

Patio Springs Gardens

My wife Christine and I have been living in our home in Eden for 20 years now, but the Fuller family were some of the original settlers of the valley and my grandparents, who regrettably passed away before I could develop fond memories of them, owned and operated the store that is now Carlos and Harleys and the historic home next door. I grew up from a toddler to my last teens spending summers at a place in Eden that could be easily mistaken as the Garden of Eden by anyone that had the chance to ever go there. There were huge cottonwood trees with shimmering leaves, green manicured grass, and natural springs that were alive with minnows and crayfish. Warm pools and cold pools were fed by the springs and sun decks surrounded by white painted railings and stone walls covered with lush vines. A Hansel and Gretel- like stone candy store served burgers, hot dogs, soft drinks, and ice cream. It had windows for ordering on two sides and huge glass windows displayed tables holding boxes of candy. And of course there was the patio. It was like a cool cave with the natural stone surrounding it and the vines all over it. It was really a stage and had been there long before I was born. I don't remember much ever going on there, but I imagine it was where there had been bands at one time playing there for dancers on the pavement around the swimming pools. My oldest sister even had her wedding band play on that patio and her ceremony was between the warm and cold pools after John Denver's Sunshine on My Shoulders was played as they came down the stairs to the pools.

I drove the hay truck with the hay elevator by the driver's door when I was just able to reach the peddles and threw bales when I was older. I played in the barn and creeks, and explored every inch of the vast area where dad had his ranch just down the road from Patio Springs, and we now have our comparatively small section of it that we call our farm. Dad raised cattle and horses, and though we currently have a couple highlanders my daughter's family care for, we are- at least currently farming vegetables, flowers, trees, berries, chickens, and even microgreens. Christine/ or Chris is the head secretary at the elementary school and was fortunate enough to have worked at the original school in Huntsville. I am a retired art teacher and have been the sole proprietor of an aquarium maintenance business that I had started even before I became a teacher.

I dreamed from before Chris and I married of living on “the property” in the valley one day. It wasn’t until we had been married 18 years and had three daughters that we could finally build. But I had started planting trees in the sagebrush around where I knew the driveway would be and I knew just where the house would sit. We--- or should I say, I was even bold or crazy enough to plant twenty-or- more one hundred plus foot rows of raspberries. And In time we had a beautiful home that sat in the middle of sagebrush and a few small trees, and a fairly impressive raspberry patch.

My brother and two sisters also have their land around ours and we are fortunate enough to have water with a well we share with 51 acre feet of water rights. I had no problem deciding where my permanent water lines needed to be; as an artist I had already drawn my entire landscape design to scale around the house and the raspberries were already in place. Over the next several years I turned the sagebrush fields around the house into a beautifully landscaped yard with koi ponds and a waterfalls and the field between the house and raspberries I removed of sagebrush, planted more trees, and watered so I could mow it. Eventually most of the raspberries that were so labor intensive were replaced by rows of trees I had either ordered in bare root and potted and a few years later planted directly into the soil, or young potted trees I nursed until I was able to plant them. The trees grew surprisingly fast and since I now had a substantial forest, and I couldn’t stand the thought of any of the pines being cut for the temporary satisfaction of Christmas trees, I purchased a tree spade to move them to various areas of the property. I also sold a few to people close by because I was terrible at placing them in tree baskets, but I could pre-dig perfectly sized holes with the spade and then just pluck the trees from the ground and drop them in the holes at close locations- similar to how I planted them around the property.

If you are at all familiar with the land surrounding our property, you know rocks are found in abundance, and there are a few areas of our place where rocks can be found. But out in the main fields it’s as if deposits of wonderful soil were washed out of the mountain canyons and settled on our place so we could grow things! The landscaping in the yard around the house matured and it was nice enough to have two of my daughters’ wedding receptions at our place and over a

few years' time we had a few other family members' and friends' weddings and/or receptions.

I have a passion for planting things and using nature to make things beautiful and natural looking. I think it all started when I was in seventh grade and a friend and I were put in charge of maintaining the science room aquarium at school. I was already starting to do commissioned drawings by then and the water and aquascaping was amazing for me! I felt so at home in the water and swimming that to work with the water, rock, fish, and composition brought everything together. I was the art sterling scholar in high school and of course liked art, science, physical education, and yearbook the most. I enjoyed my time in school and only struggled with dreaded math-and took as few math classes as possible! I served an LDS mission in Germany and Austria and as an artist took over 700 pictures and learned the language with great attention to "sounding German." To this day when I get the chance to speak it, native speakers comment on how well I speak their language.

Chris and I married shortly after I returned from my mission and I finished school while working at Myers' Mortuary and living in one of their apartment houses in Ogden. I would go to school mornings and work at the mortuary doing grounds work and errands in the day while working viewings and going on death calls on my assigned nights. I landscaped the yard of the mortuary apartment house and even did some designing for the grounds of the mortuary. It was during these six years working and living here that I started my aquarium maintenance business, did some landscape drawings for people, and drew portraits as well. I completed my English major with art and German minors and completed my student teaching. We bought a home in North Ogden and I began teaching for the Ogden City School District. I began my career teaching English and German but spent most of my years teaching art at Highland Junior High where I stayed the full 27 years of my teaching career. While teaching I turned my yard in North Ogden into what I still think is one of the most beautiful in the neighborhood; I drew several landscape designs for homes, and was up at our property in Eden planting and watering the strategically placed trees and later taking care of the raspberries I mentioned earlier.

A year or so before I retired and we had been in our home in the valley for sixteen years, I was at the Farmers' Market in Ogden on a Saturday afternoon and came across a friend and former fellow teacher who had retired a couple years earlier from teaching science and who had been responsible for the amazing greenhouse at our school. He was growing and selling vegetables and as we talked about our love for growing things it came to me that I could see myself growing vegetables and enjoying it very much. He mentioned he could use more space to grow and I quickly announced I had land and water that would be great for growing. Jon Contos and I teamed up that Fall and planted our garlic on the property inside the deer fencing I had to put in several years earlier because the deer had taken a liking to my trees. We planted our first vegetables the following spring. We improved the fencing around the 2 acres I had installed for protecting the trees and now the garden area and sold produce another year at the Ogden farmers' market and also sold at a market in the Ogden Valley. Jon introduced me to microgreens as well that we grew in our homes and also sold at market and local restaurants. Covid hit and we weren't able to sell at the markets, but we had by this time begun a CSA with customers in the Ogden Valley and Ogden area where Jon lives. Community Supported Agriculture is a great way to support and get to know your neighbors and we got a little bigger and better each year. While at a soil conference Jon and I ran into a former student who informed us of grant money available to farmers and we soon had a grant to help build a 30' x 96' greenhouse inside the deer fence. We completed the greenhouse in the spring of 2022. We were also growing a variety of flowers and finding our customers loved to buy them as well. I grow flowers in the fenced area as well as in the yard surrounding the house- at least those the deer don't care for! This spring we will add a 16' x 60' high tunnel greenhouse near the existing greenhouse to help in expanding our vegetable and flower crops. We have also secured a two-year grant to provide lettuce, tomatoes, and carrots to the underserved in the Ogden area and will continue providing produce and flowers to our loyal CSA customers. Jon and I have both built walk- in coolers at our homes for keeping our product fresh as well.

Because I always have several projects going at once and I'm eagerly continuing the beautification of our place and now have a bit more time since I'm not teaching school, I have been acquiring large landscape rocks, soil, and sheds to

store tools and equipment in. One of the sheds I had dis-assembled and brought to the property several years ago I thought would be better as possibly a play house for the grandkids. A good friend of mine who was also an accomplice in many of my endeavors helped me take it down, transport it, and begin to put it back together. Walls went up and a picture window from a house another friend was remodeling was put in on the entire end wall and suddenly it took on a personality of its own and my creative mind began to picture it as an integral part of the landscape and within the first summer of its presence I mentioned it less to the grandchildren as their playhouse and began referring to it as the “little house” where they would be able to visit. Though it is only 8’x 15’ with a 4’x4’ section added for a hot water heater and electrical panel, it has been a five year project which has added a great deal to the evolving vision of our farm. The porch has been attached and the cement for the porch and back patio are in and It is only now at the beginning of this year beautifully finished with the dedication I give to all my projects- they reflect the endless time of planning and work with attention to detail and overall composition to the whole. And this summer I’m excited to landscape around it to make it tie-in to the pristine landscaping around the main house. I envision our little house glamping cabin as a quiet place for couples to spend the day and night to fully immerse themselves in the environment of the farm.

I want to combine and share the many passions that have incredibly shaped my life with others at a place where everything comes together. I want to create a space for growing a variety of plants, vegetables, berries, trees, flowers, microgreens, cover crops, koi, chickens and possibly other animals. A place where people can grow. Where an emphasis is placed on showing others how to do the same while giving glimpses, opportunities, and experiences of the possibilities that nature has to offer. It is in the moments we are surrounded by the literal life-giving gifts of the earth that we begin to realize their significance in the happiness we search for.

There are still many things to be built, developed, and landscaped in order to even scratch the surface of what I now envision for our place. I want to build another smaller greenhouse for starting our seedlings and teaching classes in near the existing greenhouse and add propane heaters to the large greenhouse and high tunnel we will put up this spring. A barn with electricity to the west of the

greenhouse just outside the deer fence will be necessary for the equipment we now have and will continue to acquire. A washing station for produce nearer to the greenhouses would make harvesting much easier. The fire pit in the lower yard behind our home is ready for amphitheater seating and with night compliant stage lighting since the power is already down there. On the northeast side of our home in the bottoms near the seasonal creek I have the rock for yet another pond and waterfall and the power is there for pumps and additional lighting. For several years now I have also planned to have a tree house around the large cottonwood tree in the bottoms and off the back deck of the main house have a walkway from the deck of the house out to it as its main access. I would also like to naturally line the seasonal creek section behind the house so I can use our water from both the current ponds and the pond and waterfall I'll be putting in to recirculate and have a running stream in its dry summer season as well. And with the night compliance lighting already installed in the bottoms behind our home it makes for a secluded area with several sites for glamping with the current central fire pit and planned amphitheater seating as the focal point.

I plan to add another large and beautifully landscaped pond between our house and the greenhouse for water storage for the gardens that is fed from the pond currently near the house. We currently have totes under the solar panels we fill to water from so we don't have to turn on the well each time we water. The large pond would take the place of the totes and allow for much more watering time as we increase our growing capacity and eventually in-ground water lines can be put in so our three inch 40 foot sections of hand line won't have to be carried around to water the grass in the mowed fields.

The area between the solar panels and the deer fence on the north has plenty of room for parking (25-30 parking spaces) for those coming to take classes on everything from vegetable gardening and bonsai pruning to aquatic landscaping for koi and growing microgreens indoors. This could also be used for parking for small weddings, family reunions, etc. Porta potty restrooms can be brought in, but I have long term plans for a permanent restroom to be constructed on site to service our guests.

Improvements to the current deer fence and even expanding the growing area within the deer fence is a possibility since we lease an additional 12 acres

approximately from the power company that is on the south end of our property. Our main well line runs along this property so it can easily be watered. I'm currently waiting for grant approval for improvements of the pipe and collecting of water from the springs we own that come from above our property. The grant would also be used to build the large pond I mentioned for storage of water for the gardens. It would provide more water year-round and reduce the amount of water needed from the well.

What I have explained is only a crude explanation of the plans I see for the future in addition to the great amount of work that has already gone into the building of our current farm as the foundation. As things progress the vision becomes clearer and the plan more exact. With the unique location of our land and farm most people don't even know we have a large greenhouse and beautifully landscaped yard with ponds and waterfalls since they can not be seen from the road above our home, and only the greenhouse can be seen from the road south of our property. Patio Springs Gardens would like to share nutritious produce and a variety of unique experiences with the great people around us. We keep the name Patio Springs alive as we remember the amazing story-book-like place where I and so many others took part in the magic of a place and time that gave us such great happiness. My dream is to have Patio Springs Gardens, hopefully, over time, become such a place as well.