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Janet Moyer Beautiful gardens made efficient through technology



Janet Moyer and her husband, Michael Hofman, of Janet Moyer Landscaping show off a satellite weather-monitoring device. — Jason Steinberg/Special to The Examiner

By Edie Sellers
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When Janet Moyer agreed to help a few friends with their gardens, she had no idea it would lead her away from her 20-year career and into life as a successful business owner.

Moyer, co-owner of Janet Moyer Landscaping, began her business in 1990 after discovering she got more satisfaction designing beautiful and efficient gardens for her Noe Valley neighbors than she did as a dental assistant.

"I always had an interest in plants," Moyer says. "I grew up in Michigan. My grandfather had a farm and we always cut flowers and had gardens."

Two years later, she brought husband Michael Hofman into the business. Today, Janet Moyer Landscaping designs, installs and maintains premier gardens for more than 100 clients and employs 12 people, including office staff, two full-time installation crews and two full-time maintenance crews.

The company's latest project brings it to the forefront of outdoor gardening high-tech.

Moyer and Hofman began testing

JANET MOYER

BUSINESS

New project: Rebuilding a rotting deck and inefficient lawn in Forest Hill

Last project: Another grass removal in Forest Hill

Number of e-mails: Light

Number of voice mails: Two or three

Essential Web site: www.janetmoyerlandscaping.com

Best perk: I get to do what I love

Fave gadget: Felco hand pruners

Education: College classes in horticulture at CCSF, business classes

Last conference: California Landscape Contractors Association

First job: KFC; they let me eat all the french fries I wanted

First aspiration: Dental assistant

Career objective: Sustainable garden landscapes that conserve water

PERSONAL

Age: 53

Likes: Travel; we take three good exploring trips a year

Dislikes: Litter, graffiti, open cupboard doors

Defining quirk: Analyzing something until I know it's right

Hometown: Grand Rapids, Mich.

Transportation: Green Toyota Prius bought on Earth Day

Fave restaurant: Home, any kind of pasta

Vacation spot: Bali is top of my list

Clothing: Levi's

Role model: My mother

Reading: Sunset magazine, Pacific Horticulture, Fine Gardens

Worst fear: My health not being good

Motivation: The beauty of it all

a new irrigation system that uses a combination of weather tracking, satellite communications and paging in their own Noe Valley home two years ago. The "smart water management" system, made by Toro, automatically determines exactly how much water a garden needs.

Experts say as much as 80

percent of all plant problems homeowners have with their gardens are due to overwatering. Moyer says it's particularly difficult in San Francisco, where springs and autumns have an equal chance of being very dry or very wet.

"In the spring and fall, we generally have to overwater so if we get

a few hot days that month, plants don't die," she explains. "We have to make a guess of what's going to happen in the next month."

The smart water system uses live reports from weather stations and details about the garden to determine exactly how much water has been used by the plants and how much more is needed — saving potentially thousands in dead plants, gardening costs and water bills.

Moyer says switching to the new system is relatively inexpensive for her clients. Adapting an existing irrigation system that's properly installed usually runs from \$200 to \$500. She says she is hoping to convert all her clients to the new system, and already eight of her clients have made the switch.

"Once you get it set up, it's great," she says. "We haven't looked at ours for a year."

Edie Sellers is a writer, podcaster and talk-show host on KGO newstalk radio 810. Read her blog at www.kgo.com.

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