



# Sanctuary, redefined

A private paradise grows  
in Somerset County

LANDSCAPE DESIGN BY **SCOTT PARKER**TEXT BY **DONNA BOYLE SCHWARTZ**PHOTOGRAPHY BY **JILL PARKER**

SIMPLY TURN INTO THE DRIVEWAY OF THIS home in New Jersey's Somerset County, and the hustle and bustle of nearby streets instantly become a distant memory. The curving path is lined with artfully arranged clumps of white river birch, kousa dogwood trees and white carpet roses, guiding the way toward the three-story house. A weeping katsura tree marks the final destination.

Just such a nature-infused refuge was what the homeowners envisioned for the one and a half acres surrounding their 6,000-square-foot home. "They wanted to feel like they were on a permanent vacation—they wanted their home to be a true sanctuary," explains Scott Parker, owner of Parker Homescape in Fanwood.

Luckily for the landscape contractor, he stood on already good grounds. "The house has beautiful 360-degree views of the mountains and the skyline," he says. "My goal was to optimize the beauty of those views from every angle while, at the same time, creating a sense of privacy and intimacy."

But the homeowners, entrepreneurs in their late 50s with two adult children, were after more than just a pretty vista. They wanted to have an outdoor space that would match all of their interests—from gardening to cooking to entertaining to photography. What's more, they wanted it to match their home.

So Parker spent countless hours observing the home both from inside and out to create a seamless design and color scheme. "The couple wanted the garden to complement the interior furnishings and vice versa," he notes, pointing to the guest bedroom as an example. "The furnishings in the guest room feature beautiful



Flowering vinca, Norway spruce, Japanese forest grass and sedum create an impressive entrance to this 6,000-square-foot home, above left.

Variegated hostas, left, are highlighted by touches of color in the roses, hydrangea, blue rug juniper and veronica.



**The New York bluestone used for the patio and outdoor kitchen complements both the teak furniture and the cedar shingles on the home's roof.**

embroidered yellow butterflies, so I planted yellow irises outside its glass door.”

Such thoroughness and attention to detail delighted the pair. “I’m very picky, and if Scott can work with me, he can work with anyone!” the wife quips. “For example, Scott and I went to three different states to hand-select the antique New York bluestone we used for the patio and the outdoor kitchen. It was very important to me that the bluestone complement the natural cedar shingles of the house, as well as coordinate with the teak furniture on the patio.”

Parker took an equally methodical approach to designing the hardscape and plantings, developing a three-phase process that unfolded over several years. Phase one encompassed privacy plantings and erosion control; phase two introduced specimen plantings, the patio and the outdoor kitchen; and phase three finished up the project with annuals, perennials, a

cutting garden and an herb garden that includes basil, rosemary, spearmint, peppermint, chives, garlic and cilantro.

“We enjoy cooking,” explains the wife. “So Scott designed a wonderful herb garden that we use all the time, and we also have a large outdoor kitchen that we use year-round.”

Once the cooking is done, the homeowners can enjoy their culinary creation on the main patio before retiring underneath the redwood arbor. Its covering of flowering wisteria vine creates a small private alcove for relaxing and enjoying the scenery.

“It really is like being on vacation whenever we are at home,” says the wife. “We also enjoy photography and wildlife, and Scott has created an environment that appeals to many different types of birds, butterflies, hummingbirds and other animals—even the deer have places in the garden where they are welcome.

“The landscape cradles the house, and the house interacts with the landscape,” she continues. “We truly love spending time in our yard—it’s our own private retreat.” □