in our Experimental Garden. The Museum Garden Tour is scheduled for July 16th. You can purchase your tickets at Big Brook Greenhouse, Firefly Trading Company or the Cable Natural History Museum. For more information about this events go to www.cablemuseum.org or call 715-798-3890.