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Creating an Oasis *of Beauty*

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LANDSCAPE DESIGN: JOYCE K. WILLIAMS | LANDSCAPE CONSTRUCTION: PINE TREE NURSERY & LANDSCAPING

HARDSCAPE CONSTRUCTION: CHRISTOPHER SMITH MASONRY

After years of owning a condominium at Ocean Edge in Brewster, Susan and Joe decided it was time to buy a real summer home. In 2005, they found the property of their dreams, with a country style house set on just under two acres of land. The yard was covered with a significant amount of snow when they purchased the property, so they didn't give much thought to the landscaping since most of the features were buried.

When the snow melted, they discovered a large bowl shaped yard with a brush pile fence along the back border. Because the front of their house actually faces the large back yard, they knew they had a significant amount of work to do.

"Since we knew we were going to be working on the house, I wanted to tackle some of the areas that were more removed from the house as I knew that the garden would take a number

of years to complete and felt that we should begin sooner rather than later."

First they hired Ted Brown of Arbortech in Brewster to remove the dead trees and trim the ones that would remain. For landscape design, Brown recommended Joyce K. Williams of Chatham. Williams designed the gardens and Jeanne Branson and her crew from Pine Tree Nursery & Landscaping, also in Chatham, created the magic.

"Susan gave me pictures of things she liked, whether it was specific plants or just mostly overall looks that she enjoyed," Williams says. "She knew she wanted a big stone wall in the

A massive excavation effort and miles of stone walls created a level area for the formal English garden. The space above the wall was planted with pink Cape Cod roses and various perennials.





back and the property lent itself to a pond or a water feature. A lot of the pictures she gave me were beautiful English gardens with walls and brick and garden features.”

They started with a conceptual plan of segmenting the different areas and gardens. Susan wanted the landscaping to have an understated elegance with a natural tone.

“We felt the scale of the landscaping needed to be adjusted to accommodate the size of the property,” Susan says. “Based on the property size I also wanted to establish various garden spaces or rooms with different feels to them.”

They hired stone mason Chris Smith of Christopher Smith Masonry to build the various stone walls, including a 300 foot long dry laid stone wall along the back of the property. The wall is three feet wide and four feet tall and has a bluestone gate in the center along with several benches for relaxing in the cool shade of the mature trees.

The focal point from the house is an English cottage garden centered on a giant boulder likely left behind from glaciers. But before any planting could be done, a lot of dirt had to be moved. John Martin Excavating leveled and graded the property, creating a slope down from the house and garage/studio area to a large level space for the English garden and a lawn, before sloping down again to the site of the pond and summer house.

Smith built another stone wall around the perimeter of the

lawn and garden area with a staircase from the patio to the English garden. Branson and her crew planted dozens of roses on the slope creating a massive sweep of elegance and beauty using three varieties of roses; The Fairy, Flower Carpet and Iceberg. Near the steps, they also added some day lilies, Russian sage, white hyssop, and golden Japanese forest grass.

The English cottage garden is laid out in a classic four square pattern with boxwood borders and granite slabs as the “doormats” for each of the entrances. In the center of the garden is a circular design of bricks with paths leading from it. To make the garden seem a bit older they stopped the brick in an irregular pattern and then used pea stones to create a soft, crunchy feeling on the longer paths. Each quadrant of the garden has an obelisk anchored to the ground and set on stone bases so they will never tilt or sink.

“The nice thing about this garden is it will have color all season long,” Williams says. “There are things that will come and go so we have something fluffy at the edges all the time. The catmint has just gone by and the lavender is just coming in.

The formal English garden is a study in symmetry. The main house, to the rear, enjoys full views of it from an expansive fieldstone terrace. At right: A shingled one-room summer house is perched at the koi-filled pond's edge. The waterfall is visible on the far side.





The balloon flower will be coming along.”

The entire back of the property is a woodland garden that will eventually have a mossy path through it. There Branson planted typical woodland perennials such as foxglove, epimedium, bergenia, inkberry, lady’s mantle, Jacob’s ladder and several types of ferns. October Glory maple, Japanese maple, oak leaf hydrangeas, and vibernum promise great fall foliage.

The woodland garden segues into the back of the waterfall garden where tall plants such as the newly planted meadow rue and Culver’s root will grow in the wet area near the small pool above the waterfall. The waterfall has two water sources and empties into a pond designed and created by Ray Durkee, owner of Hanoki Pond Works in Chatham. The pond will have a bog garden at the far end with water loving plants like Joe Pye weed, black-eyed Susans and ornamental grasses.

Under the trees on the lawn, hostas and ferns create eye catching appeal and a sloping garden in the side yard has azaleas, bleeding hearts, hostas and daylilies.

“It’s been a fascinating job just because of all the unusual plant material and the variety of the beds,” Branson says.

In addition to all the new gardens, it was important to

Susan to honor those who lived in the house before her, so she wanted to save as many original plantings as they could. Many of them were moved to different spots on the property. The dark green cypress that used to be near a corner of the house is now a dramatic focal point in the center of the lawn.

A large dogwood tree that formerly lived in the patio area was moved to a spot near the driveway and two new dogwoods flank the end of the driveway to provide symmetry.

Branson’s company moved an ancient overgrown wisteria to a separate part of the property and let it heal for 18 months before moving it again to wind up the massive circular stone staircase that leads from the patio to the side yard.

“It’s soothing and it’s tranquil, but it is a journey because there are so many different little aspects of it and different little rooms,” Williams says of the end result. ☒

Above: This view shows the woodland garden and waterfall in the foreground with the tiered section of the lawn toward the back. **At right; top:** A walk amongst the English garden reveals its lushness. **Bottom:** This weighty handcrafted field-stone gate, set into the perimeter wall, swings with just the push of a finger.

PLANTS USED IN THIS LANDSCAPE



Iris ensata, Japanese iris
blooming June and July in full sun, adds a touch of the exotic: at nearly 3' tall, it's varied flower colors and forms invite being cupped in the hand to view. Its grass-like foliage makes it easy to combine with other plants. Shorter-lived than many iris but forgivable because it is so striking.

Crocosmia 'Lucifer', Montbretia

blooms July and August on long wiry stems above grassy foliage.

A tender perennial on the Cape, Islands and South Shore, its zing of hot color makes pinks and purples pop in full sun, and it is right at home in warm-colored borders as well.

Crocosmia looks great dancing above more dense perennials, along with Verbena bonariensis.



Astilbe 'Bridal Veil', False Spirea

blooms June and July above fern-like foliage. A well-known and adaptable plant, Astilbe is long-lived in shade or sun if it receives adequate moisture.

There's an astilbe in a color and height for every garden, and it is most effective in massed plantings.

Hemerocallis 'Hall's Pink', Daylily

is a late blooming, 30" beauty in rose-pink, happy in sun to part shade. It works well with the blues of August—caryopteris (blue mist), agastache (hyssop) and perovskia (Russian sage) as well as mid to soft-colored roses.

Very hardy and never fussy, daylilies are easy to grow.



Leucanthemum 'Sante', Shasta Daisy

with double, fluffy white blooms that are especially long-lasting. The anemone-type flowers add wallop to the sunny garden in July, blooming profusely on strong, 30" stems. Well drained loam keeps these daisies happily perking along.

Rosa Flower Carpet TM, Shrub Rose

mounding to 3' and spreading 6', Flower Carpet™ blooms non-stop from June to November. Heavy laden clusters of bright rose-pink

semi-double flowers cascade above shiny green foliage that never even heard of leaf spot disease, as long as they are always watered from below. Occasional dead-heading throughout the season keeps the flowers coming right up to heavy frost. Wonderful for the sunny mixed border and on hot, irrigated slopes.

