Kris and her husband Rick are passionate about creating a home that is both beautiful and functional, and doing it on their terms.

The front yard always stood out as something that needed a little attention. “It was kind of ugly,” admitted Rick. It had a big driveway and turnaround.”

When the couple saw an ad for the Homeowner Incentive Program (HIP) in the paper, a lightbulb went on. “HIP was a chance to improve our home while helping the environment,” Kris said. “We decided to give it a try.”

They scheduled an appointment and met with HIP staff to talk about options. “We were amazed at the possibilities,” Rick said describing the interaction as a brainstorming session. Access to a person who understood permitting made it possible to quickly assess a wide variety of choices. “It was great,” Rick said.

And then the arguments came. With a laugh, Rick admitted that the design process for the Bulcroft family was fraught with a spirited exchange of ideas. “It took many an hour,” Kris said with a laugh. “We finally decided on a plan.”

**We were amazed at the possibilities.**

—Rick Bulcroft
A key part of the process was the use of native plants, a requirement that Kris initially resisted. “It wasn’t part of my gardening style,” she said.

In time, she came to appreciate the importance of using native vegetation. “There are lots of choices out there, and they’re extremely low maintenance,” Kris said, referencing the longer, drier summers. “They don’t need much watering.”

The Bulcrofts also learned that the use of native plants doesn’t necessitate a wild look. “It’s very possible to have a structured, organized look with native vegetation,” Rick said.

The use of native vegetation also presented an odd puzzle of sorts. With a black walnut tree in the front yard producing chemicals toxic to many plants, it was a challenge to find viable options that were both beautiful and low maintenance.

In the end, they met with success. They combined both native and non-native species in their own way, creating an attractive colorful space. “I learned to love them,” Kris said. “They’re nice.”

Ultimately they were happy to see their unused concrete drive-way disappear. The patio and landscaping that replaced it combine both native landscaping and underground pollution filters to create a functional landscape that protects the lake.

A total of three infiltration systems were installed to manage runoff from most of the property that will help to improve the health of Lake Whatcom.

From the initial site visit to the final reimbursement, the project took a total of about ten months with about 85% of the total cost reimbursed by the program.

The Bulcrofts are delighted with their new space and are happy to be helping protect the environment. “It was a win-win,” Rick said.

It’s possible to have a very structured, organized look with native vegetation.

—Rick Bulcroft

QUESTIONS?
Find resources at www.lakewhatcomHIP.org, or request a free site visit to discuss your project options with a local expert. Call (360) 306-4701 or send an email to jcoe@whatcomcd.org.