

New England HOME

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Sleeping Beauty

A sensitive landscape design reawakens the grounds of an early twentieth-century home, restoring a long-dormant elegance and grace.

✿ Nature will always have her way. Leave any garden to its own devices and before long, plants and trees will reclaim what they see as their own. This turn-of-the-last-century estate in Dover, Massachusetts, is a case in point. Conjuring images from an old fairy tale, the gardens had grown well beyond their original borders, old trees loomed menacingly over the house, and the pool (an awkward 1960s model) was sprouting weeds.

The view today, however, reveals nothing of that sorry past. Landscape architect Dan Gordon's well-edited, elegant plan has transformed the scene and remarried the handsome stucco house to its pastoral site. For the new owners and their young

family, Gordon's changes have been life-altering. A series of spaces—outdoor rooms that include a lawn terrace, a dining terrace, and a pool garden—provide options for various activities, while the tranquil color scheme of green and white, what Gordon refers to as a “restrained palette,” complements the setting. Hydrangea, dogwood, boxwood, and yews are planted in decorous drifts, and tidy carpets of verdant pachysandra are set neatly here and there, accented with an occasional fern. Bluestone steps help transition the family from one pretty spot to another.

Every detail is meticulously choreographed, and therein lies the beauty. Perched on a ridge, the large

Landscape architect Dan Gordon created a beautifully proportioned pool garden that's within easy reach of the house. A parade of white hydrangeas adds to the gracious setting and gives enjoyment to those inside, too. The tall hydrangea paniculata is an old specimen that has been carefully preserved.

| TEXT BY MEGAN FULWEILER | PHOTOGRAPHY BY NEIL LANDINO |

Outside Interest



TOP TO BOTTOM: The red cedar pool fence will eventually weather to gray, making it a perfect fit for the garden's understated palette. Unlike today's pool, which mirrors the lines of the architecture, the old pool was perpendicular to the house. The inviting lawn terrace is an open-air room for play or entertaining.

“WE TOOK THE BEST OF THE ORIGINAL GARDEN, REWORKED IT, AND INTEGRATED IT INTO OUR PLAN,” SAYS DAN GORDON.



home looks east though chestnuts, pines, and other trees to the Charles River and west across a sweep of broad meadow. The mature trees and the generous amount of open space help evoke an English ambience for the four-plus-acre property. Indeed, Gertrude Jekyll, that early twentieth-century doyenne of

British gardening, and her colleague, architect Edwin Lutyens, would no doubt approve Gordon's classical approach and his use of local natural materials.

To bring the garden back to its former glory, Gordon stripped away those elements that didn't reflect the home's character and rescued those that did. An old, bowed fieldstone wall, for example, was repaired and modified. Today it borders the lawn terrace and, along with a cedar cross-buck fence, crafted by New England Woodworkers, provides a subtle pool enclosure that befits the setting.

Other walls, of lesser quality and likely not of the same vintage, were removed, although many of their salvaged stones found a spot elsewhere on the grounds. Unruly plantings and trees were eliminated, while tamer specimens got carefully carted off to different locations. “We took the best of the original garden, reworked it, and integrated it into our plan,” says Gordon. And to better join the garden with the site, he simplified the grading. Made consistent as it wraps the house, the grade steps down to both the pool area and the lawn terrace.

Yesterday's pool, which was not only in disrepair

PROJECT TEAM

Landscape design:

Dan Gordon,
Dan Gordon Landscape
Architects

Landscape contractor:

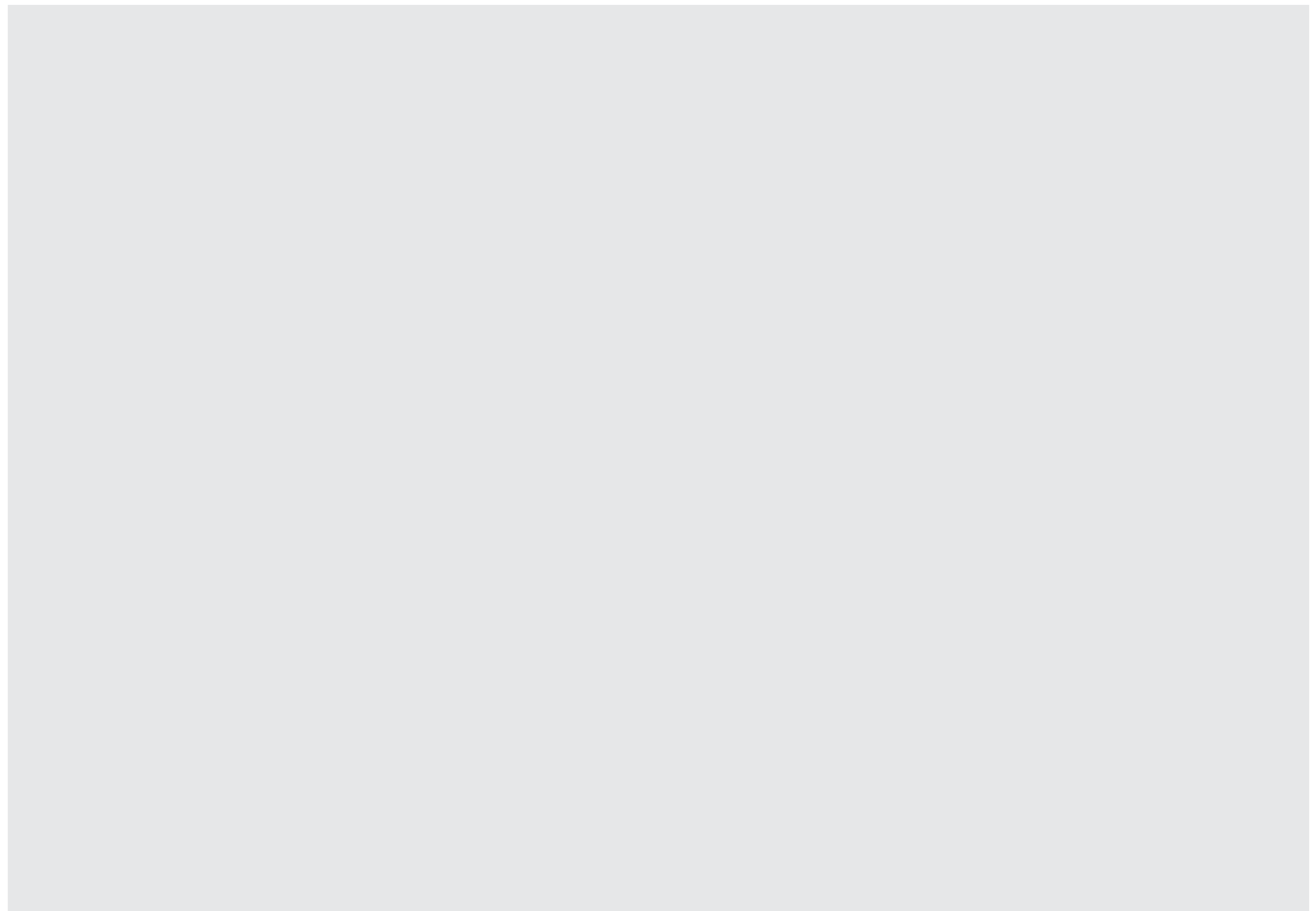
The Picot Company



but also badly oriented, was nixed and a new version installed. Today's model, with its streamlined blue-stone surround, is set closer to the house for a better indoor/outdoor connection. The pool's proximity draws the eye into the landscape. The rectangle of blue water doubles as a reflecting pool, too, affording the owners an ever-changing view of sky and trees.

And there's a sense of order to the straight lines and symmetry of pool, fence, and lawn that enhances the feeling of peacefulness.

A direct sight line runs from the home's front entrance to French doors at the back, which open to the dining terrace—a favorite gathering place—and beyond to the lawn terrace, a swath of manicured





FACING PAGE: Bluestone paths lead to different areas of the garden and help keep feet dry when the grass is damp. **LEFT:** The old fieldstone wall, which Gordon refurbished and reworked, is joined to the cedar fence by way of new cedar gates with bronze hardware. From the meadow side, due to the hilly topography, the wall reaches almost four feet in height.

green where it's easy to imagine an old-school croquet match springing up at any moment. Rounded in shape on one side, the lawn terrace lends interest, creates a generous defined area for entertaining, and sits in delightful contrast to the rustic meadow.

It seems Gordon has managed that rare thing: using less to make more. No bright-colored borders

or fancy ornaments anywhere, just a lovely garden skillfully awakened from its slumber. "We did what was appropriate in keeping with the theme of an older house," says Gordon modestly. But anyone can plainly see, it's a whole lot more than that. ■■

RESOURCES : For more information about the professionals involved in this project, see page 209.

