

PARALLEL PATHS

Samuel H. Williamson

When the current owners purchased this 1806 Federal row house located in crowded, busy Georgetown in Washington, D.C., the garden was overgrown with English ivy and weeds. Broken pottery was found when excavating the garden, calling to mind the utilitarian role of row house backyards in the 19th century.

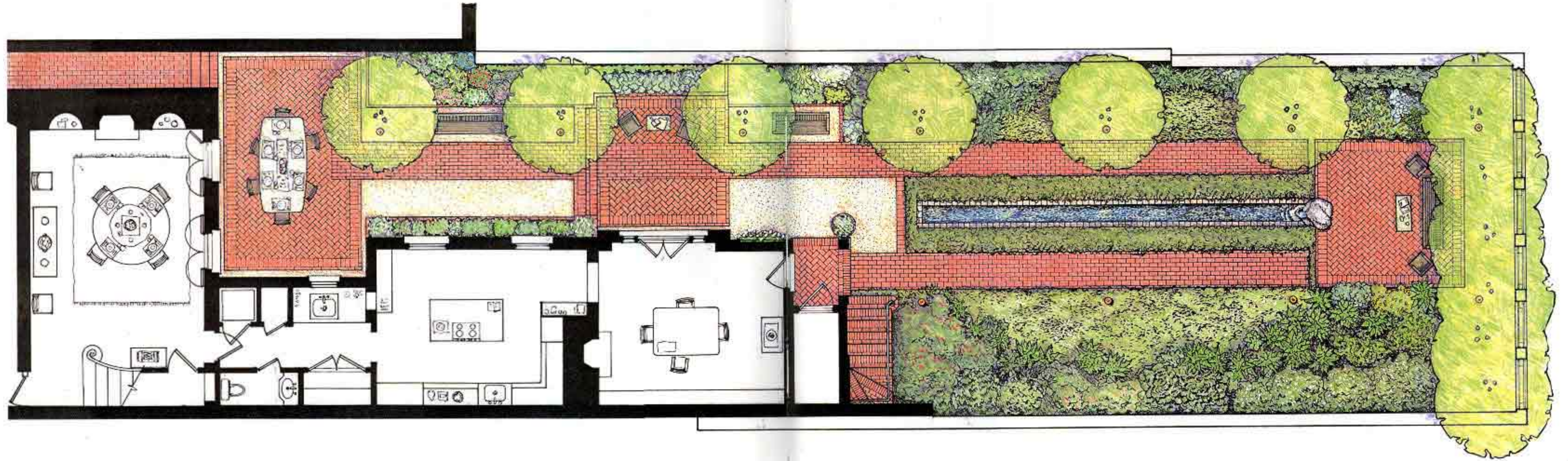
In conjunction with an extensive restoration of the house, the landscape architect was asked to create a garden that would establish a dialogue with the Federalist architecture. The result is a spare, almost minimalist design that reflects the austere, democratic, anti-European aesthetic characteristic of Federal style. By contrast, the soft, green, shady plant palette provides a cool respite during Washington's hot summers.

BIG IDEA: Rather than divide the long, narrow garden into smaller rooms (a common design solution) the landscape architect chose a different tactic. His design reinforces the site's strongest characteristic—its depth. Parallel brick paths extend the full length of the garden from the rear of the house to a small, shady terrace at the far end. A narrow water runnel is framed by the paths and fed by a fountain that flows from stones at its terminus near the rear terrace. On the west side of the garden, and extending its length, is a row of six 'Heritage' river birch. Seven more of these graceful trees stand at the rear of the garden, behind the terrace.

Right: As seen from the dining room, parallel brick paths flanking the water runnel connect the house with the wooded terrace at the rear of the garden.

Photography: Roger Foley

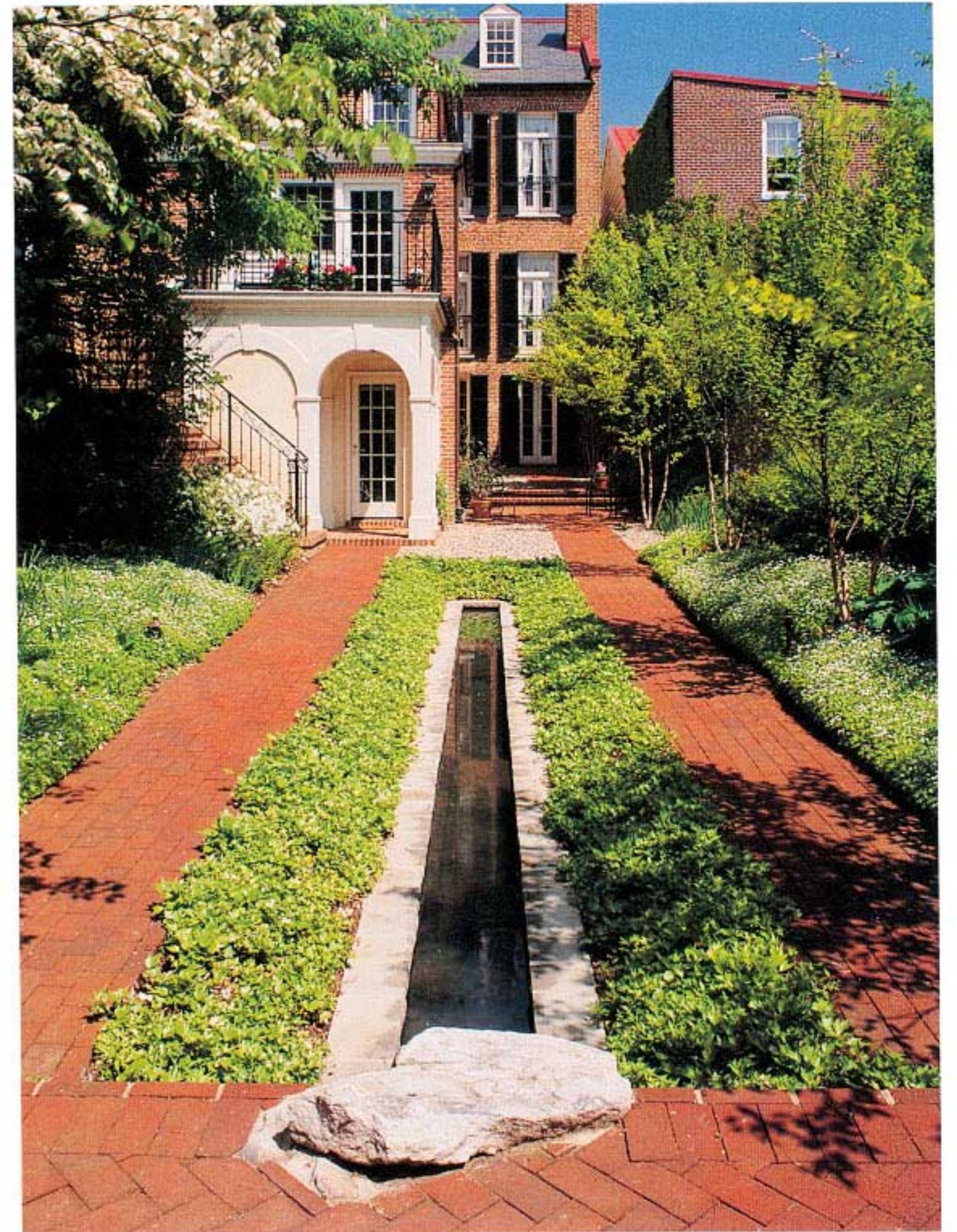






Above: The runnel is bordered with hostas, plus 'Needlepoint', and 'Green Gem' (two varieties of English ivy).

Right: View from the terrace looking back to the house.



POOL GARDEN

Samuel H. Williamson

In a leafy suburb of Dedham, Massachusetts, an 1850s Greek revival house sits atop a small hill in the woods. Beneath an immense copper beech tree in the backyard, an oval swimming pool is almost entirely surrounded by stone walls in a tight, 30-by-37-foot space.

To accentuate the pool and give coherency to the lawn panels that flank it, the landscape architect encircled the pool with bluestone banding that twists and threads its way through the terrace. The spaces between bands become lawn panels, stone infill, or planting pockets. The stone infill between bands is a veined slate with blue colors similar to the colors of the bluestone. Ruddy purple veins in the slate recalling the color of the copper beech.

BIG IDEA:

Plantings echoing the colors of the beech were chosen by the landscape architect. Reddish colored flowers are often neglected because they appear “brown” to some people; here they go exceptionally well with the color of the beech. The stems and undersides of the leaves of *Ligularia dentata*, the flowers of *Fritillaria meleagris*, the leaves of red-leaved rose *Rosa rubrifolia* and purple smokebush *Cotinus coggygria* “Royal purple” are set off by the white Casablanca lilies, white tulips, daffodils, and an espaliered magnolia along the stone wall.

Right: By surrounding the pool and lawn panels with the same bluestone used for the terrace, the small backyard becomes a coherent whole.

Photography: Adrian Catalano





Left: The border passes from full sun, with tulips in spring to full shade with *Astilboidea tabularis*.

Right, top: Espaliered peaches help achieve a full range of heights in a tight border.

Right, bottom: An Ezra Pound peony embodies the deep red and white color scheme early in the spring.





Left: The dark red leaves of this Heuchera "Purple Palace" echo the colors of the copper beech and Japanese maple in the distance.

Right: A bench at the edge of the garden.

