



# a light touch

NATURE AND NURTURE PLAY EQUAL ROLES IN THE LUSH GARDENS THAT SURROUND A NORTH SHORE HOME. ○ TEXT BY MEGAN FULWEILER ○ PHOTOGRAPHY BY STACY BASS

100 NEW ENGLAND HOME SEPTEMBER/OCTOBER 2014



A sequence of well-planned spaces on various levels leads down a hill layered with lush plantings, including existing trees that were maintained wherever possible. PAVING PLOT: The owners were drawn to the home's English-cottage style. The garden levels highlighting the entrance, made of flockport, Massachusetts, quarry stone, were discovered at an estate sale.







Bright black-eyed susans and sunny lilies offset the grand stone wall. Top right: Maximum furnishings and a low-key fire pit at the lawn's edge make for a popular gathering spot without diminishing the recreational views. Such quiet places, Lombardi explains, "allow people to slow down and take notice." (Left to right: Rectangular stone led in a natural-looking pattern enhances the decorative bench and arbor. The arbor will eventually be home to vines for a spectacular burst of additional color.



tion that, while substantial, maintained many of the house's original elements.

Today, visitors make their way along the drive to the entry through mature oaks and umbrella pines, which are joined by newer recruits such as flowering dogwoods and birches. With Japanese maples and magnolias lending a romantic air to the handsome motor court and pots of bright flowers gathering attention, the home's more modern wings seem less prominent. Massive stone pots sporting an arresting blend of ferns and bold, sunset-hued begonias direct the eye straight to the front entrance.

"The wife loves color, which allows us to experiment with all kinds of daring combinations," says Vanessa Tropeano, field director for Parterre Garden Services, a spin-off of Lombardi's company that helps clients maintain and manage their plantings. Stone-obsessed like lanterns and hibiscus are popular players, mingling with faithful sweet-potato vine and old-fashioned verbenas.

On the property's eastward side, the drama in-creases tenfold. The landscape architects' ingenue-

ous solution translates to a series of spaces cascading to the shore, providing a number of opportunities to stop and soak up the surroundings.

The scenic journey begins on the top of the ledge where the house is located and sweeps down a curving stone staircase crafted by R.F. Marzilli and Company (the Medway, Massachusetts, firm that handled the garden's construction as well as many of the larger plantings) to the hydrangea-bordered Jacuzzi.

From there, steps descend to the lawn (a boon for sports) and a granite terrace in the form of a parabolic arch. "The shape—rounded but pushing toward the water—suggests nature's movement," Lombardi explains.

There's also a welcoming fire pit, but few sitting here ever focus on the dancing flames; the ocean is more yards away, after all, stretching as far as the eye can see. From this vantage point—thanks to Myer and project architect Susan Dunbar—the marvelous house expands outward to greet the landscape. The family's pool is tacked into the side of the hill on this same level, flush with the lawn and adjacent

"We didn't want to force ourselves on nature. The plants we chose had to like this environment and want to stay," says the wife.





"Bees, mice, butterflies—whichever wants to live there is welcome," says the eco-conscious wife.

to the home's basement for easy access. In summer, the roof and glass walls along the front retreat into their dedicated slots. Come winter, they slip back into place and the fabulous outdoor pool becomes a warm spot for indoor swimming.

The path winds on down the slope to a stone dining pavilion, where a fireplace makes the spot a coveted destination for cozy gatherings as well as sunny events. With tables and chairs always at the ready, impromptu gatherings can happen at a moment's notice. Leggy daylilies and small forests of lime-green sedum dot the little building's perimeter. Nearby, wildflowers blanket a generous meadow. Spring's graceful lupines and columbine is favorite for hummingbirds; give way to summer's Black-eyed Susans, Echinacos, and native milkweed. "Bees, mice, butterflies—whichever wants to live there is welcome,"

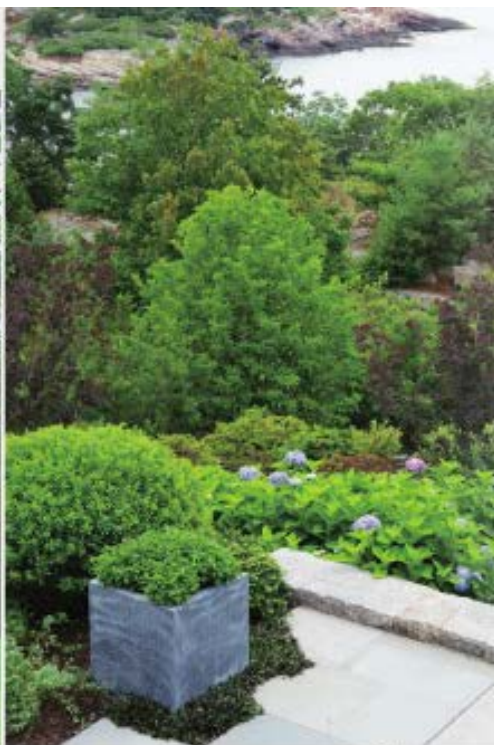
says the eco-conscious wife, who encourages all her flowers to roam at will.

From the meadow, it's a short walk to the beach where father and son launch their kayaks. Long forgotten are the logistics of workbenches and machines traveling precariously up and down the hill. The lovely landscape, as the owners hoped, resembles one that's been in place for generations. "It's a sort of managed evolution," says Lombardi, one that's complemented by an "honesty of materials and attention to details."

Take the stunning and soon-to-be-rain-covered arbor bench Lombardi designed to block the view of a neighboring house, or the incredibly handsome stonework. Paths and stairs built with existing rocks and those mined during construction lend a sense of history. A hefty stone bench by the outdoor shower



The new company's long service has established and cemented with personal relationships with local growers. A six-month partnership by a dozen one-of-its-kind shops leads another lot of fascinating stories. **BY LIZ GARDNER FOR ENR**



make a convenient spot for dropping a towel or putting on shoes.

And bronze railings—crafted by Valle's Forge, in Wales, Massachusetts—are so artful they belie their function. "We wanted a bit of a nautical feel," says Lombardi of a graceful nest of poles. At its center sits a sphere of lustrous labradorite that mimics planet Earth. Heightening the magical—what Lombardi calls the "childlike sense of wonder" this garden awakens—are a trio of cast-bronze hermit-crab shells along the railing. The last, the landscape architect relates, tilts to the side, and out crawls a crab heading for the water. It's a fitting decoration to underscore the owner's affection for our planet with all its glorious flora and fauna. ■

**EDITOR'S NOTE:** For more information about this project, see page 211.