



Think of a garden on Cape Cod and you're likely to picture voluptuous masses of blue hydrangeas, mounds of bright pink beach roses, and stands of grasses waving in a salty breeze. But, just as not every house here is a white-trimmed, weathered-shingled cottage, neither is every landscape composed of the stereotypical (though undeniably lovely) arrangement our imaginations conjure.

Landscape architect Kimberly Mercurio was called in to work with a couple whose Orleans house is in fact, as Mercurio says, "Cape Cod classic cottagey." Her clients had something less typical in mind for their yard and gardens, however. Architect Peter McDonald had replaced a dilapidated old barn with a new pool house that has a simple, modern aesthetic, and the couple envisioned equally uncomplicated surroundings. An open floor plan and wide doors mean that even from the inside, the pool house feels very much a part of the outdoors. Mercurio's plan encourages the connection between

LEFT: Landscape architect Kimberly Mercurio used creeping thyme between the terrace's bluestone slabs for low maintenance. The wooden bench was crafted of salvaged wood from an old barn on the property. BELOW: Mercurio's landscape plan echoes the simple, modern aesthetic of the pool house, designed by architect Peter McDonald with interiors by Jill Morelli.

## Gardens Of Delight

A trio of Cape Cod landscapes proves there is no one right way to create surroundings that enhance their homes and bring pleasure to their owners.

BY PAULA M. BODAH



PHOTO: JILL MORELLI



indoors and out and echoes the pared-down interior by designer Jill Morelli.

The house opens to a bluestone terrace with joints of creeping thyme. The terrace abuts a swath of grass that gives children plenty of room to run around, while from the seating area on the terrace or the arrangement of chaises at the pool, adults can keep a watchful eye. Simple furniture crafted

from wood salvaged from the old barn joins a trio of streamlined chairs with vivid orange cushions on the terrace.

The wooden fence that encloses the bluestone-surrounded pool mimics the pool house's simple architecture, and will all but disappear behind a privet hedge as the shrubbery fills in over the years.

Other plantings were kept to a minimum, both for easy maintenance and for

**Plantings were kept to a minimum, for understated appeal. "It's very simple, but there's a lot going on there," says Mercurio.**



CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: A simple fence dovetails nicely with the new pool house. A privet hedge will eventually fill out to hide the fence that encloses the pool. Keith LeBlanc's program for a West Yarmouth property keeps things natural; near the house, a buddleia brings color to a sitting area. The house tucks in among a grove of cedar trees. The home's front entrance is approached via a natural-looking walking trail flanked by ferns and native groundcovers. FACING PAGE: The granite slabs laid in the grass stand in as parking spaces.



understated appeal. The new landscape plan, by design, blends the Cape Cod aesthetic with a modern sensibility. "It's very simple," Mercurio says, "but there's a lot going on there."

#### NATURE'S WAY

A West Yarmouth property designed by Keith LeBlanc of LeBlanc Jones Landscape Architects also has a deceptively simple appearance. In this case, however, that simplicity translates into a lush, almost wild-looking yard and gardens that seem to have sprung up naturally. The couple that lives in this house, which has been in the wife's family for years, asked LeBlanc to rework the somewhat formal gardens to create a more relaxed feel. The two-story house, with its widow's walk overlooking Nantucket Sound, has a traditional look. "The plan was about organizing the site to give a relaxed approach to the house while respecting its formality," LeBlanc says.

A long driveway takes visitors through groves of cedar trees and past areas of low-growing native groundcovers. A key part of the plan was creating parking for the many visitors the couple entertains throughout the summer. "We resisted, and they didn't want, the huge gravel court that would be more typical," LeBlanc says. Instead, slabs of granite laid in the grass at various points between the main house and the guesthouse serve for parking.



TOP: MICHAEL CUNIFF; CLIP: GETTY IMAGES/ISTOCKPHOTO.COM

## OUTSIDE INTEREST

Rough slabs of granite form a walking trail to the main house through a thick carpet of ferns and groundcover. The only plantings that might be considered formal are the climbing roses and hydrangeas that flank the front door. Elsewhere, buddleia, catmint, and groundcovers set off terraces of irregularly shaped pieces of bluestone and granite. As unstructured and freeform as this property seems, make no mistake: it took a great deal of thought, planning, and hard work to get that natural look.



### A FORMAL TOUCH

Landscape architect Dan Gordon undertook a very different challenge in designing the pool and tennis-court areas for a mid-Cape home. The house sits on a long, linear site in an established neighborhood where nearby houses are, says Gordon, "older properties with lots of rhododendrons. They have kind of an estate character, rather than beachy."

Gordon's clients wanted to keep that character, and bring to their property what he calls a "country club feel."

At the start of the long entry drive, Gordon established the estate feel by planting American holly and rhododendrons among rich evergreens and a canopy of oak trees.

The new tennis court is tucked off to

**CLOCKWISE FROM TOP:** Dan Gordon designed a seating area that "balances softscape and hardscape" in the tennis court of this mid-Cape home. The court is tucked next to the property's long entry drive and screened by trees. Summery perennials in the pool area give way to a natural landscape near the beach. The swimming pool was designed to keep the focus on the ocean views.



one side along the drive, and includes a pretty sitting area grounded by bluestone and grass laid in a grid pattern.

Around the house and guesthouse, Gordon used boxwoods, evergreens, and flowering trees and shrubs to lend a formal feel, while at the swimming pool the tone becomes more exuberant and relaxed. As the property stretches toward the water, summery perennials give way to a natural

landscape of *rosa rugosa*, summer sweet, and beach grasses.

The pool keeps a low profile, letting the water views take center stage. Every detail of this landscaping plan was given attention, including finding the perfect color for the pool: a rich deep blue that matches the ocean beyond. \*

**RESOURCES** For information about the design professionals involved in these projects, see page 140.