About the Owners
Chuck and Chris are professional landscape contractors, in business since 1996. They provide site analysis, design and installation and maintenance services. With a portfolio of long-time sophisticated urban clientele, they cater to high-end, large scope projects. And when a client is tired of a particular plant or piece of art they frequently ask that it just be hauled away. Many of these orphaned treasures end up at Wood Gate Hill! They also frequent architectural salvage auctions in the Plaza area, further expanding their access to high quality structures and art pieces.

About the Garden
This eclectic garden is a must-see for tree lovers and fans of traditional marble and bronze Greek statuary. The arrangement into garden rooms properly organizes the many moods and functions into defined spaces. This avoids visual chaos and sets a consistently elegant mood. Thus, there is no discord when one goes from the giant Buddha head “Zen” garden to the adjacent entrance garden with a politically-incorrect lawn jockey. Each garden view is a carefully planned vignette combining plants, containers, furniture, sculpture, water features and lights, similar to a staged room in a home. No detail is left to chance. Beds of brilliant annuals and the many containers ensure pops of sophisticated colors and textures among the many greens of conifers, formal yew hedges and lawn areas. At night the entire garden is awash in the glow of lights installed by Chuck and Chris. Art is installed with lighting to ensure proper appreciation and modern pieces are gradually joining the classic Greek statuary. Abundant seating areas can accommodate any size group, from an intimate duo to a large gathering of several hundred garden guests.

Special Features
✦ A huge Ash Tree (treated to prevent Emerald Borer Ash beetles) creates its own shady, moist microclimate in the front yard. If it should die, that will be a death sentence for all the shade-loving plants that live under its canopy.
✦ Numerous water features add to the park-like ambiance, including a small lake, home to assorted geese and ducks, plus fountains and waterfalls to create music.
✦ Mature conifers
✦ The collection of antique statues and sculptures in bronze, marble and stone scattered throughout the garden
✦ The massive garage houses Chris’s collection of classic cars.

Favorite Plants
• The Green Ash Tree
• Norway, Koster Blue, Yellow Oriental, Alberta Spruce Trees
• The Mulberry, a giant male tree that acts as a windbreak on the southwest side of the property
• More conifers: Ponderosa Pine Tree, Hicks Yew, Weeping Alaskan Cedar Tree, Boulevard Cypress Tree
• A Vermillion Pitcher Plant

Greatest Challenges
Time is the most limiting factor. And burn-out is a risk when one’s career is landscaping for clients and then you come home to your own needy landscape. Of course, watering and weeding are unrelenting challenges whether at work or at home.
What is a Garden Room? It is a garden conceived as a room, or series of rooms, complete with floors, walls, ceilings, and furnishings, each with distinct functions and each carefully integrated with its surroundings. Garden rooms create privacy, separating play and utility areas from eating or socializing areas.

Creating Garden Rooms — Just as walls define the rooms in your house, garden rooms must also have defined parameters or walls. A brick or stone wall or any kind of fence provides the fastest and easiest way to divide a garden into rooms. But the walls of your room can also be created with evergreen hedges, trees planted in a specific pattern, a deciduous shrub border or a perennial border. Use planters of varying heights to create the suggestion of a wall or partition or an espalier as a living fence. Space can also be defined with hardscape, and if your yard slopes, using the shifts in grade can naturally create distinct spaces with steps providing the transition between rooms. To design a garden room, provide structure by combining both plant and hardscape materials.

Points to Consider — View: Walk around the yard observing the views from different locations. A hedge, wall or trellis can enhance a good view by framing it or blocking an undesirable view. Also pay attention to the view of your garden room from inside the house. Remember, your garden room is an extension of your home; they are connected.

Scale: When creating garden rooms, keep in mind the idea of scale. A garden room should be large enough to be useful, but its size also needs to be proportional to the size of the house. It also follows that the “walls” and the accessories used within the room need to be in proportion to the room. A plant’s mature size, the size of a statue or fountain should be considered when working with enclosed spaces. Garden rooms should create a feeling of intimacy, not of being closed in.

Repetition and rhythm: An organized repetition of elements brings a sense of unity and continuity. To create a connection between a house and a garden room, use materials that relate to the home. Repeating architectural elements of a house will also reinforce continuity. One of the advantages of dividing the garden into separate rooms is that each room or garden can have its own theme or personality. By repeating design elements or accessories, these rooms are tied together. Repeating color, themes and textures, recurring fragrances, a brick walkway that connects the front of the home to the backyard, fences and trellises made of the same material, all help create continuity.

Personalize Your Garden Room —
* After creating your garden room, give it some personality. If the garden room is an area intended for entertaining and conversation, make sure that you have comfortable and inviting places to sit, linger and relax.
* Maximize the use of focal points in garden rooms. A piece of statuary may create a place of contemplation. A mobile or a whimsical birdbhouse may create a playful mood.
* Container plants can be used as accent pieces in a garden room. Small trees, hanging baskets and topiary plants can make any area appear lush and full.
* Consider fragrance as you plan your garden spaces. Scented flowers and herbs planted close to a walkway or sitting area will add a pleasant fragrance to the surrounding area. Include fragrant vines and night blooming flowers.
* Waterfalls, fountains and manmade streams add a peaceful, calming sound to the landscape. Their sound can entice visitors to enter your garden room, as well as buffer the sounds of traffic or other outside noises. Water features lend drama to a small garden and the reflective qualities of water add depth and mystery.
* Consider using low voltage lighting to expand the use of your outdoor garden rooms. Hanging string lights, using candles or torches are other ways of adding light to an outdoor room.

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In 1987, Wood Gate Hill was 80 acres of undeveloped farmland. The subsequent 33 years have witnessed the property’s evolution into a magnificent estate with extraordinary plant collections and an abundance of traditional fine garden art. Both Chuck and Chris are serious, knowledgeable collectors with specific interests ranging from specimen conifers to iron lanterns to Greek revival statuary to classic cars to exotic breeds of geese. With a greenhouse for overwintering the many tropical palms and ferns, the garden has a distinctly Victorian appearance, reinforced by the wrought iron fencing and lanterns.

Wood Gate Hill
Chuck Michael & Chris Coffey – Louisburg, Kansas
“Gardening is the work of a lifetime, you never finish.” – Oscar de la Renta

A September to Remember
September 8th & 9th, 2023
Marais des Cygnes Extension District Master Gardeners Garden Tour
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