The adage “Good things come in small packages” may be overused, but it certainly describes these two Enthusiast gardens at the Birmingham Botanical Gardens. Designed by Birmingham landscape designers Mary Carolyn Boothby, Jody H. Hamre, and Carolyn B. Tynes, they demonstrate how today’s average homeowner can arrange a modest back yard to accommodate trees, shrubs, flowers, and vegetables within an overall pleasing design.

In the rear of the north Garden is a vegetable garden consisting of three rectangular beds. The rows run north-south, so that taller vegetables won’t shade shorter ones. Directly behind the beds are espaliered fruit trees, a fig tree, and strawberries. This area shows that even an “edible landscape” can have a formal and attractive look.

In the work area across from the vegetable garden, you’ll find a cold frame, tool house, and compost bins. Fun isn’t totally forgotten, however—notice the jogging board, a piece of old-fashioned, play equipment. Behind the tool house, a gate acts as a service entrance.

Mixed, herbaceous borders along the sides of the garden supply continuous color from spring until fall. Moving to the lawn and terraces, you discover the perfect spot for relaxing. A boxwood hedge defines the lawn area and adds privacy. Because the lawn is small and brick walks edge the garden beds, maintenance is minimal.

The south Enthusiast Garden suggests attractive ways for landscaping the smaller back yard of a condominium. As with the north Garden, privacy is a prime concern and wooden structures and holly screens provide this. Low maintenance is another important feature. Mowing the small lawn takes just a few minutes. Flowers, herbs, and vegetables are planted in raised beds, so soil is loose and easy to work. And by sitting upon the landscaping ties, gardeners can work in the beds without kneeling or stooping.

A potting shed in one corner serves as a work and storage area. When work’s done, it’s time to head over to the gazebo, which provides a shaded, sheltered spot in which to relax and enjoy the garden.
The Lucille Ryals Thompson Enthusiast Garden
a gift given in love and in her honor by
Hall W. Thompson
Judith Thompson
Hall W. Thompson, Jr.
George C. Thompson
Michael D. Thompson
Lisa Thompson

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The Lucille Ryals Thompson Enthusiast Garden

Designed by W. Fancher Lane
Written by Stephen P. Bender
Plans by SOUTHERN LIVING Art Department

The Birmingham Botanical Gardens
2612 Lane Park Road
Birmingham, Alabama