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Grace & Grandeur

WHERE THE PRACTICAL MEETS THE MAGICAL

BY NANCY RHULING
PHOTOGRAPHS BY NEIL LANDINO JR.



Lead planters, inspired from England, were converted to water features to add sound, movement and light to the front courtyard.

The journey up the straight gravel drive to this midcountry home is quite a pleasant passage and hints at what awaits a visitor to its grounds. A latticed cedar entry gate opens to a magnificently understated allée of magnolias underplanted with clipped boxwood. All is as creatively composed as a Romantic-era poem.

Along the way, there's a glimpse of fruit trees. It's an orchard of nine planted three-by-three, like checkers set out on a game board. On the other side, the view is balanced by a low native-stone wall that embraces a great lawn and a narrow terrace of boxwoods that are dramatically sculpted into a pretty and proper crisscross design.

The slow, serene reveal is at the heart of the award-winning landscape design by Greenwich-based Doyle Herman Design Associates' principals, James Doyle and Kathryn Herman.

"Our work is quite architectural," says Doyle. "And the common thread is that it is always appropriate for the architectural style of the house." The designs of

Doyle Herman, which the duo founded two decades ago, have won numerous honors—four Stanford White Awards, four Palladio Awards, five AIA A-List Awards, four AFLD Merit Awards and five Cottages & Gardens Innovation in Landscape Design Awards.

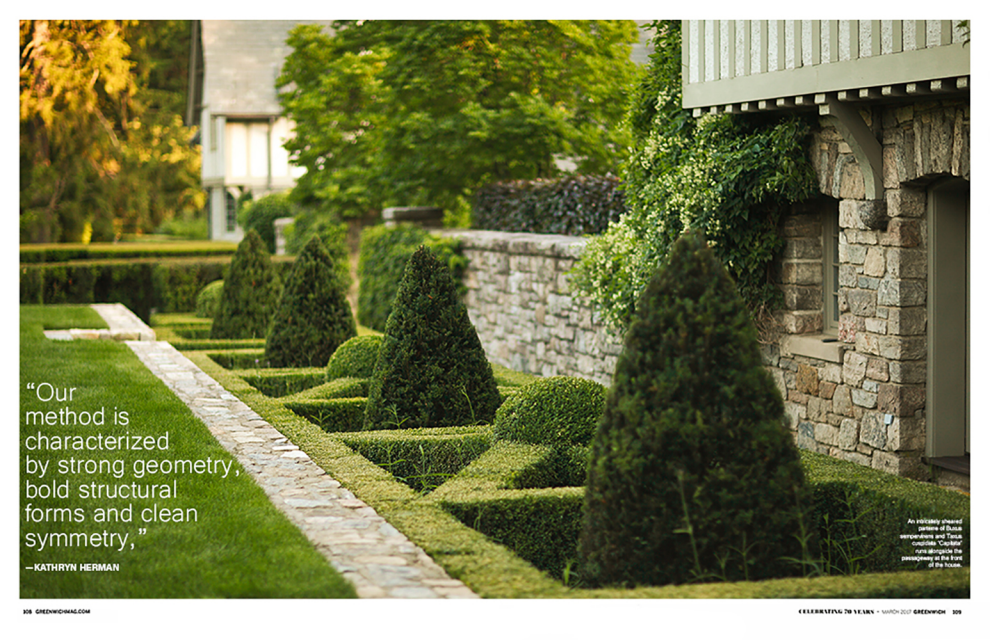
This project brought the thirteen-person studio new recognition and the rare chance for Doyle and Herman to collaborate on the same project as a team. For this rambling, 1980s U-shaped English Arts and Crafts-style stone home set on four acres that back up to protected wetlands, the restrained, structural work of Doyle Herman hewed to the traditional.

"Our method is characterized by strong geometry, bold structural forms and clean symmetry," Herman says. "And from the sculpted boxwood at the front a gate to the conical yews in the courtyard, these ideas are exemplified in this project."

The new owners of the 12,000-square-foot home, a couple with several young children, had inherited an overgrown landscape that bordered on the wild side and commissioned Doyle Herman to create a cleaner style that suited their casual and carefree lifestyle. Their



Lead planters, rounded with handwelded and lacquered, are stationed at the entry.

A photograph of a formal garden. In the foreground, a stone path leads through a series of geometric hedges and conical topiaries. The garden is adjacent to a house with a stone wall and a window. The scene is lush and green, with a well-maintained lawn and various plants.

“Our method is characterized by strong geometry, bold structural forms and clean symmetry,”

—KATHRYN HERMAN

An Italian-chic garden of Dutch variegations and Tuscan conifers. “Capitella” eyes dominate the perspective of the front of the house.



Clockwise from top left:
 The pool and terrace offer a place to relax.
 The rear perennial border blooms in purple, cherokee and burgundy. The main walkway in the perennial garden is lined with Hydrangea paniculata standards. A monarch butterfly flutters in the Verbena bonariensis. A Chatsworth bench views the garden.
 White allium and blue salvia spill over with abundance.



decision was driven not only by aesthetics but also by a practical problem: While they were renovating the two-story, slate-roofed house, they discovered that their septic system had to be replaced with an unsightly above-ground upgrade.

"This project was challenging from an engineering and soil standpoint and by the fact that the footprint of the house is odd," Doyle says. "But we embraced the challenges."

The plan that Doyle Herman created—what the pair call "charming and practical"—features open spaces for entertaining, relaxation and play; perennial gardens; a great lawn; a swimming pool; innovative planter water features; a vegetable garden; layered terraces; and a parterre.

Herman says that the lawn, which is in a prominent spot on the property, is practical yet so beautiful that "you could put up a tent and have a party there." Throughout the property, the placement of plantings was very carefully thought through.

"Each element is on an axis with a room in the house," Herman says. "The vegetable garden, for instance, is right outside the kitchen so the family can pick things for dinner. And right outside the husband's office, there's a perennial garden and a terrace so he can sit and enjoy the view."

The structural color palette—green and purple—is carried throughout via plantings of boxwood, yew and beech. "The impact is set at the front gate, which has an open design because we did not want a solid barrier," Doyle says. "The sheared evergreens that announce the landscape are formal, and as you move through the property, everything becomes more relaxed, especially in the areas that are used for entertaining."

The main house and guest house, which are connected by a porte cochère, are announced by an ample entry court with interior walls of a triple layer of graduated hedging—boxwood, hornbeam and tall purple beech.

A wandering wisteria vine with showy snow-white blossoms softens the doorway of the central bay of the home. On one end of the courtyard, a series of English lead planters, retrofitted as fountains, serenely splash, imbuing intimacy to the immense and imposing space.

"We wanted to add sound to enliven it," Herman says.

Although the landscape is an expanse of structured plantings, a pair of perennial gardens proffers a glorious bouquet. In a pretty game where all are winners, the white-blossomed Peegee hydrangeas play tag with Shasta daisies, nepeta, allium, phlox, salvia and a variety of geraniums, peonies and roses.

The swimming pool, which was renovated by Doyle Herman, is one of the more casual spaces found on the property. "The plan is a procession of spaces that begins at the house and becomes less formal as you get to the pool," Doyle says.

The dining area, which is closest to the house, is outfitted with a circular table and chairs and leads to a bluestone terrace appointed with potted palm trees that show the way to the pool. "There are a lot of really great spaces on the property that range from broad ones to intimate ones," Herman says. "And a lot of the spaces relate to the inside when you're

"The sheared evergreens that announce the landscape are formal, and as you move through the property, everything becomes more relaxed, especially in the areas that are used for entertaining."

—JAMES DOYLE

looking out. It's a lot of fun for the children to run around in them."

The classic-style furnishings, which include a Chatsworth bench that holds court at the end of the perennial gardens, were chosen for their comfortable character and were positioned to have a maximum visual impact.

Doyle and Herman consider the project one of their more challenging and more rewarding. The engineering issues pushed them to create a different landscape, Doyle says, which, in the end, was perfect for the property. "We took the problems and made them beautiful," he says with satisfaction. □