

## FEATURED GARDEN *by Cathie Lank*

Sometimes a few words are all it takes to make a major change in someone's life. This was the case for Jana Vysocky. Jana had always had a garden but when an incident forced changes in her life a few words was all it took for her to start seeing gardening in a whole new way.

"In 1999, my husband became very ill and we had an occupational therapist come to our place," said Jana. "One day she told me that I needed to get out more and she took me to a garden show and I was very inspired by other people's gardens. I thought if they could do it then I could too."

### "Gardening is my passion..."

Her competitive spirit was ignited. She threw herself into gardening and by 2004 was competing in her first Calgary Horticultural Society Garden Competition where she came in second for Curb Appeal. She has been competing every year since, winning various awards over the last five years. One of the highlights of competing came when she won first place in Perennial Bed during the Calgary Horticultural Society's centennial celebration in 2008.

Her inspiration comes from seeing other people's gardens during shows and competitions in the summer. She sometimes incorporates ideas that strike her as interesting and laughs at how obsessive competing can become.

"My mother was a passionate gardener and had a gorgeous rose garden," said Jana. "I have some roses in front and one of them is the same as the ones she used to grow. I grow it in memory of her."

While Jana's mother had a passion for roses, Jana developed a passion of her own – lilies. In fact, she

has earned the nickname, "The Lily Lady", and has a vast collection in her garden including many Asiatic, oriental and day lilies.

"I love lilies because they're so easy to grow and they multiply so easily," said Jana. "The colours are very attractive too and the scent, especially from the oriental lilies like 'Stargazer', is just so incredible!"



## JANA VYSOCKY

In the fall Jana waits for them to die down and then cuts them down. After that, she just leaves them citing they need no other special care and are very hardy. The following year she finds her lilies often double in amount.

Jana describes her front garden as one big perennial bed and back yard as an English cottage garden with both vegetables and perennials. This is where she has her greenhouse, which she uses to start her tomatoes and peppers and protect them from the cold. Another element Jana loves to incorporate in her back garden is containers, which she enjoys using in various ways.

"I have pots everywhere," laughs Jana. "Some I use for plants but others I like to use for miniature ponds."

Not satisfied with zone ratings for plants, Jana has become a bit of an experimenter in the garden. She planted a 'Concorde' grape (*Vitis labrusca* 'Concorde') 15 years ago on the east side of her house and the vine is still going strong and produces many grapes for her every year. She has also tried the Himalayan blue poppy, which has done well though she finds

them short-lived. Both plants are typically rated as zone 5 but survive in Calgary's zone 3.

"Don't listen to people who say certain plants are not for this zone," Jana recommends to other gardeners. "It's always worth a try."

Like most gardeners, Jana has a favourite spot in her garden. It's a contemplative area where she can sit surrounded by her plants.

"I have a nice sitting area which is so pretty," said Jana. "There's a slate patio and walls where I can have plants. I really enjoy this little area."

Jana is once again looking forward to the summer when she hopes to compete yet again in the garden competition and is looking forward to visiting other gardens for more ideas and inspiration.

"Gardening is my passion and biggest hobby," said Jana. "I love all the flowers; they're all so beautiful. I spend hours and hours in the garden; it's very therapeutic."

