



The upper and lower decks at the home of Paul and Peggy Koppmann. (Shuran Huang/Buffalo News)

Outdoor spaces: A grand spot on Grand Island

By [Susan Martin](#) | Published July 3, 2018 | Updated July 3, 2018

The newest addition to Paul and Peggy Koppmann's covered deck behind their Grand Island home is a pair of cushioned swivel chairs. "We can just swivel around and look at the garden," said Peggy Koppmann who, like her husband, is a master gardener.

The deck is a lovely place to be on summer days and evenings, too, thanks to string lights on a dimmer and solar lights. The swivel chairs join a grouping that includes a sofa, love seat and coffee table – also in all-weather wicker. A lower deck, built by Paul Koppmann in 1998, provides additional seating.

"We're pretty much outdoor people," said Peggy Koppmann, the longtime principal at Huth Road Elementary who retired in 2002.

When the couple moved to this home in 1996, the upper deck was there – but no landscaping. "Not a tree, not a bush, not a plant, not a thing," said Paul Koppmann, who retired from Occidental Chemical Corp. So they got to work. Now their garden is a must-see during the third annual [Grand Island Garden Walk](#), 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. July 8 (see details below).

The Koppmanns changed and expanded their gardens as time went on. They replaced clay soil with compost and high-quality soil. As trees grew, they transformed sunny gardens into shady ones. "We went from full sun to primarily shade and dappled shade. A lot of plant material had to be changed," Paul Koppmann said.

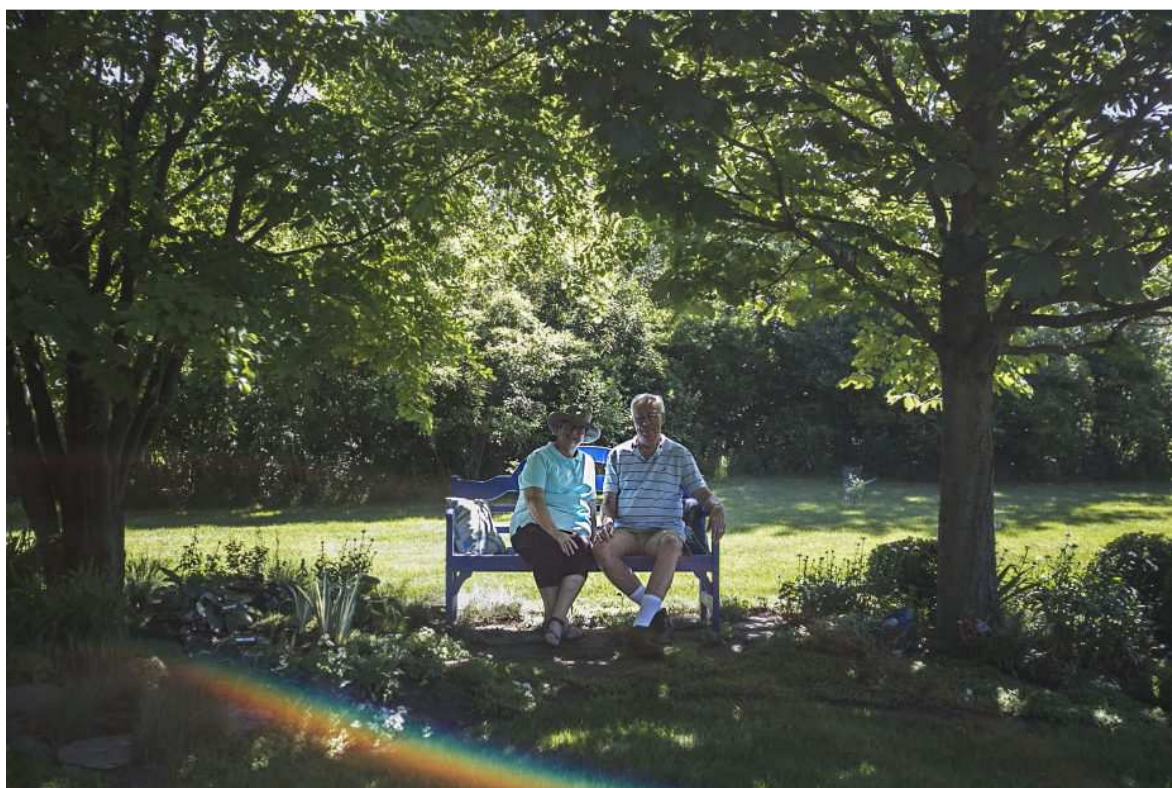
They built gardens around freestanding trees as they grew. Along the way, they caught the bug of creating large, continuous beds with plenty of curves – after visiting master gardener Craig Coyne's garden in Snyder.

“We would put one bed in and say, ‘We need a bed over there.’ Craig was a big influence. Our garden just keeps growing,” said Peggy Koppmann, a member of Cinderella Isle Garden Club.

Like others who maintain shade gardens, the Koppmanns fell for hostas. They have at least 100 named hosta varieties, including mini ones with “Mouse” in the names. School Mouse. Holy Mouse Ears. Blue Mouse Ears. They also brought in native plants that attract beneficial insects, such as Joe Pye weed, monarda and swamp milkweed.

They expanded the patio and created other seating areas. A path that begins under an arbor near the driveway continues along the side of the house into the backyard. It was created with large flagstones set in pea gravel and a border of Montana river rocks, and includes a bump-out area with a garden bench. A perennial garden on this side of the house is planted with lady’s mantle, Solomon’s seal, helleborus, delphinium, foxglove, roses and peonies.

A full-sun bed toward the back of the property is planted with torch plants, white-flowering gas plant and daylilies. Mesh and wire form a double fence to deter deer and rabbits from a garden planted with peppers, tomatoes, cucumbers and rhubarb.



Peggy and Paul Koppmann in the back garden, which is shaded by two trees. (Shuran Huang/Buffalo News)

Another seating area is found in yet another back garden, shown above, this one with an English blue-painted bench shaded by a white-flowering yellowwood tree on one side and flowering chestnut tree on the other. Other trees incorporated into the various gardens include a fern leaf beech, dawn redwood and a London planetree that sheds its bark.

So with two master gardeners in the household, will those swivel chairs see much action this summer?

As Paul Koppmann put it: “When we’re not weeding, we’re up here.”