

New England HOME CT

TRUE BLUE

*NATURE'S
PALETTE
SHINES*



Good Grades

A landscape design team earns high marks for transforming a steep property into a series of sophisticated outdoor rooms. BY MEAGHAN O'NEILL



For a family building their dream home in Greenwich, the design direction for the landscape was clear: maximize space for outdoor living, including a pool, tennis court, large lawn, terraces for entertaining, and a formal approach to the house. The pathway to doing so, however, was anything but.

The nearly two-and-a-half-acre property, which had been neglected for years, featured a challenging change in grade that dropped about thirty feet from front to back. The existing 1920s house would be torn down, making way for a new one by Shope Reno Wharton architects. Playing off the distinct Shingle-

For the grounds of a home in Greenwich, landscape architects at James Doyle Design Associates created a graceful allée lined with nepeta and golden sedge; it connects a screened porch with the pool area.

style design of the new home, James Doyle Design Associates remedied the grade issues by creating a connected series of gardens and outdoor rooms.

“It was definitely a challenge to get each aspect of the landscape in place,” says Heather Harris, senior landscape architect and project manager. To solve for all elements, the team created an upper terrace alongside the house and introduced a grassy slope with granite steps that lead down to a formal lawn adjacent to the pool. Behind it, the site slopes down again to a tennis court at the rear of the grounds.

These gradual transitions between plateaus are a key component of the design. “We didn’t want to burden the property with masonry,” says James Doyle, principal, who prefers to shape landscapes using techniques such as berms rather than retaining walls. “It’s a softer approach,” he says.



ABOVE: Gardens and terraces create a plateau at the same level as the main house for entertaining; just beyond, the landscape dips down several feet to the formal lawn and pool. **LEFT:** Behind the pool area, which features twin pavilions, stands a stately century-old sycamore. “We deemed it sacred and made every effort to save it,” says landscape architect James Doyle.



LANDSCAPE DESIGN:
James Doyle, Heather Harris, James Doyle Design Associates
ARCHITECTURE:
Don Aitken, Shope Reno Wharton

Delightful views from the back terrace include a square sculpture garden that was cleverly installed just off the Shingle-style house designed by Shope Reno Wharton. Planted with purple hardy geraniums and Japanese Stewartia trees that bloom all summer long, it features a playful royal-blue-glazed ceramic apple sculpture by Lisa Pappon.



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—Landscape designer James Doyle



CLOCKWISE FROM ABOVE: Stone-slab steps with rough-hewn edges lend gravitas to pathways, while understated-yet-sophisticated plantings, such as nepeta, boxwood, and hydrangea, soften the space. Near the entrance, boxwood, smoke bush, and liriopie are low-maintenance plantings that add year-round interest. Between the house and the formal lawn, a slope planted with tall fescue adds a gentle touch.



Fescue and bluegrass paired with shrubbery such as smoke bush and boxwood are unfussy yet sophisticated plantings that help “ground the house to the landscape,” says Harris, without “taking away from the architecture.” In other spaces, cherry trees, nepeta, and hydrangea add subtle yet colorful seasonal interest.

The result is a year-round design that unites landscape and house and reconnects both to the neighborhood. Timeless as it may appear, it was thoughtful collaboration, complex engineering, and unfaltering attention to detail that produced such a fluid outcome. As Harris puts it, “It took a lot of imagination to get here!”

EDITOR’S NOTE: For details, see Resources.

