

# EAST COAST HOME+DESIGN



# Outdoor Spaces





# HORTICULTURAL HEAVEN

*ECH+D Celebrates the Great Outdoors*

Stories by Susan Heller and Lollie Mathews



## Janice Parker Landscape Design

### A Restoration & Renovation of Historical Proportions

#### The Mission

Blend garden romance and historical charm with versatile functionality and contemporary design. Importantly, honor the original design created by the legendary, Ellen Biddle Shipman. Combine two lots, make them work separately and together. A delightful proposition for a modern-day design maven, who fortunately, combines well-honed analytical skills with intuitive artistic sensibilities.

However, there were Complications. The westward facing slope was very steep, posing all kinds of issues. The garden pavilion, signature fountain, and sundry masonry was in total disrepair. Retaining walls were in structural failure. Underground spaghetti ruled, it was a counter-intuitive crazy quilt of drainage pipes and utility conduits. Hurricane Sandy had ripped out huge old trees leaving great gaps, in other areas the soil was damaged and compacted. The site itself is extremely cold and exposed.

“Generally, we’re not called into anything simple,” Janice explains. You need a landscape architectural firm when things are not so easy – part of our approach is that we love the challenges. It’s fun to deal with complex sites, they invite us to explore the mystery, drama and excitement of the location.”

Although Shipman created some 400 gardens in her career, no photos or plans for this particular site were found in her archives at Cornell University. Instead, Janice studied her work extensively so that she could invoke her aesthetic and spirit. Working both sides of the logic and creative street is something Janice does all the time. “Understanding the right way to work with things is a combination of analysis and intuition. We are seeking to create a layer on top of a piece of topography or land that has its own energy and personality. I am intrigued by the analytical and technical issues because they do inform the right way to work with materials. And because we need to know about the water table, the soil content, and environmental exposure, we do a lot of research and work with a geologist.” This level of focus and detail would be why her website showcases such a wide range of astonishing creations.

Research completed, it was time to address architectural details. The

pieces of the balustrade that remained, were sent to a restoration company which then recreated the entire balustrade to match. The lower fountain is a stucco-pebble matrix, a design form that appears frequently in the papers at Dumbarton Oaks (a research library and museum of garden design and landscape architecture) because it was fancied by designers around the turn of the last century. Janice found someone willing to train herself in creation of the special stucco-pebble surface so that they could restore it and put it on the new staircase. The beautiful curved stone bench had been carved up a number of times, the question became - how do we reunite the various pieces and create something new that would respect what had been there originally? The answer was to utilize the same hand-crafted pebble matrix to create a mosaic paving around the bench.

“Obviously the property has traditional architecture that we wanted to acknowledge, but we didn’t want to take it overly seriously. We wanted to create a timeless sense of grace and charm – with a light touch of humor. So we have the statue of a beautiful Aphrodite which is an homage to the feminine energy of the garden at the same time two dolphins spitting water with another fountain on top, is just great fun.”

The arresting stag sculpture was a product of design whimsy and historical connection with the property. With landscape architects in general, and Janice in particular, the yin and yang as expressed in design principles, is very much in play. She takes into account the variable lighting of the atmosphere above and the configuration of the land below, so that what she creates in the mid-zone unites the two elements seamlessly. “That,” she says, “is where you get something really potent. That’s where the magic lives.”

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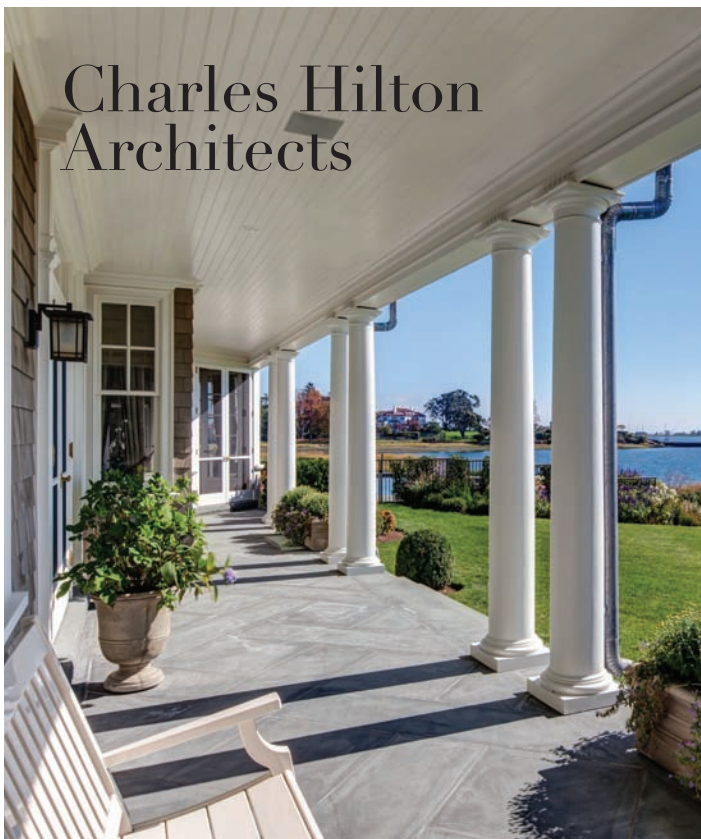




This new waterfront shingle-style house in Greenwich, CT, provides a stunning view of Todd's Point. Architect Charles Hilton, wanted to create a space that offered comfortable viewing of the myriad moods of Long Island Sound; from brilliant sun, to misty fog and windy chop, with all the boats dancing at their moorings.

He created a long linear plan, which terminated on one side with a semi-circular porch that also features pool views. Opposite the classical columns are French doors that open into the family room. The stunning fieldstone fireplace serves to anchor the house to the land. Chuck did not want to use new-cut stone, instead he sourced old, oversize chunks of fieldstone – creating a contemporary scene with a sense of history and proportion.

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# Austin Ganim Landscape Design

## Sun + Sea Breezes + Salt

Three elements that provide delightful living on the Connecticut shoreline and pose interesting challenges in terms of landscaping. Additionally, Eva Chiamulera of Austin Ganim Landscape Design in Fairfield, CT, wanted to create for her client, a stunning visual frame for the house that also provides a sense of privacy from adjacent beach patios.

Beginning with a planting bed, she crafted a combination of soft textures with colorful flowers and foliage in the entryway that was wonderfully aesthetic while serving double duty as a matrix to anchor the soil in place. To create a sense of motion in the garden that would preclude damage from strong breezes, she brought in Limelight Panicle Hydrangea, which has a smaller flower head and the long blades of Maiden and Switch grasses.

Part of the magic of landscape design, is accomplishing the practical goals of accommodating intense heat, salt and solar radiation while setting a visual backdrop--evergreens and euonymus--for seasonal detonations of color--Blue Salvia, Pink Sedum, Knockout Roses and Luna Pink Swirl Hibiscus. To that palette, Eva added among others: Thunderhead Japanese Black Pine, Moonshadow Wintercreeper, Elijah Blue Fescue and Summer Storm Purple Leafed Hibiscus.

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