



In a plan that was passed from one homeowner to another, a stream flows from the center of three French doors, then wends its way through a wild landscape toward more formal constructions of patios and lawn.

A PARADIGM-BUSTING PLAN

SAM WILLIAMSON CREATED a customized landscape plan for this house in Dover, Massachusetts, but the developer ran out of money and left the building and landscape undone. "There was just hardpan, clay, and subsoil there," recalls Williamson, of Williamson & Associates in Portland, Oregon. However, the developer showed potential buyers the plan and used it to help sell the house. The approach worked; the buyer not only kept the plan as originally conceived but had it quickly implemented. "He took it as whole cloth," Williamson says, "exactly as we'd planned it."

"Normally, landscape design is done in these dissipating rings that radiate from the hard architecture of the house outward to more and more wilderness as you move farther away," Williamson explains. "I was trying to flip

this paradigm a little here and start with shady, woody at the house, with the more formal paved terrace farther away." To this end, Williamson included several key features in the landscape. There is a main courtyard formed and wrapped by the three sides of the house, all of which include many multipaned windows and French doors. Pathways lead from the doors through the courtyard to terraces for sitting and dining and then to the manicured lawn beyond. "We wanted to make this gesture of two limestone paths that run through the French doors toward the distant landscape," he says. Beyond the paved elements, the grand lawn steps down over a low stone curb, broken at regular intervals with square bluestone plinths set with candle-lit lanterns. Of the curb, Williamson says, "It's not a functional thing as much as expressing the

radiating energy running out from the garden." Beyond the lawn, the real woods begin, providing a framework for the entire site.

RADIATING OUTWARD

The lush courtyard close to the house was created as "a shady retreat from the big south-facing windows," Williamson notes. The main feature of the space is a stone-edged, lushly planted stream bed that begins as a pool set just outside the middle French door. "The whole thing starts with

a circular pond that pours into a small winding stream, which in turn pours into a rectangle at the lower of the ponds. Then there is an arc at the edge of terrace, and then the arc of patios, and the curb with the lanterns on them. It's all a reference to these radiating views that move outward and gesture to the larger landscape around it."

The first small pond is only about 18 inches (46 cm) in diameter and features a waterfall that drops into a runnel. "I wanted to create the feeling of motion through water that seems to be running out toward the horizon,"

The stream starts with a small pool and waterfall and then flows among rocks, birch trees, and brightly flowering plants. The sound of falling water—the first of several landscape elements—and the naturalized plantings invite visitors to step outside.



he explains. "The runnel is about 12 inches (30.5 cm) wide and 20 feet (6 m) long, and it curves as if it were trying to go around the two birch trees." The stream is "set up like a long, narrow pond," with a recirculating pump. In addition to the birch trees, the stream bed is planted with a Japanese maple, low-growing thymes, mosses, irises, and aquatic plants. "The flower colors are yellow and orange, as it was meant to be sunny and brightly colorful," Williamson says.

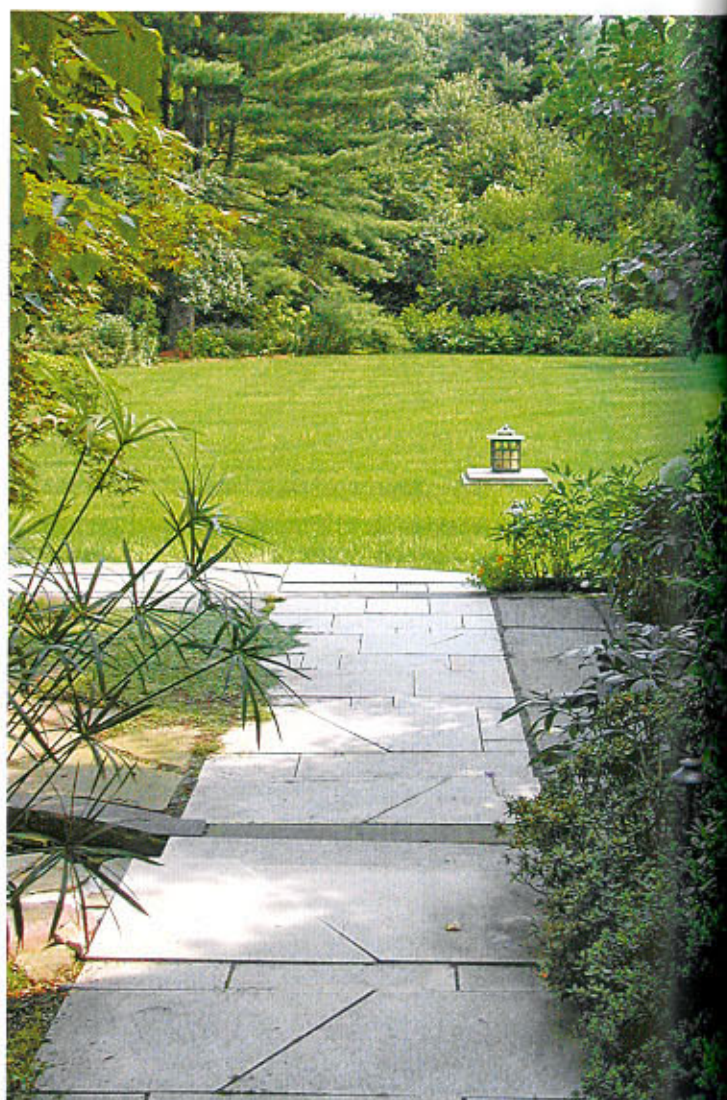
A shaded dining area is set just around the corner from the stream. Pavers in complementary colors connect the elements of the landscape, even as each is marked by a slightly different pattern of stones and set with gaps of varying width.



COMPLEMENTARY PATTERNS

The site features a variety of stones set in several patterns. "The lighter limestone paths are the bright lines that run through the garden," he points out. "They increase the longitudinal aspect and express these long views from the house out to the horizon. We used cut stones to get the joints tight." The pattern of the stones was borrowed from a project done in France by the legendary Gertrude Jekyll and Edwin Lutyens. "The squares and rectangles, of course, form an old and common pattern," Williamson says. "But Jekyll and Lutyens added an occasional diagonal joint imi-

A walkway leads from the more densely planted and paved areas around the house into the open expanse of lawn, framed by the woods beyond.



tating repairs made to the occasional broken stones, which adds a certain amount of visual interest. I've always wanted to use this pattern, and here was my chance."

Williamson also created a sitting area from which to view the stream, and, around the corner, a dining area made of regular bluestone and banded with an edge of lilac bluestone. "The other thing I was playing with in this project," he notes, "is using all kinds of stones together. I've always noticed that if you look at a collection of tile samples, the color range is very wide. But with stone, the colors tend to hang together better than you might think. So I was playing with all kinds of stone to see if it might

work; there's bluestone, lilac bluestone, limestone, and local, native fieldstone."

While the homeowner who finally saw this job to completion likes it best as a place to stroll in the evening, especially by moonlight, Williamson is most intrigued with the formal aspects of the plan, even as they result in a naturalized setting. "I like the clarity of the diagram," he says. "It's these two lines that run out from the house and are overlaid with this circle of water; then these parallels are intersected with an arc that gets more and more open as it radiates outward. It's all about expressing the connection of the house and the overall landscape."

A curving stone curb in the middle of the lawn is set with lanterns on plinths and expresses the "radiating energy running out from the garden."





Bluestone pavers have been mixed with more naturally shaped stones, as well as creeping plants in a range of colors and textures, to create a pattern to walk through or view from above.

PEBBLES, ROCKS, AND BLUESTONE

THE OWNERS OF this oddly shaped and sloping site in the hills west of Portland, Oregon, were avid vegetable gardeners. Now in their 80s, "it was getting to be too much to pull out the rototiller every year," said Sam Williamson of Samuel H. Williamson & Associates in Portland, Oregon. So they requested an Asian-inspired, low-maintenance garden to replace the tomato, pepper, and pea plants. "What I did instead," said Williamson, "was my take on American gardens from the 1950s that were supposedly Asian-inspired, and then I made it more contemporary."

The house and garden area have been carved out of a hill. The house is a single story in the front and two stories in the back, with a "daylight basement" that opens out onto the 40-foot-by-40-foot (12.2 × 12.2 m) shelf that is the garden. This setting created both challenges and opportunities. "We wanted to create a garden that was an

A compact garden space becomes an interesting array of garden rooms with the introduction of pathways and a variety of textures in plants and stone.



interesting pattern to look down on from the upper floor of the house, and also wanted to create a lot of variety in a very tight space," Williamson explains. He used two techniques to achieve these goals and make the space feel more expansive: introducing a series of pathways and using a wide variety of textures in both stone and plant material.

"One of the first ideas I had was to create a walk-through ground cover," Williamson recalls. "And this is an abstraction of an authentic Japanese garden detail, where you have bridges that zigzag across water features. The idea is that ghosts travel in a straight line, and as they follow you, they'll fall in the water and drown. So when you get to the end of the bridge, you'll feel more peaceful." Williamson also created a separate pedestrian path with a row of cedars on one side and junipers along the other. "I wanted the views to keep changing," he notes. "You start on the upper deck with expansive views of the Oregon coast range, and then as you descend, you get into a more closed-in world, with teasing glimpses into the garden. It's about adding some feeling of progression, rather than seeing the whole thing from the start."

TEXTURE AND COMPLEXITY

At the furthest end of the walk is a garden room planted with a vine maple grove among bluestone and pebbles. "It's meant to feel like a destination, but also like a terrace and a pathway you pass through, as well as a decorative abstraction that you can see from above," he says. This sense of passing from one place to another and seeing a plethora of textures, including bluestone pavers cut in several proportions, Montana moss stone, Mexican beach pebbles, and gravel is also designed to increase the feeling of expansiveness. "Sometimes, to make a small space seem bigger, people tear down walls," Williamson notes. "But if you put up a wall, and create complexity, that makes a space seem bigger, too."

The textural complexity is extended to the plant choices. Irish moss, creeping thyme, blue star creeper, ferns, and brass buttons grow among the stones. Japanese kerria, vine maples, cedars, and junipers add vertical interest while bright flowers are used as accents. "It's rich, but not a wild mix," Williamson notes, "and we wanted to make it feel a bit like the Pacific Northwest woods by, for instance, adding in some ferns." He also added an island

The subdued and cohesive palette of blues, grays, and browns inherent in stone of almost any kind provides a soothing backdrop for plants as well as fallen leaves.



A vine maple grove is planted among bluestone and Mexican river rocks to offer visitors a place to linger or pass through on their way to other parts of the garden.

of boulders set amongst the plants to appear as a single stone outcropping.

When choosing plants to place among stones, Williamson offers a few guidelines. "One is that you have to think about the heat that the stones create. Pieces of stone are big heat sinks and some plants really like it, while others hate it," he says. "You need to think about whether you want the ground cover to creep out over the top or to sit neatly along the edge of the stone, because if you choose the wrong one, you end up with a maintenance issue." Color also plays a part. "Stone has a really

restricted palette compared to plants," Williamson points out. "For example, bluestone is blue, but not as blue as a blue flower. The color palette of stones hangs together regardless of what kind of stone it is, so I think of stone as a neutral backdrop and then accent around it with plants."