

New England HOME

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*Plunge
Into Spring*

OUTDOOR LIVING AWAITS



Secret Gardens

The outdoor spaces of a landmark townhome in Boston finally get a chance to bloom. BY KATHRYN O'SHEA-EVANS

Any history buff would agree that this four-story Beacon Hill home is a treasure trove. Designed in 1821 by architect Alexander Parris, the home was designated a National Historic Landmark in 1977. But the gardens? Not exactly worthy of lore. Until, that is, the family who bought the property in 2019 added a garage beneath the home's courtyard and reached out to landscape architect Dan Gordon to work his magic. The goal: a peaceful and leafy green space to serve as an outdoor extension of the classically beautiful Federal-style residence.

One of the largest courtyard gardens in Beacon Hill beckons through the foyer of this grand townhome, designed in 1821 for congressman Nathan Appleton. Architect Guy Grassi revamped the home for today while maintaining its age-old elegance.



RIGHT: Lattice lends an Old World sensibility and helps frame the space. The off-black color (a proprietary Walpole Outdoors hue) complements the metalwork and window frames, says landscape architect Patrick Taylor. **BELOW:** Planted urns and clipped boxwoods supply structure. “We kept it historic—not historic in terms of old, but in terms of keeping with the character and classic kinds of detailing,” says landscape architect Dan Gordon.



To ensure a lush feel, the designers included gurgling fountains and sizable Skyline honey locust trees. “A lattice screen provides privacy and enclosure on the two open sides, but we wanted to soften it and provide a bit of a canopy to the space, and the trees are really essential in doing that,” Gordon says. Tucked underneath it all, a subsurface collection system and wire waffle filtering mats ensure adequate drainage from the garage roof. Dan Gordon Landscape Architects Senior Associate Patrick Taylor employed the Greek-key motif on the home’s street-facing portico in custom detailing on the entry gate. (The design team also reworked the home’s street-facing garden.)





A timeless color palette and tried-and-true regional flora comprise the plantings. “It’s just a classic mix of plants: boxwood, hydrangea, evergreen groundcovers, and honey locust for dappled shade,” Gordon says. “It all

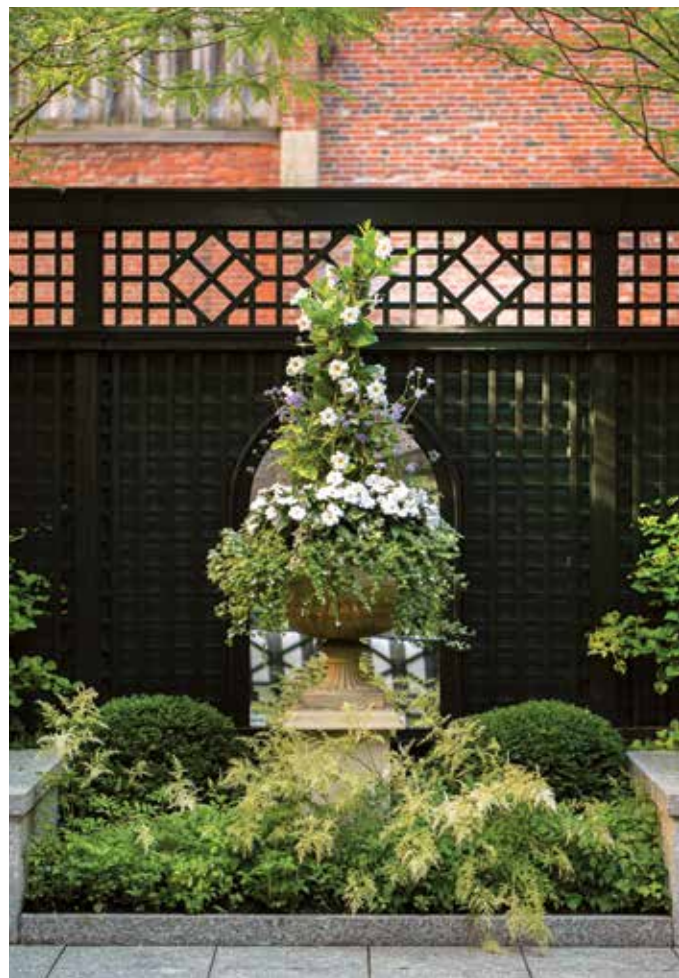
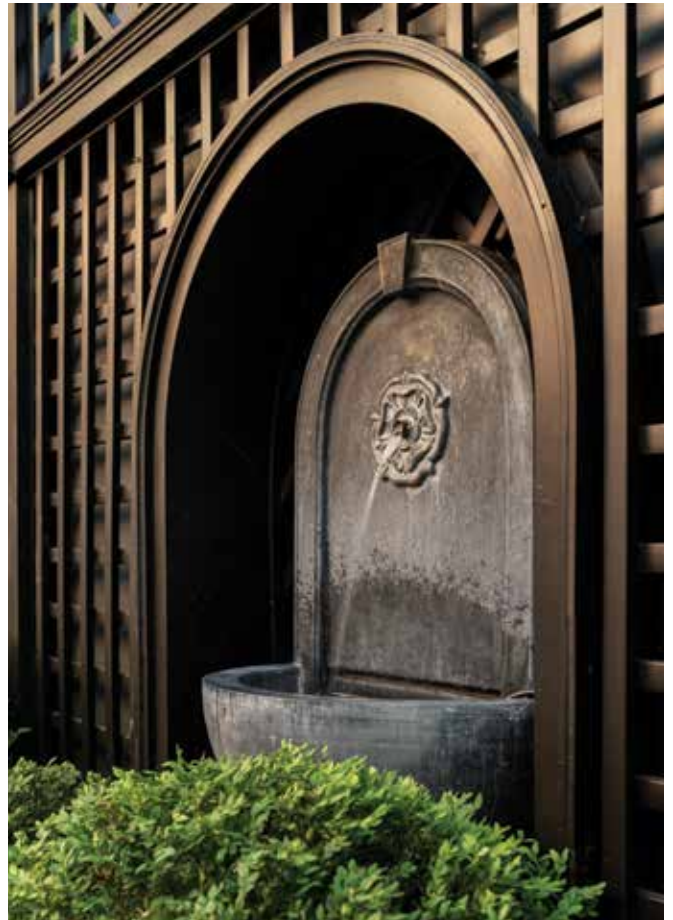
works really well together, and we’ve had a lot of success with this palette.” If that green grass looks too good to be true, that’s because it is. The design team installed a faux version from SYNlawn. “There really wasn’t enough

A strict color palette of off-black, white, and granite gray puts the focus on the verdant and lush greenery. Plantings include the poetically named bridal veil astilbe, lenten rose, and Japanese forest grass.

sunlight, and it's just too heavily trafficked for lawn," Taylor says. Plus, turf comes with some major perks—including no need to mow, chemically fertilize, or water in a region that's recently seen significant drought.

Upstairs, the top-floor roof-deck, which features panoramic views of Boston Common and the Back Bay, was originally "pretty sparse—just some planters and an old wood deck," says renovation architect Guy Grassi. "We developed it with an outdoor fireplace, grill system, and all the things you'd want to have up there," he says, adding

CLOCKWISE FROM RIGHT: "We worked with a craftsman to create the fountains, which build on that historic context and add to the ambience of the garden," Gordon says. Textural variety and layering are as vital in a garden bed as they are in a home's interior spaces. Arches in the latticework over both fountain and fire echo the structural archways in the home's architecture.



A Jet Mist granite fire table creates primal allure on the roof-deck, where the panorama spans Boston Common and the Back Bay. Birch trees and boxwoods provide a park-like feeling that's restorative in the city.



LANDSCAPE DESIGN:
Dan Gordon Landscape Architects

RENOVATION ARCHITECTURE:
Grassi Design Group

RENOVATION BUILDER: Metric Construction

that his firm tries to design outdoor spaces with as much functionality as indoor ones. Think a de facto living room, dining room, and kitchen—all things Parris could only have dreamt

about in the early nineteenth century.

Whether you're indoors or out, the results are the same. "Spectacular," Grassi says.

EDITOR'S NOTE: For details, see Resources.