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Formal, whimsical, flowering or natural, some of Greenwich's most beautiful gardens from their annual tour, navigated by the Garden Education Center experts, show us that no matter what your taste, thoughtfully placed plantings can transform any yard to **GREEN AND GORGEOUS.**

❖ OASIS OF CALM ON DAIRY ROAD

Described as a family garden by volunteers from the Garden Education Center of Greenwich (GEC), this Dairy Road garden lends just the right combination of greenery, color and hardscape. The hand-hewn wooden pergola at the highest point of the property creates the perfect place for a homeowner to sit back and enjoy the view. Dripping in wisteria and edged with hydrangea, the stone archway and patio framed with a rustic pergola adds drama to a formerly woody landscape. New Dawn roses and sweet autumn clematis are interspersed throughout. "It's an oasis of calm in a wild

topography," says Barbara Collier of the Garden Education Center. From a seat on this hill, the homeowners can "survey their domain: a sunny hillside leading down to the cool, calm swimming pool and house." The property, designed by landscape architects Conte & Conte, is decorated with mixed borders and natural lawns. Around the circular driveway are annuals and boxwoods. The back of the property is accented with a magnificent cutleaf maple, an elegant weeping hemlock and an allée (a French formal garden that is both a promenade and extension of a view)

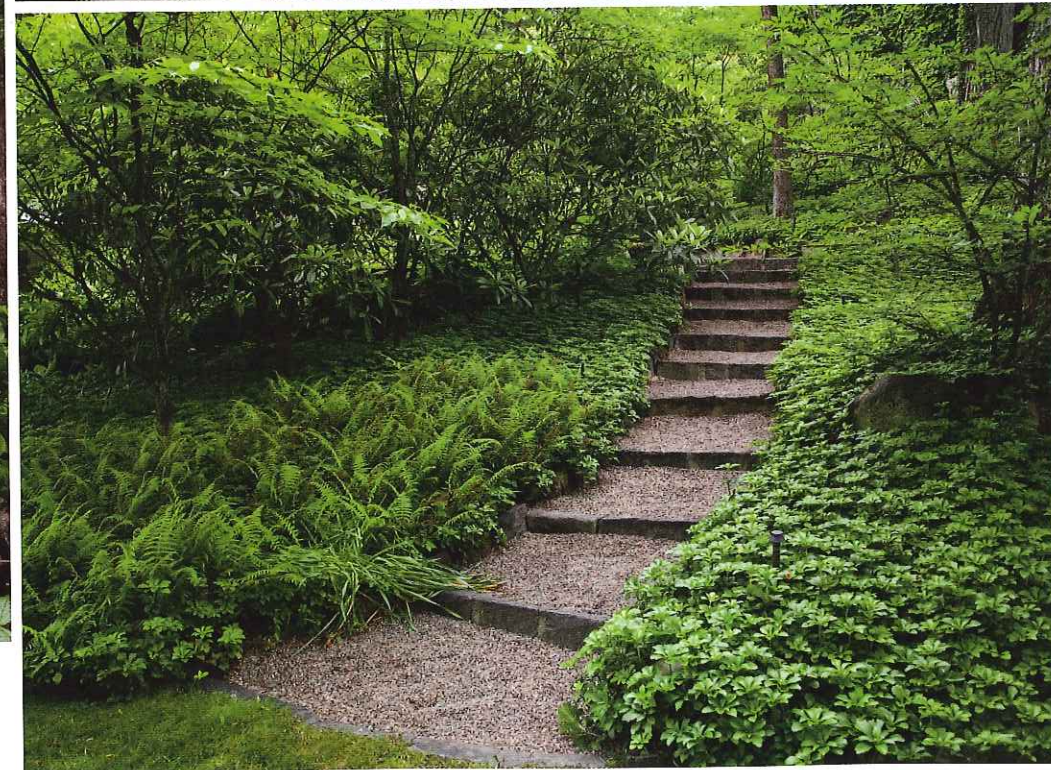
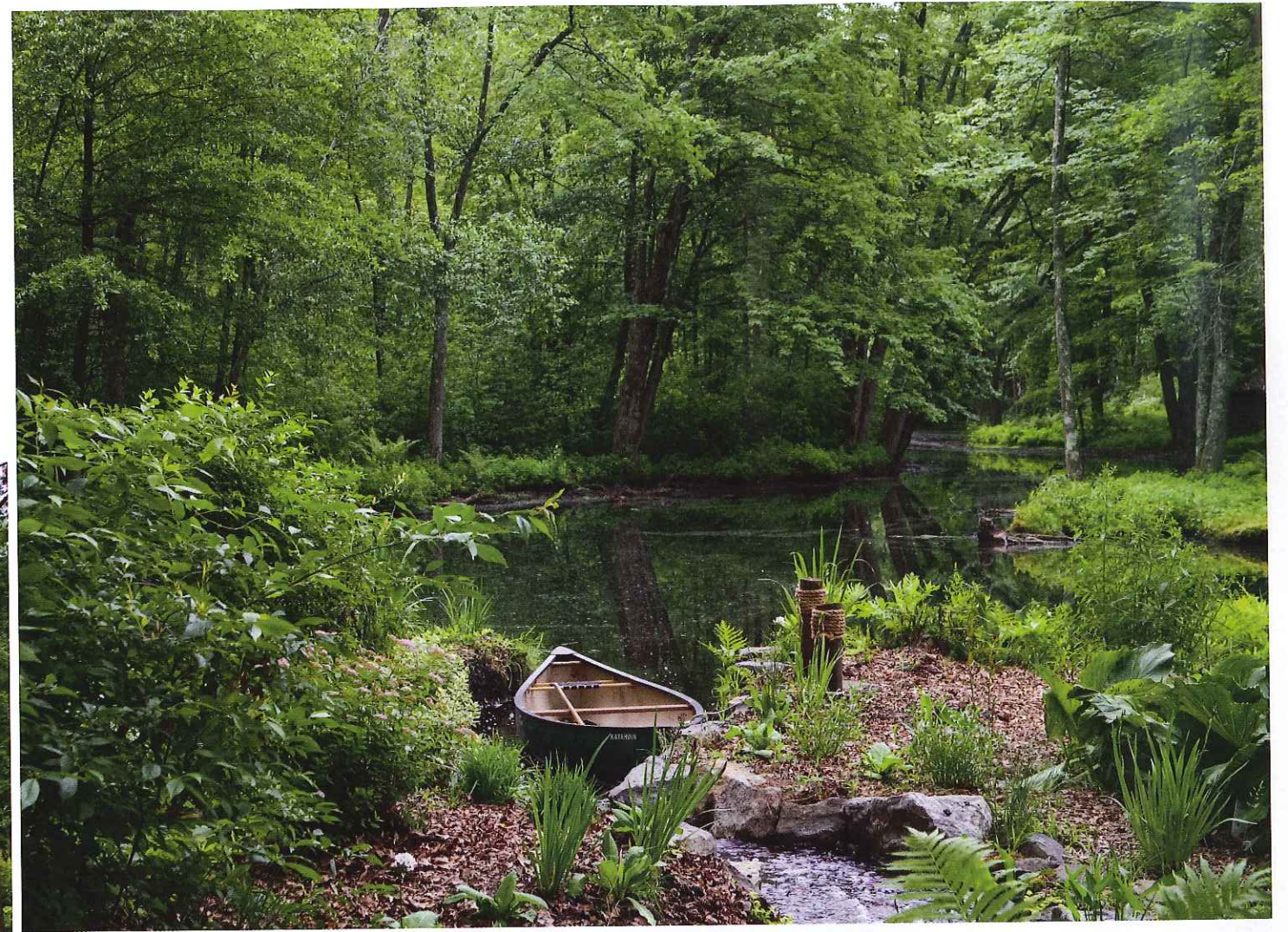
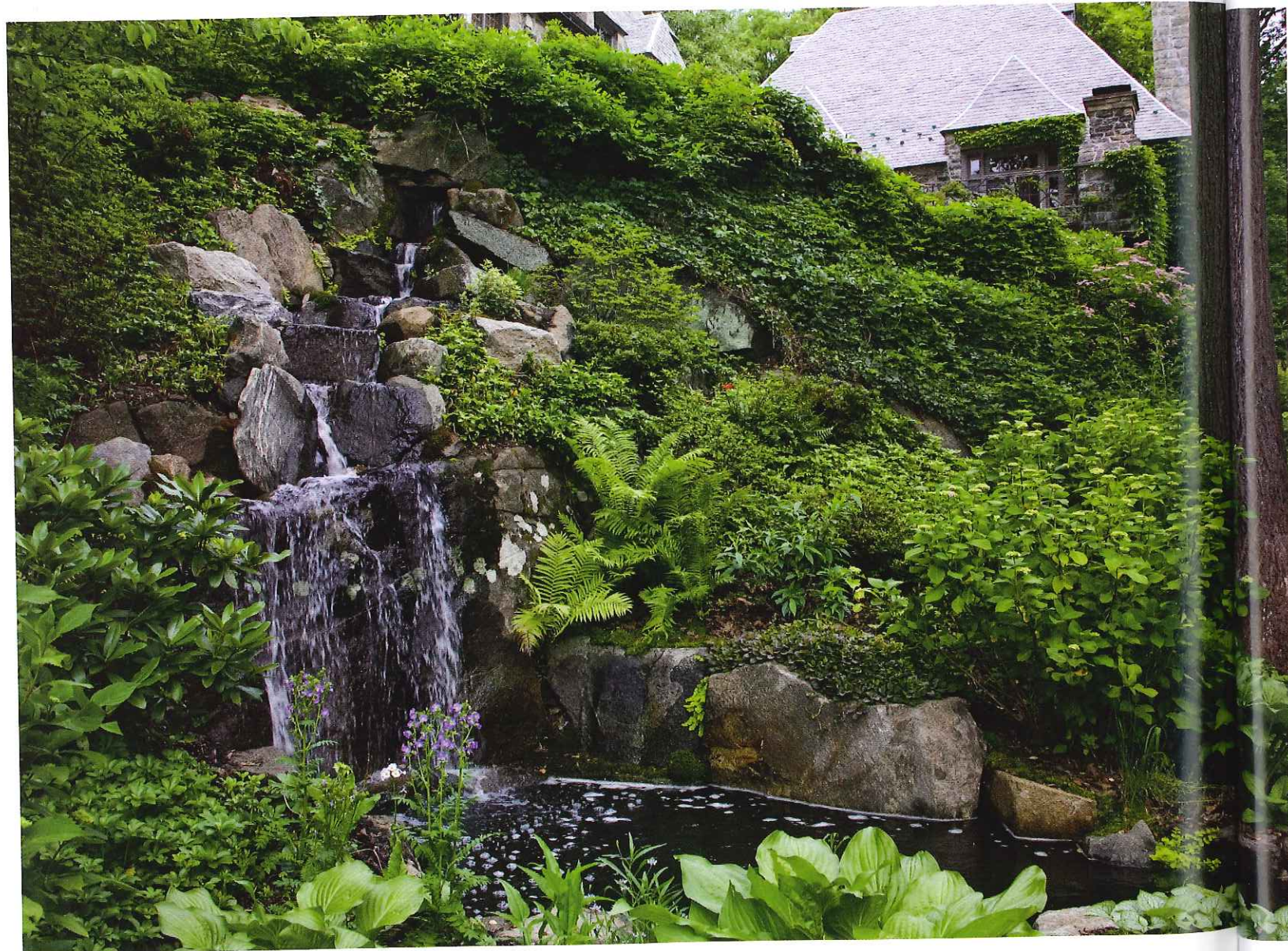
of Heritage birches underplanted with cool moss. Just beyond sits a koi pond edged with woodland plants including cardinal flower, cinnamon fern and red twig dogwood. Tucked away not far from the pond, a white shed with a window box of roses and clematis surrounding it is a sweet sight to rest your eye on. "There is nothing accidental about the design," Collier says, noting that the garden is well-balanced. **TAKEAWAY** | Take an overgrown, unruly hillside and turn it into an opportunity for an outdoor living space. Frame it with shrubs, flowers or climbing vines and hanging plants.

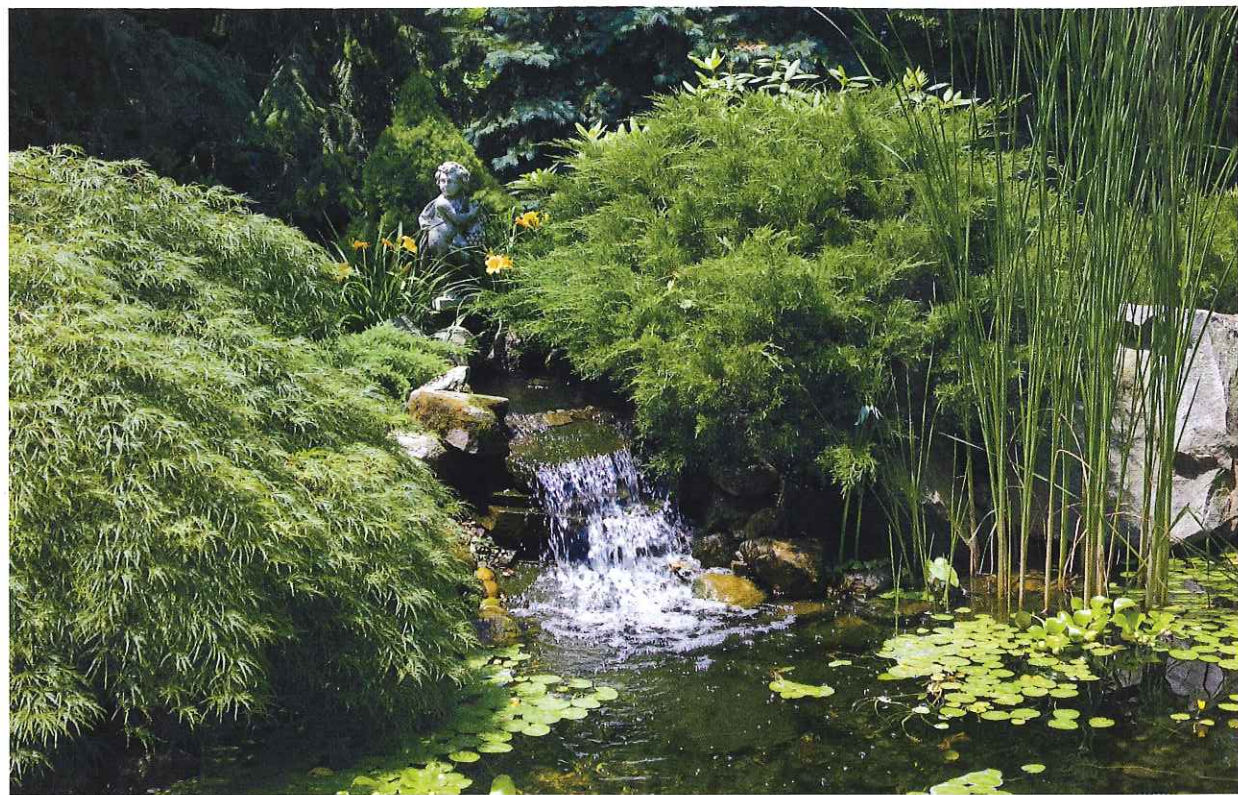
ESCAPE ON VINEYARD LANE

This regal estate of the 1920s gives visitors the feeling that they have stepped back in time. The property, highlighted by the château-like Twachtman house built by the children of the famed impressionist painter in 1929, is the design of the current homeowners themselves and takes advantage of all the landscape offers. A sloping hillside is tamed with stone paths and ground cover. A tumbling brook and natural rock outcroppings are framed with drifts of azaleas, hostas and ferns. "Magnificent is the word to use for this property," says the GEC's Madeleine Marchese. A

stream leads to a very large natural pond that straddles this and the neighboring property. A rope bridge leads to a treehouse like no other, and a tree swing invites visitors of all ages to explore their inner child. "They use a lot of repetition of ground covers, forget-me-nots," says Beth Ryder, vice president of horticulture for the GEC. Ryder says the gardeners also use their lawn effectively by creating a semicircle with a retaining wall, framing the greenery with hardscape. A pool and pool house are located downhill from the main garden. On the other side of

the house, a sculpture garden winds around the grounds in a way that makes the relatively new feature seem as if it has always been there. A rose garden lends a splash of formality to an otherwise woodland escape. "This property has an informal feel, but it has sort of an English feel to it also," says Collier. "Everything is very thoughtfully planted to look like it just sprung up there." **TAKEAWAY** | Embrace your property's natural beauty and find plantings and hardscape that blend in to make for a high-impact, low-maintenance garden.





❖ HIDDEN GEM ON MIDDLE WAY

Bigger may not always be better. This property, bursting with plantings, undoubtedly proves that a small garden can be just as fascinating, say Ryder and Collier. Although this beach cottage is right on the corner of two streets, visitors to this garden would never know it from within its green walls. The property owners have transformed their garden into a series of outdoor "rooms," each one enticing visitors to find out what's next. From a swimming pool with lilac topiaries, to the koi pond that

provides a habitat for birds, there are surprises around each corner. A wrap-around porch with hanging baskets makes for the perfect panoramic view of the gardens beyond. Flowering shrubs and perennials include a few that date back to the garden's origins. The home was built at the turn of the century as a summer home for the Mary S.E. Lucas family members. What this garden lacks in square footage (it's on a quarter-acre), it makes up for in plants: roses, hydrangea, alliums, day lilies,

boxwood and peonies are just a few of the varieties found here. Although many spots are sunny, the area is also dotted with shade. So as not to waste an inch of space, shade plants fill in those spots, and the koi pond is surrounded by wetland plants. "For the space she has, you can't believe how much she has done," says Collier of the property. **TAKEAWAY** | By creating vignettes, you can lure your visitors from one "room" to another, making maximum use of even a small piece of land.

❖ PRACTICAL AND PRETTY ON NORTH STREET

Very personal, themed and thoughtful, this front garden was a way for landscape designer Alice Cook to create a pleasing escape from society right off the road. "It shows the importance of good landscaping and planting," says Collier. The homeowner went to great lengths to get this property as level as possible. Apple trees are perfectly placed in rows across the lawn, while Boston ivy

climbs a covered gate. Boxwood surrounds a fine herb garden closest to the street. As it grows, the boxwood can be sheared to form a natural wall around the herbs. Each detail creates a look that is formal and elegant but also low maintenance for the homeowner. An impressive vegetable and bamboo garden are in the back of the house, and a pool is to the left of the front yard garden. The greenery

is peppered with a calm color palette of white, blue and purple.

"People tend to focus on the flashy, fancy, flowering plants when they want to design a garden, but our world has every growing condition under the sun and green can be very effective," Ryder says. In this case, the homeowners wanted shrubs, trees and herbs, which are all not only low maintenance but also less

attractive to animals and insects. **TAKEAWAY** | Herbs can be a great gardening choice for those who don't want to spend a lot of time on their knees. "You're not growing them for the flowers, which can be a pain," Ryder says. However, herbs do require a lot of sun. If your best sun is in your front yard, frame your herbs with a wall, whether natural or hardscape, to give it a more formal look.





❖ FORMAL ELEGANCE ON WINDING Lane

While the house is only eight years old, the landscaping, designed by Bill Spitzer of Horticultural Solutions, lends a feeling of English country charm that is centuries old. What was once a sloping parcel is now a relatively level landscape through massive structural work and grade changes. The homeowners wanted an outdoor space perfect for entertaining, complete with parterres (formal planting beds edged in walls or clipped hedges) of roses and perennials, sculptured boxwood borders and elegant statues. An allée is created with clipped hornbeam trees lined with azaleas and nepeta, providing an intimate outdoor seating area. A fountain and pool are formal water features, while the meandering stream leads to more rustic woodland gardens just beyond a stone bridge. On the other side of the house, a putting green awaits avid golfers. Statues are framed by a clipped green lawn, terraces of flowers and trimmed shrubs. "The owners travel and collect these sculptures from their trips," says Collier. "They might very well have designed the garden around them."

In back and in front of the house, mixed borders of perennials, annuals and shrubbery form a maze of greenery around the house. "The great thing about that type of mixed border is that in the winter, you still have the structure of shrubs," says Ryder. **TAKEAWAY** | Design and focal point are key when planning a formal garden, says Ryder. "Pick a vista and frame it; pick a sculpture and design a garden around it."