



# View Master

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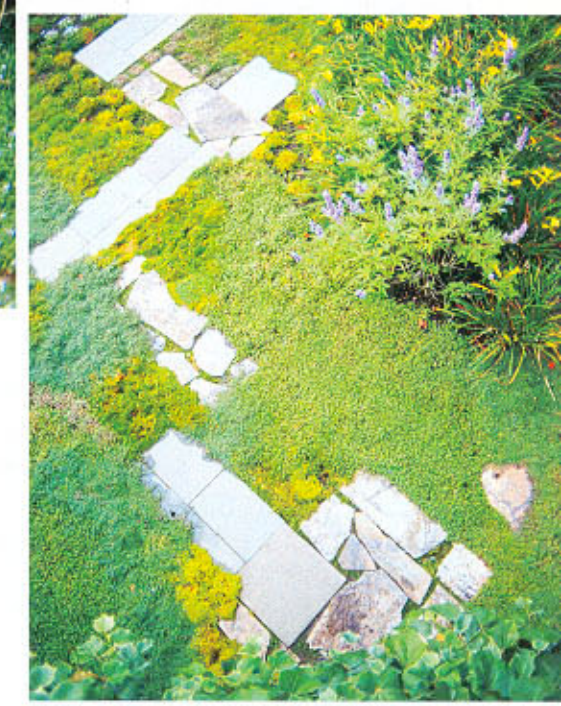
WHEN WAYNE AND LOIS WILLIAMSON decided to redesign their garden, they did what any parents would do. They asked their son for help. In this case, however, their son, Sam, just happened to be the principal of Samuel H. Williamson Associates, and a modest, 4,500-square-foot garden posed no problem. After all, the striking designs of this landscape architectural firm have been highlighted on the cover of *Architectural Digest*, and their exquisite gardens range from Portland to the coast of Maine.

The Williamsons' original garden was all about vegetables. Every spring since they built their West Hills Portland home in the 70s, they brought in a dump truck filled with mushroom compost and planted a huge vegetable garden. "We were gung ho for veggies," said Lois, "but as we got older and our joints got creakier, we had to make a change."

Now in their 80s, they wanted a lower-maintenance garden, one that could be viewed both from the daylight basement and from the deck above. They longed to keep their favorites: The sweet, peach-colored Graham Thomas rose that climbed along the lower fence, the fragrant, 10-foot lavender lilac and a cluster of well-established grape vines. Plus, these plant lovers wanted a garden brimming with plants – as many as this small space would allow.

The result is an evocative blend of Asian influence with a few contemporary twists. "My mom likes an Asian garden," said Sam, "but I was tweaking it a bit." Strong geometric designs

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A sunny southeast slope provides the setting for this intimate garden, offering views out to the Coast Range and Mt. Hood. Throughout there is a tension between Asian and contemporary elements, between the soft woodland plantings and the bold arch of the junipers. The stepping stone path is an abstraction of an Asian garden element, a zigzagged bridge across water. According to Sam, "If you walk across this bridge, the story goes, ghosts that follow you will fall off the bridge, and all your troubles will disappear."





In fall, the red leaves of the vine maples glow against the gray river rock and blue stone, and in winter, the bones of the garden remain: the stone, the walls and the evergreens.

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blend seamlessly with softly curving hedges and walking paths. "The challenge was to incorporate the beloved elements from the old garden into the new design," said Sam. The new areas of planting take their cue from the existing retaining wall and curve gently out from the straight lines of the house and deck. A new retaining wall echoes the old one and flattens the site, lending itself to comfortable walking.

Seen from above, the garden is a tapestry of color, pattern and texture constantly changing with the light. From within, it is an enchanting exploration of the mastery of gardening in a small space.

A meandering walkway and clever plantings work together to both reveal and conceal views. Entering the garden, you descend down a linear walk of rectangular blue stone through walls of foliage to a view of the Coast Range. Turn right and skirt between a veil of evergreens, a curving Skyrocket juniper hedge and a collection of arborvitae that intermittently offers you tantalizing

glimpses of what's to come. Then step into the shade of a grove of vine maples and the heart of the garden, an open area of low, richly textured groundcovers surrounded by woodland plants. A walkway of blue stone and Montana-mossy stone leads you back through more ground cover to the house.

The ground cover is a patchwork carpet of blue star creeper, two varieties of thyme and brass buttons, or '*cotula squalida*', a tiny fernlike leaf that turns a rich copper color in fall. This is truly a four-season garden. Blooming in spring are the lilac, liriopse and star magnolia, and in summer, rudbeckia, pampas grass, Russian sage, daylilies, chaste tree and roses. In fall, the maple leaves turn red and in winter, the evergreens prevail.

Lois is extremely pleased with her son's design. "It's just lovely," she said. "Our friends come over and say, 'we've got to go out and see your garden!' Then she adds, as only a mother can, "Plus, it looks a heck of a lot better than an old veggie garden in the fall." ♦