Julian Edelman’s Oasis
New England’s own Super Bowl MVP shares his Back Bay home

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Old meets new on Nantucket and a high-style colonial revival restoration
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 steppers 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

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

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 crossbuck 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 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...
but also badly oriented, was nixed and a new version installed. Today's model, with its streamlined bluestone 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...
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.