



A landscape rooted in time

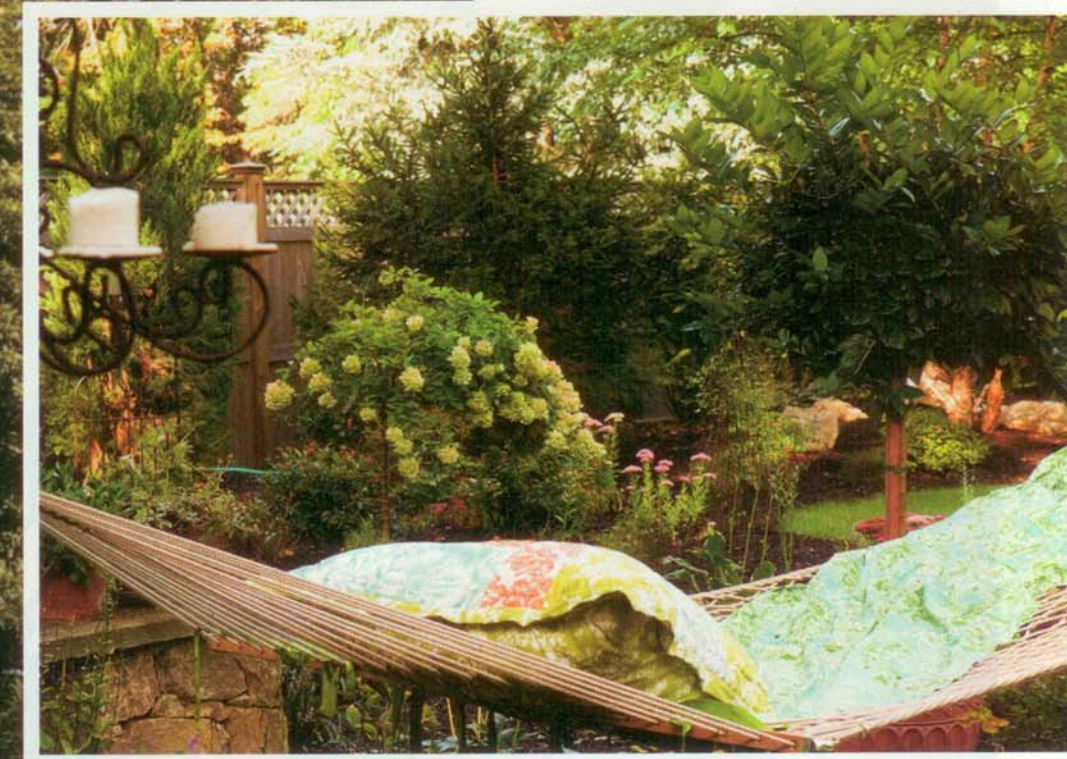
GARDEN PARTIES

Debbie Cerami designed the mahogany dining table, which was then built by carpenters employed by her husband's construction company.

When

Anthony and Debbie Cerami built their 4,000-square-foot English colonial home in Westfield six years ago, everything about the new stucco-and-stone construction felt Old World, right down to the landscaping.

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A tree and an old fence post support a rope hammock. "We throw some big pillows on it and we all use it," Debbie Cerami says.

"As soon as I saw the two trees, I thought it was screaming for a pond," Anthony Cerami recalls. Dubbed Max's Pond after the family dog, relatives and neighbors gravitate to it year-round for fishing, hockey, and ice skating.

A chandelier hangs from a tree branch over a rustic patio set. The built-in fireplace is for ambience, homeowner Anthony Cerami says.



*If everything about the grounds feels authentic ...
... that's because it is.*

"Just like the house," Anthony Cerami says, "we wanted it to feel original, like it's been there for quite some time." A recent vacation to Venice only reinforced their vision of grounds rooted in time.

The Ceramis developed their landscape in stages on a parcel measuring two-thirds of an acre. Cerami, who runs his own contracting business, Anthony James Construction in Westfield, oversaw the project and designed the hardscaping, working in conjunction with William Hipolit of Parker Homescape in Scotch Plains. "We gave him a sketch of what we were looking for," Debbie Cerami says, "and he did a great job."

The property has three distinct gardens: a perennial garden, a tailored English garden, and a vegetable garden where the Ceramis grow tomatoes, peppers, mesclun, and grapes. "I always had grapevines in my backyard growing up and remember that fragrance of grapes," she recalls.

Al Fresco Entertaining

The family's love of outdoor living was a driver in how the hardscaping unfolded. Along with the trio of gardens are three areas for entertaining. A patio by a canopy of weeping willows accommodates an oversize farm table that she designed and his company made. "We eat outside all the time," she says. Clearly cold weather is no deterrent. The Ceramis use propane heaters and an outdoor fireplace to extend the al fresco entertaining season.

The more formal entertaining area is under a cedar pergola just off the living room. That's where she unwinds with cocktails and intimate

conversations with friends and family.

And then there's Max's Pond. When the Ceramis purchased an adjacent 15,000 square feet of land two years ago, Anthony Cerami instantly knew it would be an ideal spot for a pond. "I thought he was crazy," she recalls. That was then. This is now. "It's magnificent," she says. "The pond is so relaxing, and it looks like it's been there forever." Max's Pond, named after the family's Soft Coated Wheaten Terrier, is an all-season attraction.

In the warm weather, the Ceramis' nieces and nephews fish in the 30-by-50-foot pond using barbless hooks so they don't kill the blue gill, sunfish, carp, and catfish. "It has become a neighborhood pond," she explains. "People even come by and stock it." When the pond freezes over, it's transformed into an ice skating and ice hockey rink.

The Real Thing

If everything about the grounds feels authentic, that's because it is. "Everything we use is vintage or classic. There are no reproductions, which really adds to the detail," Anthony Cerami says. A chandelier that hangs from a tree, a birdbath, and a stucco fountain are vintage pieces from a local shop that salvages items from knocked-down estate homes. Even the bricks are recycled.

"Outdoor living for us is very special, very comfortable, and very private. We're tucked away in a corner," he says. "It's a real big playground for us."

Lyna Bort Caruso is a widely published writer based in Rockville Centre, New York.

SOURCES Patio set: Chandelier and table, Recycling the Past in Barnegat. Dining table: Anthony James Construction in Westfield. Bluestone deck: Parker Homescape in Scotch Plains.

For contact information, page 218