

# RELAX, ALREADY!

The roof deck of a historical brownstone gets a 21st-century makeover.

By Jaci Conry

## The Problem

Situated in Beacon Hill overlooking the Common, a stately brownstone had an impressive pedigree: It was designed by architect Alexander Parris for textile manufacturer Nathan Appleton in 1821, and the home (now a National Historic Landmark) would later be the site of Appleton's daughter's wedding to poet Henry Wadsworth Longfellow. Fast-forward 200 years, and while the look of the downstairs courtyard remained in keeping with the original look, the roof deck was essentially "ground zero, nothing more than a rubber roof," says landscape architect Dan Gordon, who was tasked with transforming it into a contemporary hangout space.

## The Solution

"A rooftop is a magical place. You are in the city but have the luxury of privacy and open space," Gordon says. To ensure unfettered views of the skyline and Frog Pond, he installed low boxwoods in zinc pots around the deck's front rail, a move in keeping with historical guidelines mandating that nothing can be visible on the roof from the street. Streamlined furnishings can be found in each of the rooftop's three spaces—a seating area, a dining space with an outdoor kitchen, and a sunning spot with chaise loungers. White flowering plants add interest to the ipe-clad deck, while river birch trees provide privacy from the neighbors. The granite fire table, meanwhile, warms on cool nights and offers a place for the owners to reflect on the beauty of their space—and the city.

LANDSCAPE ARCHITECT: DAN GORDON LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTS. LANDSCAPE CONTRACTOR: MICHAEL S. COFFIN

