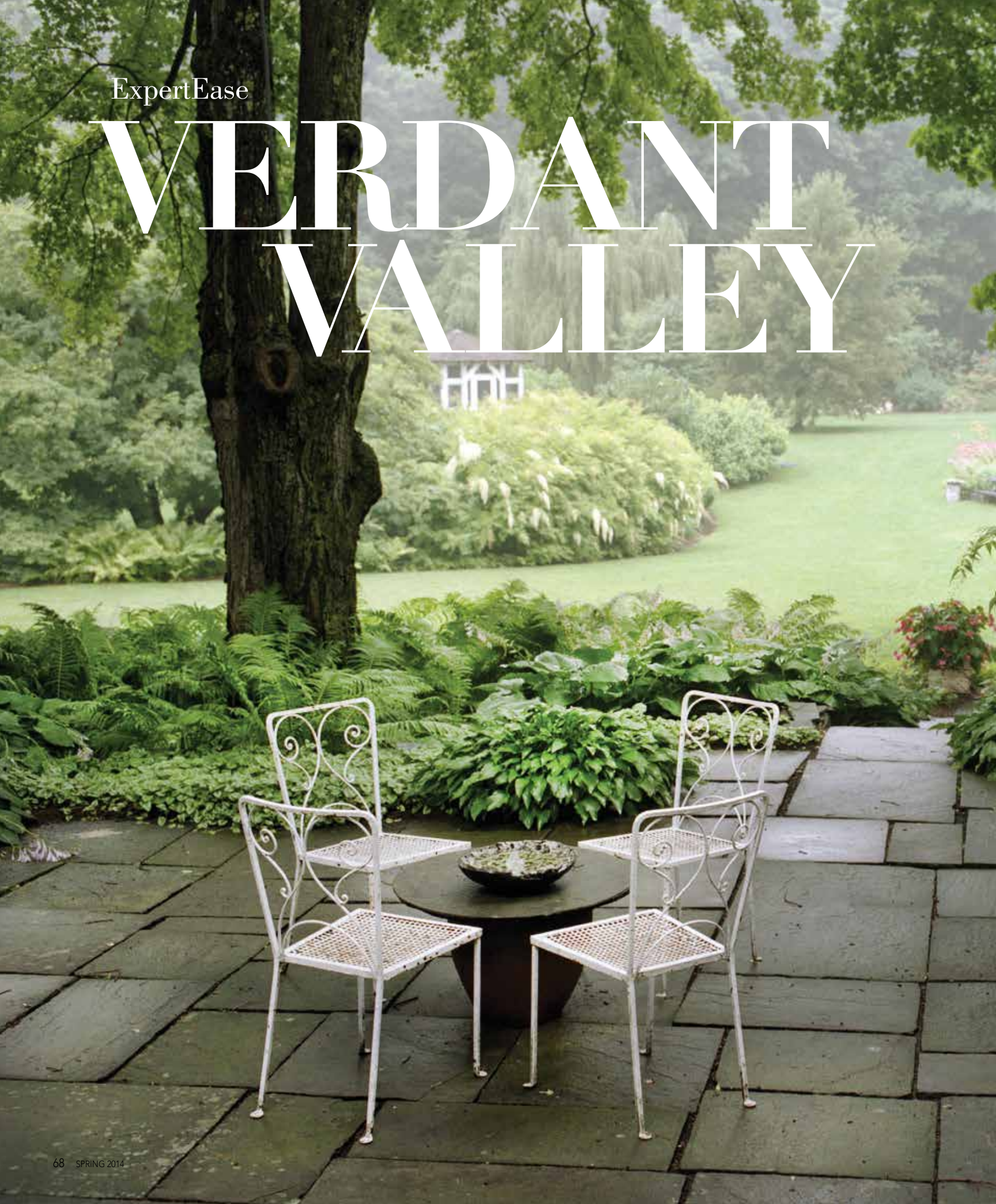
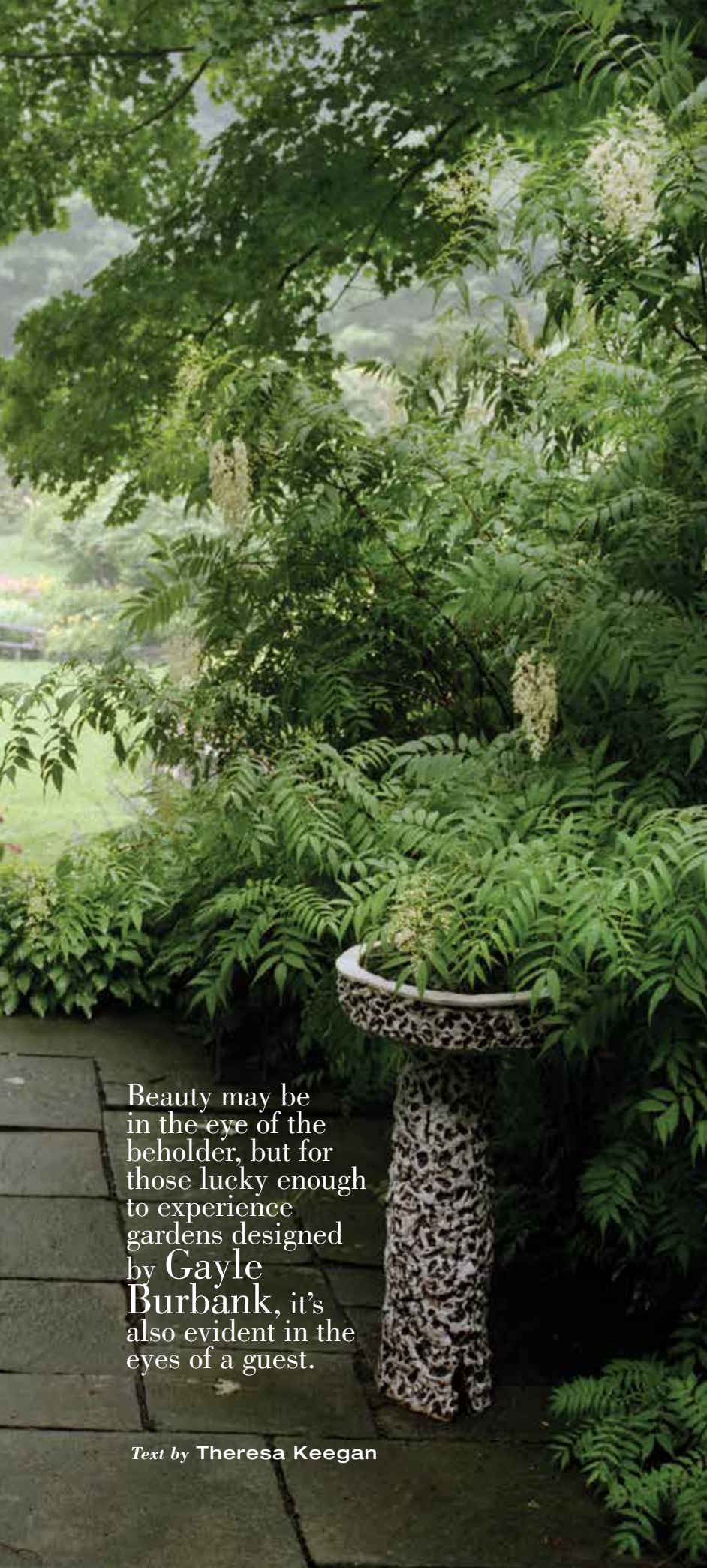


ExpertEase

# VERDANT VALLEY







Beauty may be in the eye of the beholder, but for those lucky enough to experience gardens designed by Gayle Burbank, it's also evident in the eyes of a guest.

Text by Theresa Keegan

“My work is all very organic, it's all referenced in nature,” Gayle Burbank says of her gardens and sculptures. And that natural flow translates into landscapes marked by hidden paths, juxtaposed plantings,

comforting sanctuaries and, often, her own massive clay sculptures. Whether the gardens are sprawling acre-plus sites in the country, or reclusive rooftop terraces in Manhattan, the organic process weaves throughout her gardens.

“I think it's important to have a garden be a refuge, to be a place to come and feel peaceful.”

She knows from her own experience the power a garden can have on a life. When she and her husband Ken Cohen bought a home in Bearsville, just outside of Woodstock almost 30 years ago, the two would arrive for a weekend frazzled from the demands of working in the fashion industry. Burbank would walk out the door and find sanctuary tackling the land. However, she didn't know a thing about what she was doing.

After a day of pulling out hundreds of lilies thinking she was weeding, Burbank sought the advice of the property's long-term gardener Bertram Bodie, who was in his 80s. His tutelage gently and successfully guided her.

“I very quickly got completely obsessed with the garden,” she said. The 1.5 acre site was cleared of much of the woods. Shrubs and bushes and annuals were planted, with an eye on color and texture. A pond was added. The pool became one of many focal points. As a former fashion designer, it's no surprise that Burbank favors landscape options that accentuate texture.

“I love the contrast with things such as big broad-leafed plants next to delicate flowers,” she says. “I'll put large-leaf plants next to small leaf plants – an evergreen next to red sticks,”

On a whim, she entered her re-designed garden in Garden Design magazine's annual competition and was named a runner up in the Golden Trowel awards.

“I said ‘I must be really good at this’,” she recalls. At the same time, the fashion industry was evolving and her hands-on role was not so crucial for company success, her daughter was





10 years old and it seemed time for a change. She quit the fashion scene and spent two years studying landscape design and horticulture at the New York Botanical Garden.

"And then, I opened up my business," she says. Her home was on the Woodstock Garden Tour, and then the popular Garden Conservatory's Open House days. She found herself consulting, designing, installing and maintaining all types of gardens – and dealing with all types of clients.

"Some say 'Just go for it' others want full control," says Burbank. Either way, once the design process starts, Burbank becomes fully immersed.

"It's just such a great, creative kind of explosion," she says. "It's all a very organic process."

She accounts for sun and shade requirements, whether animals such as deer and rabbit are present, climate, hardscapes and natural contrasts, and even what plants look beautiful when she walks into a nursery.

"When I get my plants and they're all at the site, then I do a sculpture. I create a land sculpture," she says. "It's always a work in progress. I could never be a landscape architect. It's too structured."

Burbank's creativity shines through in a variety of ways. Upstate, she used natural stone outcroppings to create a waterfall for a television director whose property overlooks the sprawling Ashokan Reservoir.

"I designed patios and gardens and fencing and the waterfall down the ledge into a stone pond. It worked out really well."

In Chelsea she used annuals and shrubs to create a brilliantly colorful garden terrace to complement a sleek, modern and entirely white apartment.

"At first, I don't think she knew what to do," Burbank says of the client. "She wasn't happy." But within a week she received a phone call, profusely praising both her design skills and the terrace. "It brought a whole different feeling to her life. In New York City people are living hectic, fast-paced lives ... I think of their landscaping as a haven."

Burbank is also proud of one of the first commercial projects she did: The entranceway to a Greenwich Village apartment. Through the years the plants have grown, defining the façade and yet every season Burbank also decorates with annuals and accents the site.

One of her favorite projects involved overhauling a beautiful old stone house in Woodstock where the gardens were in chaos. Burbank never name drops when discussing clients, in this case she simply says "They had the resources to let my vision of the place come to fruition."

There are English-style gardens off the master bedroom, creating a private sanctuary. There are areas for entertaining and areas for relaxing. Burbank defies categorizing herself into any one style, again relying on texture and contrast. "If there's a boxwood hedge there has to be chaos behind it. Too much perfection is not what I'm looking for."

Although Burbanks' huge, flowing, organic sculptures, which often double as birdbaths and fountains, complement her organic garden designs, she will never include her in a client's design. "If they see something and want to add it, that's fine. But it's never part of the original design."

She keeps her sculpture, which she works on during the winter months, separate from the gardens, which she works on the rest of the year. But she does acknowledge the inextricable organic link that overshadows all her work.

"I feel it's pretentious to call myself an artist, but really, that's what I am," says Burbank. "It's all tapped from the same place, the same creative stream and it all flows." ■









## Garden Conservancy Open Days

The Garden Conservancy's Open Days is an opportunity to visit some of the country's most spectacular gardens.

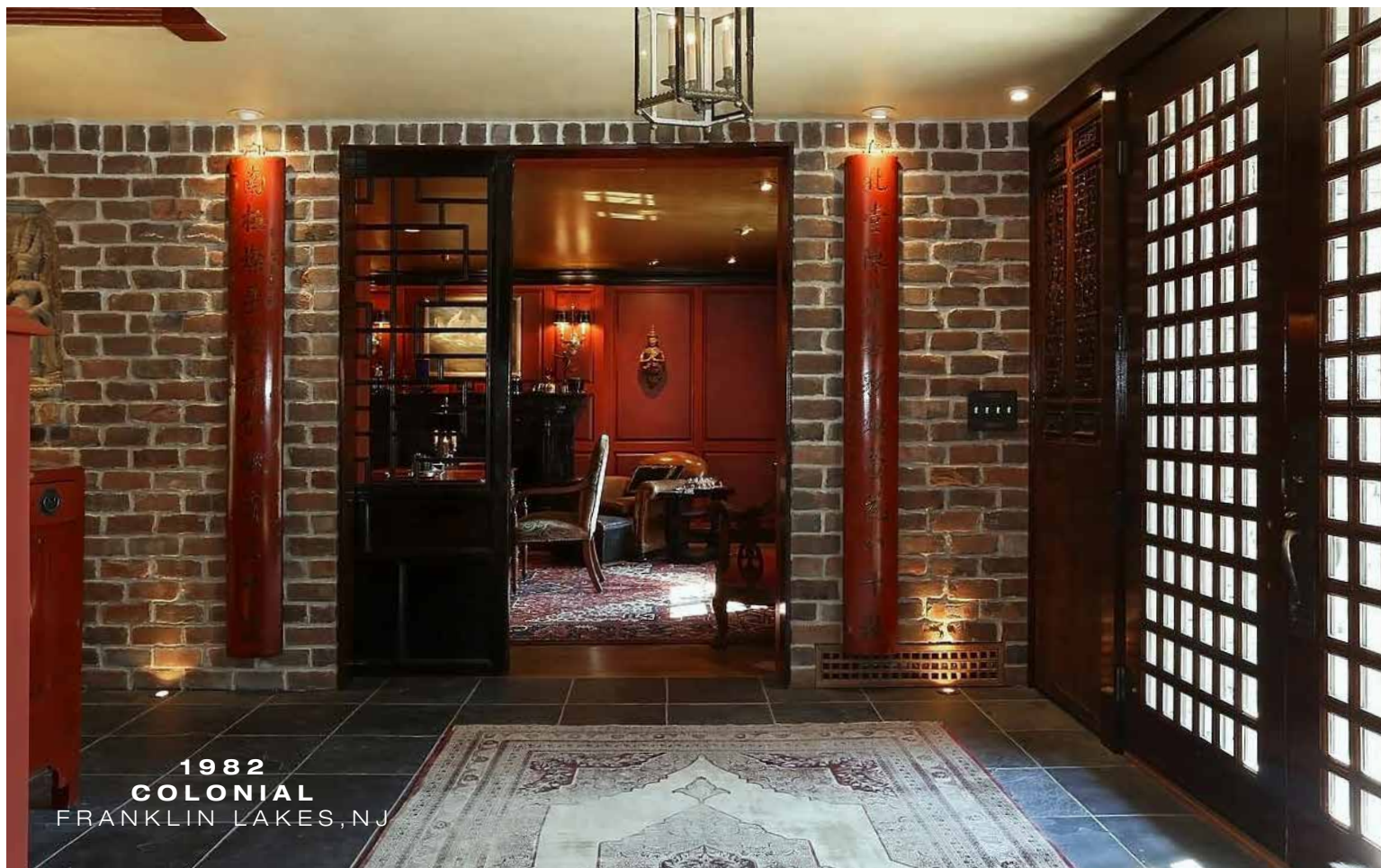
Gayle Burbank's garden is slated for a July 2014 Open Days, information available at the Garden Conservancy website or call 888.842.2442











1982  
COLONIAL  
FRANKLIN LAKES, NJ

# peacebypiece

There are several distinct styles in this house, each fully realized.  
The transitions between them allow for a seamless flow from one style to the next.

*Text by Ellie Sywak*  
*Photography by Peter Edberg and Jeremy Cook*







When custom building or renovating a home, we must decide whether it's better to stick with one theme or to take a risk and allow several different ideas to take root. For Stephen Biale, the owner of 378 Hillview Terrace in Franklin Lakes, NJ, taking a risk certainly paid off.

In certain rooms, the design inspiration stems from one central feature, and the rest of the room falls into place around it. Other areas are designed for their functionality, and still others commemorate beloved moments and tastes.

Stephen Biale's parents built this home between the years 1982 and 1983, aiming for a "faux-Tudor" look. Biale's father had been in the industrial construction business; therefore, the house was supported by huge steel I-beams (which proved fortuitous upon renovation!). In 2004, Biale bought the home from his parents with the intent to renovate and to live in it with his wife and step-daughters.

For several years, individual rooms and spaces were completed without much overhaul. In 2010, the larger changes began when Biale enlisted the help of architect Stephen Kowalski. The home was transformed inside and out, expanding the footprint of the house and building on the best projects of both Stephen and his parents. One of the changes was adding a round turret to the back of the house to give some more architectural variation, as well as additional space. Furthermore, the kitchen and garage were both expanded, and the swimming pool was updated to include a cypress open-air cabana.

The property is crossed by an old Indian trail, which extends through the forest on either side. The backyard has been beautifully terraced with hand-cut Pennsylvania fieldstone and Vermont slate patios. The railings are handmade wrought iron, made by the same designers responsible for the ironwork at The Dakota apartment building in New York City.

The house's façade reflects the elegance inside, with both six-inch hand-chiseled Pennsylvania fieldstone and cedar shake. The cedar roof shingles are extra thick and feature copper trim, gutters and leaders. While many homes have elegant design and high quality materials, few feature the array of designs and styles that can be found here at 378 Hillview Terrace. ■

#### ENTRYWAY |

Entering the home is like being magically transported into the Far East. Tones of red richly spill into view, and statues and carvings with Asian imagery occupy shrine-like niches in the 100-year-old Tuscan brick walls. The entrance and stairway with custom carved railings are laid with slate and lit from below, providing the atmosphere of a candlelit temple. The doors leading to the basement are hand-carved light wood from Indonesia. Authentic Asian art is infused into the walls; one carving from Cambodia is 1,200-years-old. The rooms flanking the entryway elaborate on the rich colors of the Asian theme and tie in with each other.





#### KITCHEN CAPTION

The ultra-modern kitchen. When the major renovation project in 2010 occurred, the kitchen side of the house was extended outwards by about 10 feet to give the kitchen more open space and to allow for higher ceilings. The kitchen had previously been more toward the back of the house and, therefore, had no room for upward expansion. Now, however, the space is the most open and modern of the entire home. Macassar Ebony Christiana cabinets relate the kitchen's sleekness to the old-world styles and dark woods of the other public spaces in the home, while the stainless steel fixtures and appliances show us that we are most definitely in the 21st century.

The enormous center island is topped with a single slab of black-polished granite, while the rest of the countertops along the edges of the room are of silver travertine. The contrast of the light and dark countertops, drawn upwards via the dark cabinets against white walls, is highlighted even more so by the sheer amount of light that spills into the room through the walls of windows and high, white ceilings that allow the light to reflect and illuminate the entire area. This large and modern space also serves as a family living area. A gas fireplace and modern television (only revealed from the windowsill when it is remotely levitated) share the light and airiness of the room without intruding into the designated kitchen space. Two doorways lead into the dining room (one through a private butler's pantry with state-of-the-art wine coolers and a dumbwaiter), thus completing the journey.









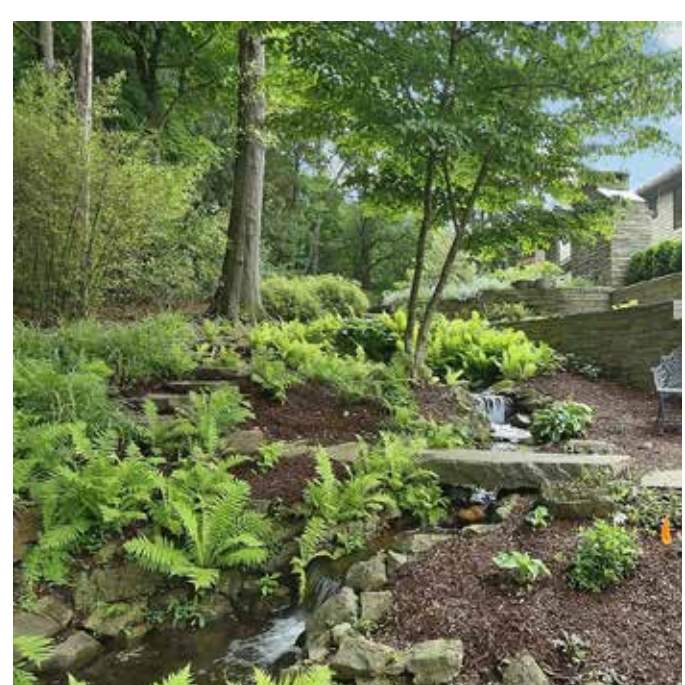






The dining room features a rich red ceiling and gold leaf lower walls to match the gold leaf design in the intricate wallpaper.





#### MASTER BATHROOM CAPTION

In the master bathroom, front and center is a pristine white oval soaking tub. His and hers sinks sit under wide spotless mirrors, and an enclosed rain-shower completes the bathing area (the other facilities are enclosed in their own private space in the corner). The light wood walls, contrasting with the white of the sinks and tub, give the room a spa-like feel, and lo and behold, there is a sauna as well, just big enough for two!

#### BAR |

The journey to the rear of the house takes us a bit forward in time but continues the aesthetic of rich and luxurious dark woods. Designed around the authentic restored Art Deco bar salvaged from a private gentleman's club in Paris and found by our homeowner in New Orleans, this room was built for entertainment. The bar-back is made of glossy mahogany and perfectly matches the bar, and the mirrors lining the back are made from antique French glass to give the bar a true period feel. The dark woods extend up across the ceiling to the wide French doors leading out onto the back patio; Biale, when designing the room, knew he wanted to be able to walk right from the bar to the outside. With the blending of dark wood, design and the one-of-a-kind bar, it's no surprise that this room sets a masculine tone.

#### WALK-IN CLOSET

The extra space created with the addition of the turret could easily be a private reading nook, and still have plenty of



*For additional photos and information on this and other ASPIRE featured homes, go to [www.aspiremetro.com](http://www.aspiremetro.com)*



