

I've given up on flower beds. There was a time, many years ago, when I maintained a large area of perennial flowers and herbs with paths of large flat stones winding through the garden. After a few years, I realized that it was way too much work. We cut down the size of our fenced in yard, began to mow much less grass, and had just a few beds of flowers and herbs around the house. Included among them were three areas that consisted of large stones that made raised beds that I planted to flowers.

Two of these beds were somewhat circular in shape, and one was populated by perennials—sedums, sage, and herbs, and a few annual flowers. The other bed was full of wave petunias, making a splash of color in the yard.

The largest of the flower areas was a wide strip along the woodshed. The large stones that made a wall enclosed a stretch that became—mostly—a perennial bed. There were Siberian irises, several kinds of day lilies, fall purple asters, baby's breath, coneflowers, and several kinds of culinary herbs.

But, life intervened. I am apparently not really a “flower person,” and it seemed that I spent more and more hours in the vegetable garden and less and less time taking care of flowers. As the years went by, the flower beds were still pretty, but they were no longer anything special.

Still, flowers give a sense of freshness that is a relief on hot summer days, and I continued to give them enough attention so that the beds were not totally disgraceful.

Then came Blue and Kate. Fly, our last border collie before these two, was a “digger,” but she pretty much left the flowers alone. Blue, and to some degree, Kate, on the other hand, are terrors where flowers are concerned. Blue, particularly, is very athletic, and she used the raised beds as platforms from which to vault over the fence. Or, when we blocked that activity by erecting a high barrier on the other side of the fence, she just sat or stood in the beds to get a good view over the fence. Kate preferred to dig a nice, cool resting spot in the middle of the beds.

So, the flower beds have been dismantled. The two round ones are gone. The area along the woodshed wall is still there, and there are even some flowers, but it is no longer a flower bed.

We have replaced the flower bed with a stone bed. We moved the big stones from the other beds into the bed along the wall. I have filled in the gaps with smaller stones, and after a few more trips to the stone piles in the meadows, there will not be enough dirt to dig in, and no place to lie down. The perennials that remain between big stones are secure enough that Blue and Kate cannot dig them out.

Someone voiced the concern that the area would be “snaky.” I don't care. Snakes don't bother me, And, there are some really nice stones, both large and small, in the bed.

There are several pudding stones with varying amounts of “pudding” in them, some nice, big chunks of granite, and lots of colorful

smaller stones. The stone bed is just as attractive—at least, in my eyes—as the flower bed was. I have always liked stones and regularly eye the piles along fences and ponds, looking to see if there is anything interesting to bring home.

So, maybe a stone bed is more appropriate for us than a flower bed. It looks as if it will require less upkeep, the dogs can't dig it out, and I don't need to water it.

And, we do have some flowers. Runo put up a shelf on the woodshed wall a year ago when it became obvious that Blue was determined to undermine any remaining instinct I had for growing flowers. The “last straw” had come when I had placed an old wooden chair up on the woodshed bed and set a beautiful pot of flowers on it. I looked out one morning and saw that the flower pot was lying on the ground—flowers broken—and Blue was sitting on the chair.

So, the predominately gray stone bed and woodshed wall is now brightened by the flowers on the shelf. And, Blue cannot reach them.

