

Reviving the garden post-Katrina

By Beverly Katz, Landscape Designer, and Nichole Roberts



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BEVERLY KATZ had six feet of water from the levee break after Hurricane Katrina covering her garden in the University area of New Orleans. The popular landscape designer who has been creating magnificent gardens in the area for 30 years didn't have time to indulge in self-pity. She immediately began working to bring the beauty back to the garden surrounding her home and office. "Once the cleanup was accomplished, I planted new flowers and shrubs," she says. "I wanted to be an inspiration to my neighbors by bringing beauty back to the street. Of course, I lost many mature shrubs and trees that cannot instantly be replaced."

Katz has kept a positive attitude since she returned from Katrina. "I have considered myself a landscape therapist since the hurricane," Katz says with a smile. "It has been an inspiring experience to help homeowners rescue their gardens. Nothing will lift your spirits more than to be met by a neat garden with blooming flowers when you drive up to your home. I call it instant therapy."

Along the way, Katz has discovered that bringing immediate color to a garden by adding blooming flowers has been a quick fix that her clients appreciate. "I have always been a specialist in walkways and raised flowerbeds and my refined designs have proven to be relatively easy to bring back to life. I also encourage the use of sculpture, water features and seating in my gardens. Just think of your garden as another beautiful room, or rooms, in your home."

Even in gardens without major damage, Katz discovered that there was usually some damage from fallen trees. "Unfortunately, even if you maintained the trees in your yard and didn't lose even one, you may have had a tree from your neighbor crush your fence and gardens," she explains.

"Simplicity is my watchword for homeowners trying to overcome a Katrina ravaged garden. Just try to get one area at a time looking nice," she continues. "You have a wonderful opportunity to try something different in your landscape. I find it exciting to bring something totally new to a space, in addition to replacing the shrubs and plants that were originally there. Nature teaches us lessons in resilience. Pay special attention to what did survive in your garden."

