



Slightly wild

Flowers form a visual bridge from meadow to front door

BY SHARON COHOON
PHOTOGRAPH BY CHARLES MANN

Imagine a meadow of grasses and wildflowers in your front yard. How would you keep visitors from wandering over to explore it instead of proceeding to your door? That was the design challenge Melissa McDonald solved in the Santa Fe garden shown here. Just to the left of a ribbon of yellow-flowered Mexican hat (*Ratibida columnifera*), a large meadow beckons. But since the homeowner wanted his guests to continue toward the entrance, McDonald's job was to make that walk visually rewarding without violating the wild spirit of the garden.

Her design strategy was to approach order gradually. At the edge of the meadow, McDonald planted perennials with a casual appearance—mostly Mexican hat and Russian sage. Then she added an orderly row of blue mist (*Caryopteris*), spacing the shrubs far apart to continue the sense of openness. On the opposite side of the path, the blue mist is joined by taller companions like white and pink butterfly bush and Maximilian sunflower (*Helianthus maximiliani*). Purple coneflower, sedum, Siberian iris, and daylilies also contribute to the display. The extra height, density, and variety of plants bring this smaller planting into visual balance with the more expansive meadow.

DESIGN: Melissa McDonald, Santa Fe Permaculture, Santa Fe (www.sfpermaculture.com or 505/424-4444) ✿

Russian sage (foreground) and other blue-flowered shrubs contrast with generous splashes of yellow Mexican hat.