

Recapturing a Legacy

Drawn to the property's rich history and literary ties, this homeowner seeks to restore an idyllic landscape to a place that once again inspires beautiful writing.



Located in Concord, Massachusetts, just a short walk from North Bridge, this picturesque property is steeped in history—from likely playing a role in early skirmishes of the Revolutionary War to having once belonged to renowned poet Ralph Waldo Emerson. Although the landscape had become overgrown, the new homeowner saw its potential and set out to restore it to its former glory.

She turned to New England-based firm Dan Gordon Landscape Architects to create a timeless garden that would foster quiet contemplation and creativity. “We were looking for a relaxed formality with the landscape that would meld the character of gardens of French wine country and agrarian New England,” says Peter Stephens, senior associate and project manager.

Although the home is a new build, architect Patrick Ahearn worked carefully to compose a dwelling rooted within the property's historical context. The home's design works with the surrounding landscape to create the feeling that the home and gardens have always been there.

“It's important to consider all the senses when composing a garden,” notes Peter Stephens of Dan Gordon Landscape Architects. “The fountain provides the subtle sound of running water and serves as a bathing pool for songbirds.”



Once owned by Ralph Waldo Emerson, the land on which this new home was built has a storied past. It has been said that Henry David Thoreau wrote in his journal as he explored the woodland and farm fields that surround it.



The property sits adjacent to conservation land and boasts striking natural features, which include a manmade pond surrounded by a pine forest. “By clearing the brush and trees near the house, we were able to return much of the property to open rolling meadow, with views to the surrounding landscape,” Peter says.

Due to the area’s abundant wildlife, the team selected plants that could tolerate browsing from deer and other animals. Boxwood hedges line the exterior of the house while flowering perennials and hydrangeas infuse the space with color during all seasons. Lavender and catmint fill the garden, emitting their sweet aromas. Pea gravel paths enhance the relaxed air and lead to various formal spaces.

The landscape transitions to a wildflower meadow before leading up to the bordering woodland. This new meadow serves as a food source for songbirds and a nesting site for the Blanding’s turtle—a threatened species that makes its home in the nearby pond and marshes.

With careful consideration given to both the property’s history and the surrounding ecosystem, this landscape is sure to inspire writers for years to come. ①



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