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Hamptons Cottages and Gardens

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A NEW MODERN EAST HAMPTON HOME NEEDED A LANDSCAPE THAT RESPONDED TO ITS ARCHITECTURE WHILE ALSO HONORING THE LAND AND ITS SPECIAL EVENING OCCUPANTS WHO LIVE THERE.

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Garden Delights (THIS SPREAD) The open-air covered terrace features a double sided fireplace. The sofa and armchairs are designed by Paola Lenti. A sculptural clay vessel was hand crafted in Belgium by Atelier Vierkant. See *Resources*.



In Full Flower (LEFT) The upper terrace offers expansive northern views of the extended property. Annabelle Hydrangea and Flowering Kousa Dogwoods flank the hand chiseled mix New York Bluestone retaining walls. (RIGHT) The formal entry to the home is installed with terraced retaining walls and monolithic stone steps using a New York Bluestone.

Although the homeowner of this East Hampton property knew that trees would be moved and replanted, and that the land would be reshaped into gardens and lawns, there was one natural phenomenon she insisted not be changed: the fireflies. Every summer evening, her family's yard and the adjacent natural preserve near Georgica Pond, fills with countless glowing lights emitted by the insects.

"The client homeowner was very open to all our ideas," says Roxine Brown, the Bridgehampton-based landscape designer who transformed the two-acre site. "She was completely fine with my bringing to her—and carrying out—all my own ideas. But the one simple, little, natural thing she insisted on was that we make sure that whatever we did that we didn't interfere with her being able to watch the fireflies at night."

In reshaping the site, where there had once been an unremarkable 1970s-era house that was replaced with a chic, thoroughly Modern residence built by Wirth & Company, Brown has kept the site bright with those evening orbs in flight. Part of her agenda for the land was to honor the new house but soften its rectilinearity with organic natural shapes. "The client and I decided to create a landscape that was warm and very romantic in feeling." Another directive from the client was that her young son be able to practice playing soccer. Brown responded by creating a tennis court-sized level field of lawn where the boy could dribble the ball and play with friends. "Both of these directives from her were so simple and satisfying to achieve."

More challenging was the building of a ceremonial staircase to the front door, leading directly from the driveway. Using a



Easy Being Green (CLOCKWISE FROM OPPOSITE TOP LEFT) The open-air covered terrace provides a space for entertaining. A river birch at the front entrance. Adjacent to the open-air covered terrace, armchairs by Sutherland face sweeping views of the property. The cutting garden features Dahlias, Cosmos, and Angelonia.

variety of New York Bluestone, noted for its hues of browns, interspersed with grays and blues, Brown designed a handsome, processional series of steps and broad landings. The distance from the car parking area to the front door measures some seventy feet, so Brown was intent on making that walk “an experience.”

Within those stone walls that encase planting areas, Brown positioned River Birches, hellebores, ferns, and hydrangeas. “As you progress to the front door,” Brown outlines, “you pass through an allée of Japanese dogwoods.” I took the Modern-style home away from its strict lines with these beautiful organic definitions.

Given Brown’s admitted love for old, existing specimen trees, she also uprooted a Japanese Red Maple, crepe myrtles, and holly trees. “We balled and burlapped them and moved them to safer locations on the property,” she says, “while grading the land and accounting for better drainage.”





Apart from the ocean, a defining feature of the Hamptons landscape is its privet hedges—and Brown introduced examples throughout the property. She has kept them clipped to a height of seven feet, just a foot taller than the fencing that surrounds much of the property. “They’re just high enough, too, so that no views from the house into the yard and gardens are blocked.” Certain expanses of the hedges act, too, as natural walls on the land, working not only as defining edges, but also as visual guides about how to best navigate the land.

Elsewhere, rounded boxwoods are set within a serpentine garden area, defined by graveled pathways. Each boxwood is carefully set to indicate a different turning point on the route. Allées of crepe myrtles—some ten mature species—run perpendicular to the specific garden area. The homeowner also requested a kitchen garden, and Brown accommodated by planting one for herbs and another as a cutting garden, abloom now with dahlias, cosmos, salvia, gauras, and even some strawberry plants.

Brown, whose company, Harmonia, Inc., has been designing Hamptons gardens for 23 years, admits that this represented her biggest commission yet. “The client allowed me to manage everything on the exterior of the house,” she emphasizes, “and being entrusted to do the job the way we were allowed gave me the leeway to bring in all my ideas. She made me feel confident that I could handle a project of this size.”

And now, every summer evening, the fireflies signal their joy at being able to fly through the new outdoor spaces. 🌟



Surrounded By Nature (LEFT) Oakleaf Hydrangea and Pennisetum Alopecuroides frame the gardens on the west side of the house. (THIS SPREAD) A red Japanese Maple was repurposed from the original property and positioned in the new landscape as a feature piece.