



HIP TO BE SQUARE

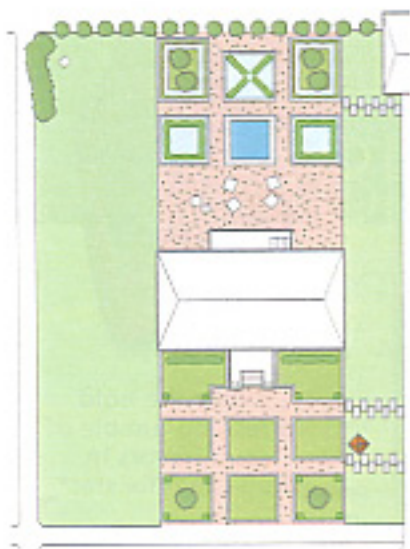
RIGHT ANGLES AND CLEAN LINES FRAME A STYLISHLY ARCHITECTURAL GARDEN FULL OF BRIGHT WHITE BLOOMS AND SMART NEW IDEAS.

A line of offset stepping-stones leads into Bradley Kemp's front-yard garden in Lawrence, Kansas. The square beds are accented with boxwoods trimmed into tidy cubes. A rusty metal sculpture balances on one corner.

BY MARTY ROSS PHOTOGRAPHS BY PETE KRUMHARDT



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Beginning gardeners often want to have it all—and right away. Bradley Kemp showed more restraint than that when he started planning a garden at his home in Lawrence, Kansas, in 1996. What he wanted most was a good idea.

"I was looking for a sort of overall organizing concept," Bradley says, "and settled on a relaxed formality that I think suits the style of the house," a Dutch Colonial Revival built in 1911. He worked with landscape designer Kristopher Dabner on the garden plan, and together they came up with a lively garden organized around crisp square beds laid out in a horticultural checkerboard. There are eight squares in the front garden and six in the back, one of them a water garden with a splashing jet.

Tightly pruned boxwood cubes in some of the beds >> on 134

A water garden sparkles at the center of the backyard (above). Bradley wanted a traditional gravel patio and paths; he likes the sound of the pea gravel crunching underfoot. A plan of the garden (left) shows the grid of square planting beds outlined by gravel paths. The design is both symmetrical and dynamic: Not all the squares are the same. In front of the house, the porch takes the place of a ninth square.



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accentuate the garden's strongly architectural structure. In the front yard, a welded steel cube tipped jauntily on one corner introduces the garden's central theme.

Both Bradley and Dabner have backgrounds in architecture, and they agreed that the symmetry of the house should be extended out into the garden. The beds, which measure about 10 feet square, are edged with cut limestone and separated by generous 4½-foot-wide gravel paths. Plants spill out of the beds at the height of the summer, but lines of low boxwoods here and there impose order and reinforce the garden's geometry.

In part to make gardening decisions easier, Bradley decided to limit his color palette almost entirely to white and green. White daffodils bloom in spring under a lacy canopy of whitebud trees (*Cercis canadensis* 'Alba'). Snow-white peonies come into bloom in May, and pale daylilies, white liatris, and white Japanese anemones take turns through the summer and fall. In the backyard, annual pansies, alyssum, vincas, and silver-edged ornamental kale fill the beds under crab apples and pines.

Bradley considers >> on 136

Fragrant white alyssum and pansies (above) carpet a bed in the backyard. In the background is a concrete obelisk that Bradley made. The obelisk and the two limestone globes on the patio (right) provide sculptural accents. "The garden combines traditional and historical elements with modern gestures," says Bradley.





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the front yard a public gesture, and the neighbors love it. This spring, a carload of teenagers on their way to a prom stopped to ask if they could take each other's pictures in the front garden.

Bradley enjoys weeding, trimming, and watering when he comes home from work. The water garden muffles the sounds of the city, and after an hour of puttering, Bradley usually finds himself in an Adirondack chair with a book, completely relaxed in the pleasing symmetry with which he has surrounded himself. ☺

The simple floral palette always looks fresh, and it has made it easy to shop for plants: Bradley says he just looks for white. When summer comes, white-flowering vincas take the place of the spring pansies (above). After a day at the office, Bradley (left) unwinds in his backyard garden.

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