A backyard sanctuary is built on scented plants and found objects

by Valerie Easton

photographed by Mike Siegel

JEAN YOHO HASN'T missed the swimming pool for a minute. One of the first things she did when she bought her house in Shoreline 14 years ago was fill in the backyard pool. While it cut down on her water bill, she was left with a flat, empty expanse of ground.

Not everyone would have looked at all that gravel and seen an opportunity for walking meditation. Yoho used ribbons of beach stones and pots of little conifers to outline a labyrinth that she regularly walks before a long day of work as a radiation therapist at Swedish Cancer Institute.

Yoho's garden is her sanctuary, a place to relax and recharge from a job that demands so much of her. Her workplace is literally subterranean, so at home the windows are left bare to capture all possible light and connection to the garden. "I decorated my house from the inside out," says Yoho. "I color-coordinated it looking out the windows."

To make such transparency work, Yoho needed to create some privacy. Her 1950s house had a typical flat lawn, open on all sides to views of the neighbors. She effectively screened her garden with a gutsy cedar hedge, which grew rapidly into a dense, green wall. Yoho may have planted herself a yearly pruning chore, but she also created a dramatic entry to the property, carved right through the hedge.

Walk through the verdant passage and you find yourself in a green-and-white garden planted for fragrance. White-flowering lilacs, magnolias, viburnum and sarcococca fill the air with sweet and spicy scents through the seasons. Yoho points out the white trim on the house and white picket fences, saying, "I'm Swiss. I like everything to match."

While the front garden reflects Yoho's traditional side, she gardens...
Ideas for creating on a budget

"I'm Miss Frugal," says Jean Yoho. "I shop at Value Village." In the garden, her thriftiness not only cuts costs but lends a personal, quirky charm. A few tricks and tips:

• **Get rid of the lawn.** Tearing out most of the lawn and the swimming pool greatly reduced her water bill. It also left space for a simple labyrinth, the garden’s most distinctive feature.

• **Customize an inexpensive shed.** Her garden shed is a Home Depot model, customized with vintage windows, planted window boxes and a mirrored door to reflect and visually enlarge the garden.

• **Use vintage items.** Yoho picked up an old bicycle (further aged by moss affixed with a glue gun), metal pump, teakettles and a bedstead, below, she found at a garage sale. These things give the garden a unique patina and a comfortable, lived-in feel.

Valerie Easton is a Seattle freelance writer and author of "A Pattern Garden." Check out her blog at [www valeaston com](http://www.valeaston.com). Mike Siegel is a Seattle Times staff photographer.