local color

MEET THE PERENNIAL PLANT OF THE YEAR

Solomon's Seal, which is variegated, striped and fragrant, is one of the nicest ground covers you can grow in part to full shade. It's stunning alone or mixed with other plants. "It's a carefree plant that always looks fresh and clean in the garden, and the bell-shaped flowers and variegated leaves bring a sparkle of white to a shady area," says Virginia landscape designer Peggy Krapf. Solomon's Seal flowers in late spring and thrives in moist soil. Good companions include hostas, ferns and astilbes. | Daily Press, Newport News, Va.

q+a | Lisa Schmitz, owner Lisa Schmitz Interior Design

By ALICE THORSON
The Kansas City Star

Interior designer Lisa Schmitz plays multiple roles in the Kansas City community. The granddaughter of artists and a mother of two has long been active in the Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art's Friends of Art membership group and also volunteers at St. Peter's Catholic School and Church.

During the past 2 ½ decades, Schmitz has designed multiple interiors in the Kansas City area, including a series of projects in collaboration with the El Dorado architecture firm.

Schmitz is married to developer Chuck Schmitz, with whom she occasionally collaborates on residential projects.

They live in Brookside, and her office is in Waldo at 107 E. Gregory Blvd.

How did you get started?

I've been in the design field since the late 1980s, when I graduated from the University of Missouri, where I studied interior design. I worked in interior design and architecture firms for 15 years, and with the birth of our second child, I went on my own, opening Lisa Schmitz Interior Design in 2002.

I started it in my laundry room. Then I rented a desk at El Dorado for a few years. I continue to collaborate with them, and I also work with other architects.

When did you move to the space on Gregory?

In 2010. It's a storefront space. We had a family demolition party to get rid of the 1950s paneling and black acoustic ceiling tiles. There were birds' nests in here. We exposed the original ceilings and stained the original hardwood floors. We painted and put in these '50s-modern inverted-dish light fixtures that we salvaged from a former salon in this building.

What kinds of projects do you do?

I've designed small corporate offices, but my main focus is high-end modern residential. I'll do the space planning as well as the finishes and furniture, accessories and pillows. I've had a couple of projects that involved enough renovation that the clients had to move out, so there's been a range, from quite extensive to just doing a room.

Any early influences?

My grandparents are artists. My grandfather built an international-style cabin in the woods with an incredible butterfly roof. He built the entire cabin by hand. That was my introduction to modern architecture.

In their main residence, they had Eames chairs and a modern walnut dining room table mixed with a traditional upholstered sofa with hand-carved wood and a walnut paneled dining room. It all smelled like oil paintings and my grandfather's pipe tobacco.

How do you go about creating an interior?

I draw everything, from floor plans to sketches and perspectives, by hand with a Sharpie. I don't do computer renderings. I also create an inspiration board with general ideas about furniture, fabrics and textures and overall images that I take from magazines or online resources. It builds from there and gets more refined.

I have a board up now with samples of cabinets, countertops, paint, wall covering, upholstery and drapery. It's for a kitchen, dining room and living room I'm designing for a client. The kitchen cabinets are white, the countertops are bluestone and the floor is ebony-stained oak. The dining room and living room have gray walls and white trim, ebony-stained floors and a limestone fireplace.

Do you have some favorite materials?

I like to use honest materials, not things that try to replicate something else. I'm drawn to natural stone — bluestone, soapstone, marbles and limestones. Wool and linens are my favorite fabrics.

What about wood?

I like a mixture of woods. I designed this table in the office, and the woodsmith used the wood in its natural state. It's walnut and shows the knots, stains — even a bullet stuck in the wood. Lately I've been using a lot of walnut and rift-sawn oak, which yields a grain that is straighter and more consistent than the cathedraling (curvy lines) of plain-sawn wood.

JILL TOYOSHIBA | THE KANSAS CITY STAR

Lisa Schmitz, founder of Lisa Schmitz Interior Design, in a living room she designed for a client on the Plaza. She likes neutral palettes with pops of color.

Lisa Schmitz designed this custom solid walnut dining room table that sits atop FLOR tiles.

What are your color preferences?

My palettes are usually pretty neutral. It's calming and allows you to interject color through accents and the owners' collections. I try to bring in texture, both visual and physical.

I do like dramatic powder rooms. Everything may be neutral, but then you have a little surprise in a powder room that may be very colorful.

What's your approach to lighting?

Minimal. I'd rather use can lights than pendants. If you do one fabulous pendant, it has more of an emphasis.

Tell me about some of your projects.

I just finished the interior design for Mike and Tammi Morgan's residence on the Plaza. It's in a modern condo building in glass and concrete. I opened up the wall between the dining room and kitchen to create a bar. The furniture is neutral with texture. There's a simple modernist sofa that I upholstered in a soft neutral fabric with a low pile, and I did the chairs in a coordinating neutral. I was working with the rug that the customer already had.

We designed the coffee table and had it made in ebony-stained ash, which adds texture. We didn't want it smooth and lacquered-looking. The daylight highlights the grain. The pillows are high and low. Some are from West Elm and some are custom-made in silk.

We gave the fireplace a concrete hearth and a walnut mantel and used the concrete again in the bar top. The warmth in this space comes from the existing wood floor and the walnut.

And you also did the dining room in the Morgan house?

It has a custom solid walnut table — a slab with a slab base. The carpet beneath it is FLOR tiles, wool, in a combination of shag and tight pile laid to create stripes. We also used FLOR tiles in the hallway to create a 36-foot-long runner.

We used a standard light fixture, clustered in a custom way, to create one clean long fixture.

The chairs are upholstered in tufted linen on the inside. The backs are covered in patterned velvet. The whole palette is gray with orange.

What do you like to use for accents?

I like succulents and air plants and moss for tabletop accents and also stacks of books.

How would you summarize your design philosophy?

Keep it simple. I focus on the clients' collections rather than gathering stuff to fill the space. I grew up with clutter. Maybe that's the reason I'm drawn to a more minimal aesthetic.

Keep planting that produce

A little planning and persistence can yield fresh veggies almost year-round.

By KATHY VAN MULLEKOM
Daily Press, Newport News, Va.

By now, you've planted your warm-season vegetable garden and are just waiting for the harvests that give you fresh goodies for summer salads and sandwiches.

Don't stop with the first crops. With careful planning and more planting, you can have fresh produce almost year-round, according to edible gardening experts, including John Fendley of Sustainable Seed Co., a supplier of organic heirloom seeds.

A tried-and-true technique called "succession planting" allows you to make the most of a small plot. It's similar to a small-space gardening concept called "square-foot gardening," continually replacing old crops with new, harvesting a lot from a little.

Before you plant, assess what you like to eat and buy seeds and transplants based on that list — lettuces and onions for salads, squash and zucchini for grilling and melons and canteloupes for snacking.

Next, figure out how many days each vegetable needs before it matures and is ready for harvest.

Then, cut the days in half or a third — and you'll know when to replant so you have two or three harvests instead of one bumper crop that overwhelms you.

The key is replanting.

"It's so simple, but many gardeners don't do it," Fendley says.

"For example, every 10 to 14 days you can seed radishes, plant a few seeds at a time, not the whole packet, and you'll have crisp radishes continually from spring to late fall instead of leaving them in the ground to get tough and woody," he says.

Good candidates for succession planting, according to Fendley, include:

- Greens such as lettuce, spinach and kale in spring and again in fall. Plant Swiss chard after lettuces are done.
- Once summer's sweet corn is done, plant broccoli transplants for a fall harvest.
- Plant vine-type cucumbers early, followed by bush cucumbers a month later.
- Directly sow seeds of carrots, radishes, beets, bush beans and snap peas into the garden every few weeks in June and July.

When you shop for seeds and transplants, look closely at the maturing dates, choosing a variety of short-, mid- and long-maturing types. Crops also continue longer on a natural basis if you harvest regularly.

NATIONAL GARDEN BUREAU

For more fresh carrots from the garden, keep sowing seeds every few weeks in June and July.