

# Green dream comes true

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When it comes to buying a home, sometimes the promise of what could be is more important than what's there at the moment.

That was the case when Scott Lindsley and Joey Hewell purchased a 1905 American Foursquare home this spring in Charlotte's NoDa neighborhood.

Less than five months after moving in, the men, both avid gardeners, have created an elaborate outdoor makeover, including a raised bed vegetable garden, a greenhouse and extended outdoor living space that were all part of their initial vision.

The four-bedroom, 3,300-square-foot home had fallen into disrepair and was in foreclosure when Lindsley, 44, a Realtor, and Hewell, 32, a stylist and image consultant, first discovered the property. Framed in front by two giant pecan trees, the once dark house had drab curb appeal and was weed infested and overgrown in the back.

"We looked past the obvious faults with the property and saw something special," said Lindsley, who along with Hewell began planning and setting out a design for the back before they even closed on the property.

A big part of the allure they found with the home was the outsized backyard. Zoned for commercial use, the property has a 60-by-35-foot cement pad in back of the lot that was perhaps once used for parking. Here is where Lindsley and Hewell envisioned an important extension of their living space and executed their plans with flair.

"We wanted the look of a formal English garden but the utility and health benefits of growing vegetables," said Lindsley, who said the 15 raised beds they had built and arranged on the pad are laid out in a pattern similar to

- How they did it

*What Scott Lindsley and Joey Hewell learned about pulling off a large-scale home project*

- Research and plan: "We read up on raised beds, talked to people who had them and learned from others what worked well and did not," said Lindsley. "One of the things we had to take into consideration was drainage and it was only after we determined the lot sloped to the back did we commit to placing the beds on the cement."

- Advice can come from unlikely sources: "I absolutely love talking with roadside farmers market sellers," said Hewell. "Often they sell plants in addition to produce and they can be great sources for seed and advice as to what plants grow well in our region."

- Find inspiration in other's work: Lindsley took and kept photos from the visit to WhiteGate Inn in Asheville to help recall the look and feel of those gardens that served as inspiration for Linwell Farms.

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those found in formal gardens.

## Colorful past

After they purchased the house, they came to learn about its colorful past.

“There wasn’t a day that went by when we’d be working in the yard when someone would walk by and tell us tidbits about the home’s previous ‘lives,’ ” said Hewell. “The home has served as a boarding house, a brothel and a crack house that was likely headed for destruction, according to what we’d been told.”

In 2005 the home was purchased by Turner South Television for use in a 60-episode reality TV show called “Homemakers.” The show ran during the 2005-2006 season and featured an all-female construction and makeover crew that renovated the home to newfound glory.

The show followed the crew as they took the house down to its studs. When it was a boarding house, it had eight tiny bedrooms, each with its own bath. The home today has an open floor plan and is light, airy and also supports two home offices, one for each of the guys.

But the home, especially the outside, had aged more and needed additional work.

## Living space outdoors

“As much as we liked the home itself, it was the potential for outside living space that sold us,” said Hewell, who noted the deep front porch offers shade and a relaxed area for entertaining in addition to the breezy space created in the back with the garden.

The garden design, raised bed specifications including soil composition and drainage components, came from books, online research and a visit to a bed and breakfast in Asheville a few years back.

“We stayed at the WhiteGate Inn in Asheville and were very impressed with the gardens, pathways and raised beds they had there,” said Lindsley, who said the visit provided inspiration for their layout.

Lindsley and Hewell had a carpenter friend build the boxes and the greenhouse. The 15-by-15-foot greenhouse is complete with a solar panel, a self-opening roof and a watering table. It came in a ready-to-assemble kit.

All told, outside the cost of the plants, they said they spent about \$8,000 on the first phase of the garden project. The next phases will include bringing in shade, a more formal dining room table and additional plantings.

The two are self-taught gardeners who spend countless hours researching do’s and don’ts online and have several years of trial-and-error under their belts.

Much of what they learned about companion planting and what does well in our region came from a Charlotte Facebook “cooperative” known as Grow Share Charlotte. (Use that phrase to search on Facebook.)



You can also see their home on Facebook; search Linwell Farms Noda. (Linwell is a combination of their two names.)

Hewell noted that their crops include tomatoes, corn, cucumbers, varieties of peppers, asparagus, beans, black-eyed peas, eggplant, chard, spinach, okra, scallions, onions, sweet potatoes, squash, melons and a variety of herbs.

Fruit trees include citrus (in pots for easy winter transfer to the greenhouse), stone fruit, apple and pear.

## **A daily routine**

“It’s important to us to know where our food is coming from, and gardening, pickling and canning is a natural extension of that,” said Hewell.

The guys grow their own wheatgrass, and enjoy juicing it daily, as well as other vegetables such as beets and carrots. “Farm to fork” is only a matter of a dozen steps from “Linwell Farms” to the kitchen for these two gardeners, who say now that things are established, they spend about an hour each in the garden per day.

“We are only one or two generations away from when everyone had a garden,” said Hewell. “It just makes sense. It’s such a joyful extension of our lifestyle, I can’t imagine not having one. People think that growing your own food is difficult. It really is not at all and it is incredibly satisfying.”



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