

More Than Meets The Eye

by Mary Smith Associates

Unlike commercial landscaping design or public works projects, designing for custom residential is a very precarious business. Attempting to satisfy the unique requirements of the individual owner takes an almost empathic understanding of the client, in addition to an appreciation of the techniques for enhancing small spaces.

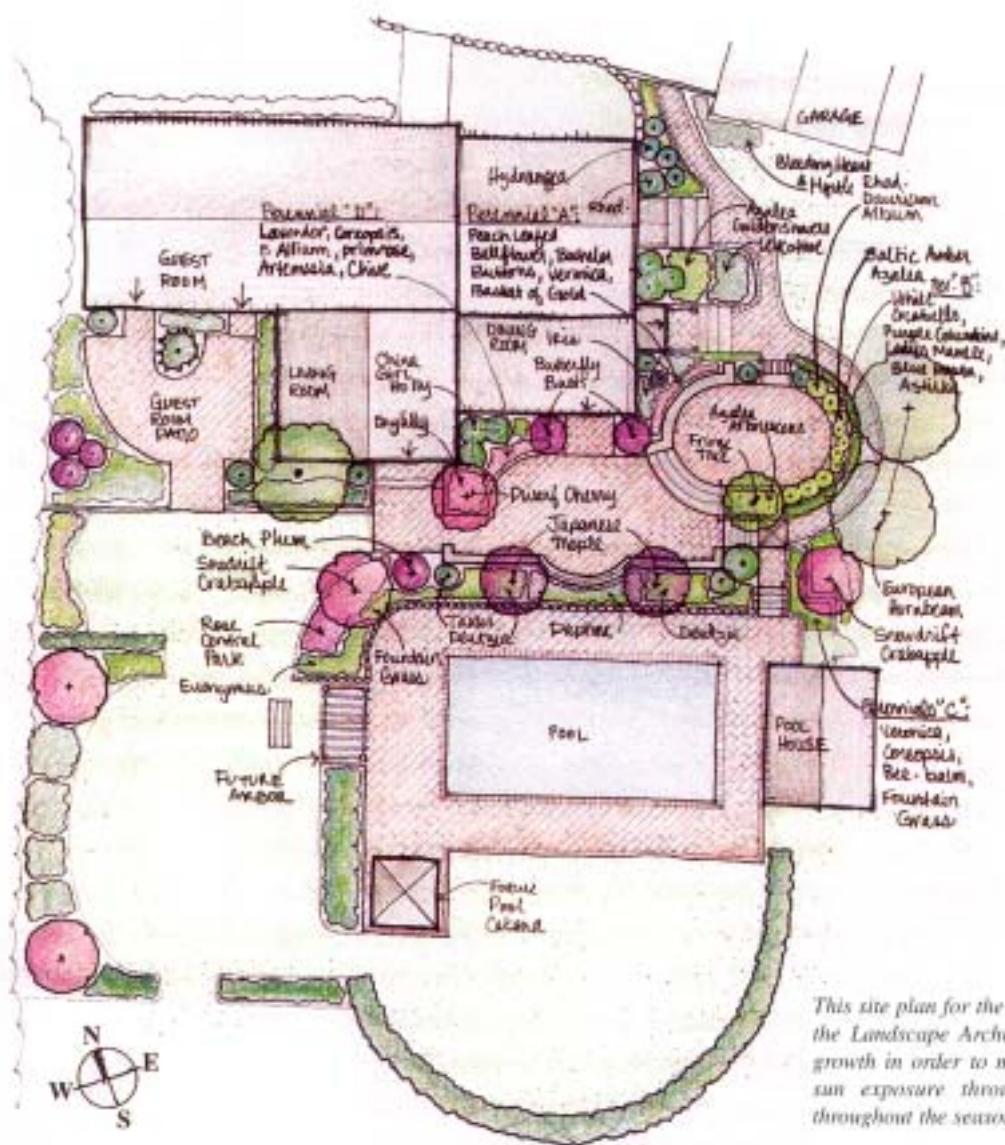
One of the first priorities of creating a residential landscape is establishing a border between the property and the outside world. This can be implied with a subtle shift in vegetation and coloration, or can be a deliberate barrier, sharply delineating the boundaries of the residence with dense foliage and stone fencing.

Many tropical landscapes entertain a vanishing boundary that opens up to rolling lawns and sandy beaches. The separation between public easement and private sanctuary is erased in favor of a communal parkstead. The other end of the spectrum is the manorial enclosure, which conceals the inner sanctum. Rows of brick and iron spikes invite the casual visitor to leave at once. Discerning the personal taste of the owner, and where on the privacy scale they reside, involves a variety of factors including age, wealth, and locality.

Another problem consistent with residential designing is the need to elaborate small spaces. Most homeowners who live in a populated urban or suburban area cannot afford more than 1/4 acre. This limitation on the size and dimensions of the space is one of the most difficult challenges that Landscape Architects often face. Creating variety and expression within the standard square or rectangular boundaries means developing the contour and dimension of the landscape. This is achieved by employing changes in elevation, either sudden drops or slopes, as well as

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This site plan for the Duxbury residence shows how the Landscape Architect has planned a variety of growth in order to make the most of the changing sun exposure throughout the day as well as throughout the season.

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elements of light and shadow to produce a sense of depth. Reflecting pools can make spaces look larger, similar to the effect that mirrors have indoors, and fountains can mask the noise of nearby traffic or planes overhead.

Special care must be paid to the type of vegetation that is used in a residential landscape. What looks the best and grows the best is not always the wisest choice. Landscape Architects must be concerned with issues such as allergies; not only allergies to the plants as such, but to the bugs that the plants attract. A rose garden, for example, might be inappropriate for a homeowner who is allergic to bee stings. Furthermore, a home with young children or pets should never have plants that are poisonous when eaten.

Landscape Architects must also consider the long-term maintenance issues. Is the sycamore that looks so attractive as a sapling going to endanger the structure of the home 15 years from now? Will the bougainvillea that offered such beautiful bouquets of

color in the spring become a menace in the summer as it grows over a foot every week, choking and snuffing out other growth?

The Landscape Architect must also consider whether the property will be owner occupied or a rental. Although an owner occupied home can expect a certain amount of regular maintenance, a rental property may go without any attention for months or even years.

These are just a few of the considerations that go into creating a modern residential landscape. One of the designers who has mastered this form is Mary Smith Associates of Quincy, Massachusetts.

Mary Smith Associates

Mary Smith Associates has been providing unique landscape design services for nearly 20 years. The firm has completed an extensive range of projects throughout New England, garnering



such honors as the Plymouth County Renaissance Award, two Gold Prism Awards from the Greater Boston Builder's Association, and a First Place from the Boston Society of Landscape Architects for "Art in the Landscape." The firm has assembled a talented core of Landscape Architects who have created an impressive array of architectural vignettes. Their work is featured in the following pastiche.

Duxbury, Massachusetts

This landscape created by Smith and designer Rachel Kisker features a series of interlocking and multi-level patios, reconstructed stone walls and gracious arbors.

The new landscape is thoroughly private but still contains an expansiveness that can only be possible with a change of levels and an emphasis on pleasing vistas within. Views from the upper patios to the pool level are framed by Daphne and Slender Deutzia. The kitchen door is set off by fragrant plants including herbs and butterfly bush. Ornamental grasses drape casually over the rough stone walls and the grey stained fences and arbors wrap around two carefully connected patios—one for entertaining and one as a more private setting.

Weston, Massachusetts

This grand residence, designed by Smith and Jeff Thoma, sits quietly at the end of a quarter-mile drive that rises dramatically over a hillside and then wraps down into the west-facing arrival courtyard.

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A beautiful seating arrangement at the arrival court to this Weston, Massachusetts residence is framed by granite walls and pink azaleas. Tulips and yellow azaleas bloom early in the season. Later, iris and daylilies will remain carefree all for a cool and serene landscape.

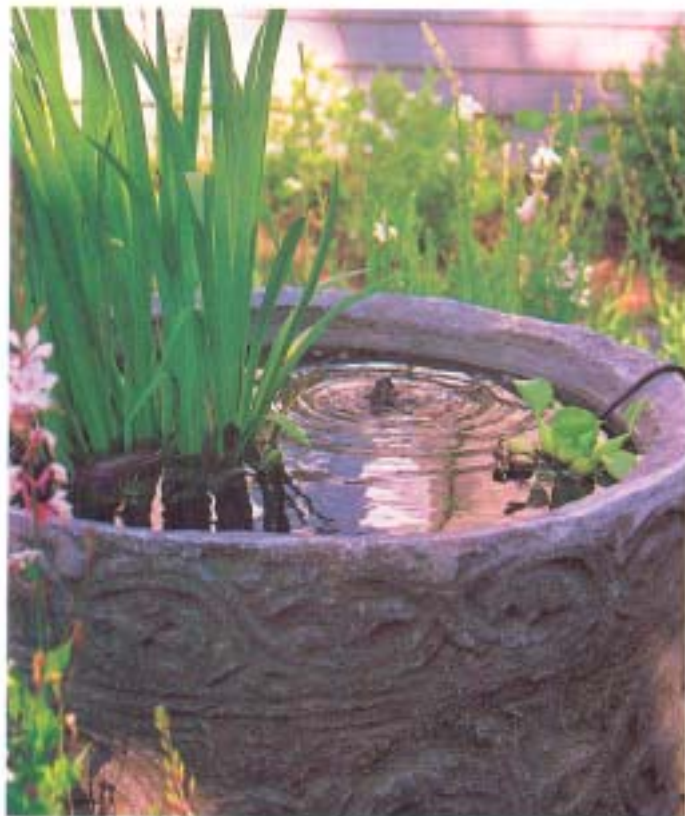
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The property then falls off into gentle grass slopes to fairways that curve around its south and west sides. A series of stone retaining walls were used to tuck the courtyard into the hillside on one side, and to extend the rear patios out over the lawns on the other.

The extensive plantings include drifts of birch and evergreens along the drive and over the hillsides, with groups of flowering trees and masses of summer flowering perennials nearer the house. A large entry court is surrounded with azaleas and magnolia. Furnished with wood benches and an armillary sundial, it is an elegant place to greet guests or to relax in the late afternoon sun. The parking court will accommodate up to ten cars and is constructed of concrete pavers that match the granite used on the walks and patios. A long curved metal railing circles the rear two-level patio, providing a delicate frame for the view to the greens beyond.

Quincy, Massachusetts

For a renovated shingle-style home facing the bay, a traditional seaside landscape was designed that features roses, hydrangea, viburnum and Korean dogwood. Many of these plantings are placed carefully around the house or against a white dowel fence that runs the length of the property at the street edge. An extensive perennial garden, filled with iris, daylilies, asters, Baby's-breath, Russian Sage and ornamental grasses, welcomes visitors to the front steps and vestibule.





This stone footpath wraps lazily around arcs of fountain grass and Japanese Maple, catapulting the viewer on a trajectory beyond the property boundary into a wilderness fantasia.

Bluestone walks lead to the side porches and to the studio courtyard and private decks. The studio courtyard is a quiet retreat from the beach side of the house, hidden in back by a tall arborvitae hedge. A formal arrangement of bluestone squares and gravel surrounds a small parterre containing artemesia, lavender, guara and a large antique reproduction cistern, used as a fishpond. Filled with spring bulbs and late flowering perennials, the courtyard is a beautiful sight throughout the seasons.

Chestnut Hill, Massachusetts

A new front walk, stone wall, and driveway layout were created for this Chestnut Hill Residence. The graceful order of space is enhanced with a variety of natural colors and textures. Bluestone, fieldstone and lush lawn are particularly beautiful with the brilliant bursts of autumn color.

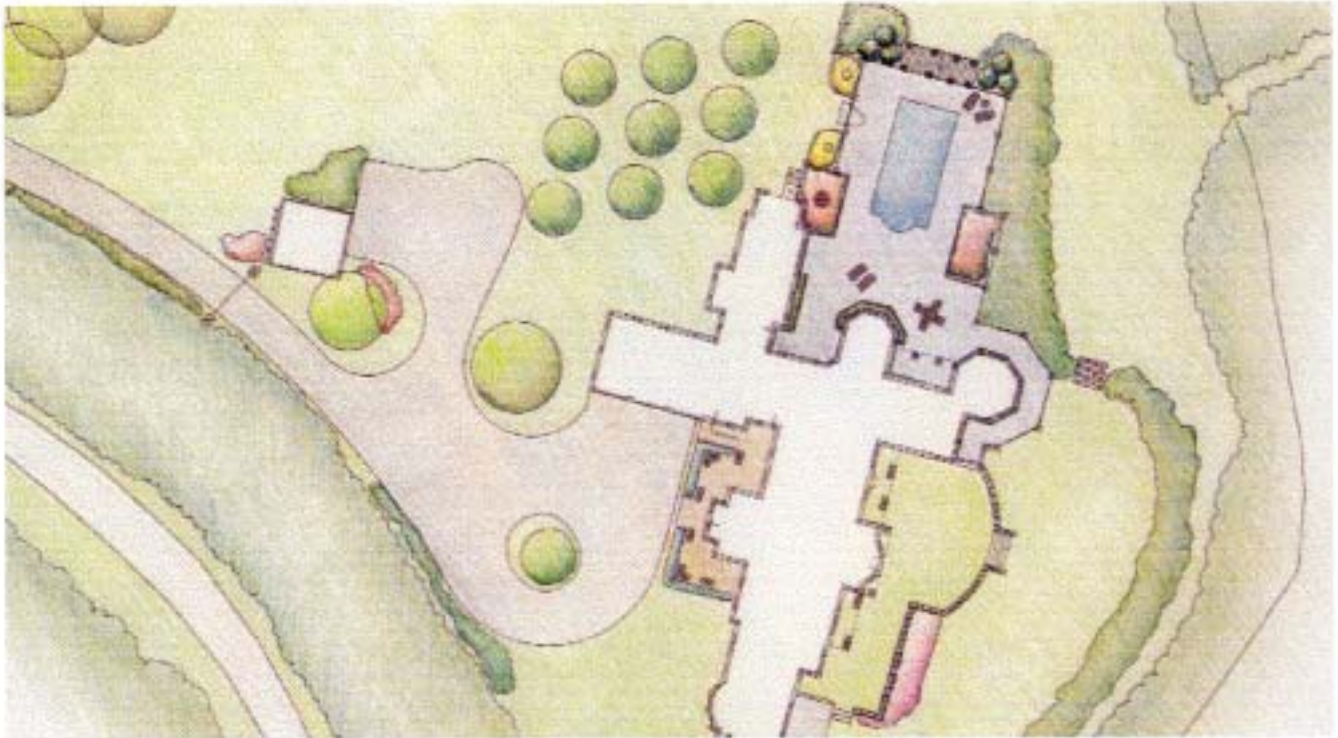
The driveway and circular front walk flow to the main entrance of the home. Alterations were designed for the existing deck to make it a porch. The porch stairs lead down gracefully to a bluestone patio which is encircled by an evergreen hedge enclosing a garden of flowering shrubs, trees, and perennials. Within the garden, is a semicircular fountain that provides a lovely view from the dining room.

East Dennis, Massachusetts

The design of this landscape derives many of its elements from the classic New England details used by the architects to create the residence. The home's white columns and finely

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crafted balustrades are repeated in the pool arbor and surrounding fences, connecting seamlessly into the natural pine woodland.

Simple stone walls, stairs and rolling lawns lead the eye from the upper patio to a grand view of Cape Cod Bay and the Provincetown Tower. An apple orchard is used as a transition space between the carriage house service area and the pool -- with a winding path leading through it to the pool's guest entrance.

The site was extensively regraded and the residence set perfectly into position, achieving a sense of presence, as if it had always been there. We turned the footprint slightly to the East to take advantage of the sunrise for the rooms on the waterside.

Boston, Massachusetts

This tiny courtyard sits quietly behind this Backbay townhouse. Its geometric scheme wraps and overlaps the spaces to give room for parking, seating and small gardens. The fences and wall fountain are important vertical features. Inside the courtyard a folding "screen" fence can be pulled over to block the parking area or be left open to add to the patio. A circular staircase leads up to a small deck overlooking the whole arrangement.

Plantings include groundcovers, flowering azaleas and a variety of green and white miniature perennials. Small sculptures and unusual objects are tucked carefully into the garden to add a personal touch. Combined with colorful summer annuals and bulbs, the courtyard is an ever-changing private world.

L A S N



The traditional New England columns and balustrades familiar in much of Cape Cod's architecture have been duplicated in the surrounding fences and cobble-lined drives to this East Dennis residence.