

Outdoors with Jon George

A Classical Retreat

in the heart of North Florida

By Jon George



A Shared Passion

Jerome and Reba Ridaught have been creating gardens at their home in Alachua, Fla., for the past 25 years. What once began as a cow pasture with one oak tree has blossomed into a country estate encompassing sweeping views of a water garden, cut flower garden, formal rose garden, shade garden and a trial area for new plants. I caught up with them one early Saturday morning as they were collecting hydrangea blossoms to make arrangements for their church the next day.

Back to the Classics

In their first garden, the Ridaughts sought to display their budding collection of daylilies with perennials and other shrubs to stunning effect. Soon, a daylily farm emerged, with Jerome designing and planting and Reba taking orders.

"I'm the brains, and he's the brawn!" Reba said, laughing. Their garden design is inspired the classical gardens they have seen in Europe, where both symmetry and sculpture play an important role in landscape. Inspired by Monet and other painterly gardens, they commissioned a steel-framed arch to be a centerpiece in the formal garden.

Notes from a Country Garden

Jerome and Reba Ridaught have worked hard to make their place a sanctuary. "I always wanted a place to design and plant," said Jerome. Drawing from years in the antiques and floral design business, Jerome would sometimes stay up late to sketch different garden scenarios.

"He has always had an eye for beauty and never met a bloom he didn't like," Reba mentioned. Classical gardens celebrate both cultivated formality and wild nature. Try bringing the beauty of a classical garden to your home by framing a view with a matching pair of stone urns. Start with colors and plants you love, and think about theming each collection as a "garden room." Soon, you will be savoring the rewards of your own garden retreat.



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