

# GARDEN ISSUE

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this page: Rows of tall fescue grass, taxus hedges and London planetrees are bisected by bluestone slab steps and stepping stones set in decomposed granite leading to the rear terrace.







INTERVIEW WITH KATHRYN HERMAN, ADAM CESANEK & JUSTIN QUINN,  
DOYLE HERMAN DESIGN ASSOCIATES | PHOTOGRAPHER NEIL LANDINO

# grace land

TRADITIONAL design gives way to CONTEMPORARY  
in this sophisticated New Canaan property





**above:** In the front yard, existing plantings and mature trees evoke a woodland feel for the approach of the property. A Munder Skiles Wharton bench is nestled into a curved freestanding wall, and the palette includes Japanese dogwood, climbing hydrangea and Japanese pachysandra.

**We featured the interiors of this home in our July/August 2017 issue, and the home was a 2018 A-List Awards finalist; now we're excited to see the beautiful landscape. How did you meet the homeowners?**

**Kathryn Herman:** The clients had seen another project we completed, and I think it was something they admired. We've been working on this project for a long time.

**Adam Cesanek:** I believe we started this back in 2013. At that point, the clients' previous home was oriented away from the road, and they were building a new home. They are a large, active family, so we were trying to create a

design that focused on an intentional connection to the outside.

**What did the property look like in the beginning?** KH: As Adam mentioned, the existing house was oriented perpendicularly to the road—which was interesting, as most homes face the street—and there really wasn't much of a landscape to speak of.

**Justin Quinn:** It looked disjointed and totally out of context with the neighborhood, but it was a good site. The clients were ready to do something special with it.



**below:** Bluestone slab steps and stepping stones create a path from the front of the property down to the side, where an outdoor spa can be found. Retaining walls match the fieldstone used on the house, and plantings include Japanese holly hedging, beds of Japanese pachysandra, red maple trees and Japanese dogwood.









**this spread:** Coming around a bed of Japanese pachysandra and Japanese holly, a decorative gravel path leads to a year-round spa crafted from bluestone. Steps feature bluestone treads with fieldstone risers, and the spa is lined by fieldstone retaining walls. Accessible from the gym in the home's lower level, the spa is outfitted with a BL bench from Atelier Vierkant.



AC: There were a lot of existing trees on the site, which was something that we and the clients wanted to integrate into the landscape. We had to be very careful when helping to site the house properly because we wanted to keep that classic, small, New England community feel. When you come onto the property, it's like entering a woodland glade; it opens up once you go through that mature forested area.

**Since the clients were demolishing their home and building new, when did you begin your work?** KH: We were brought on while the original home was still there to design a landscape plan that would marry with the plans the architect, James Schettino Architects, had for the new home. We love being involved early on, but as far as the actual implementation, a lot of our work came once the home was up and out of the ground.

AC: We worked with the architect to site some of the other programmatic

elements on the site. The clients asked for a sports barn, which we helped site away from the road to give it a bit more privacy, as well as a cabana and pool. We sited those in the backyard to help keep the space open, create a larger play lawn and respect that pool area as a separate space.

**In terms of design, what atmosphere were the clients looking to create?**

AC: The home has a fairly traditional approach to the property, and there is a stone wall as you enter. We did an oil-and-gravel stone driveway, and as you move toward the back of the property, it gets a bit funkier. We did an aerial hedge with linden trees around the pool area and other geometric plantings such as sheared taxus hedges and other boxwood globes near the covered porch areas. It's kind of this transformation as you walk through the landscape.

JQ: The clients were looking for a robust set of programmatic elements,









**above:** Off of the bluestone rear terrace, boxwood globes, taxus hedges, boxwood hedges and London planetrees offer layers of texture. **opposite:** Bluestone slab steps with shadow lines paired with bluestone cheek walls lead down to a decomposed granite path and the formal lawn. Fieldstone retaining walls elevate groupings of London planetrees and boxwood hedging; Summit Boomerang lounge chairs are grouped under the covered porch.

but they also wanted to create a sense of place, which sometimes can be challenging on that size of a site, which is two acres. They also wanted the property to feel private.

KH: And to add to that, the clients have really built a beautiful home, with the interiors and the exterior, and I think they had a chance with this new home and the property to express and incorporate all of the features they had always wanted.

**How did the architecture of the home influence the landscape design?**

AC: The home is more traditional in the front, but it has a contemporary interior, so as we moved toward the backyard, things get a bit more geometric. Boxwood parterres in the front of the property are paired with fothergilla plantings, and we did a formal planting around the parking courtyard with dogwood. Then, shifting toward the back, we created spaces that were more celebratory of the landscape, such as the perennial garden, various nodes—different meeting points around the perennial garden, such as the fire feature, and the spaces off of the covered porch—and large, elegant stone slab steps

that really help to create this concept of a large, graceful outdoor space.

KH: The rear property feels more contemporary as you go through it. We wanted to respect the architecture of the back of the home—there are a lot of large windows that look out onto the landscape, so it was important to give the clients a great-looking one.

AC: The house sits on an architectural plinth, so we extended it out past the back of the house, and that became the rear terrace. Drawing off of those architectural elements really helped us integrate everything.

JQ: There is stone on the exterior of the house, and there is a dialogue with that. We needed to pick up on that in the landscape, so we used the same stone that's on the house in the landscape.

**I see a spa tucked into the side of the home. Can you tell me about that?**

AC: The spa was definitely one of the most successful areas on the site, and we designed it to be usable year-round. We visited the property last year when snow was on the ground, and you could see that people had run out there in their bare feet and jumped in.





**above:** Across the formal lawn, a lush perennial garden is full of blue cornflowers, 'Caradonna' sage, 'White Giant' alliums, 'Husker Red' beardtongue, 'Hummelo' betony and 'Merrill' magnolias. **opposite:** Off a corner of the rear terrace, boxwood globes in various sizes are an elegant point of interest. Taxus hedging, boxwood hedging and a yellowwood tree round out the view.

KH: The spa is accessible from the gym in the lower level, so the idea is that after you work out, you can dash outside and enjoy the spa.

AC: The wing walls for that area extend off of the building architecture, and we had to work closely with the architect to make sure those could be pinned to the foundation. If you look up toward the covered porch, it's about fifteen feet above the spa, so there were a lot of things to consider in regard to grading and how those retaining walls came together. But the clients were really happy with how it turned out.

**The rear terrace has several entertaining spaces. Was that important to the clients?** AC: Yes, and there are these little moments throughout the property. There's a spot off of the rear covered porch, adjacent to the office, with a few lounge chairs where you could go out and enjoy a cocktail. There are other lounge and dining areas on the rear terrace as well as a contemporary fire feature at the terminus of the perennial garden.



**Walk me through the landscape once you step off of the rear terrace.**

AC: As you come down, you're met with a formal lawn panel surrounded by steel edging and decomposed granite, which was an interesting choice for us for the surface material because it gives a different texture. The bluestone stepping stones with decomposed granite reinforce the central axis that runs from the front door all the way to the back of the property. Those stepping stones then go through the perennial garden, which has a lot of different varieties as well as boxwood evergreens for structure. To step down onto the larger play lawn, there are large bluestone slab steps set into that bank with tall grass that we have cut once or twice a year. As you follow that across, there is an espalier apple tree centered on the back of the sports barn.

**And then we arrive at the pool. How did that area come together?**

AC: We were trying to create a larger play lawn off of the back of the terrace, so we moved the pool to the eastern-most side of the property. The two pool houses and pergola are centered on the pool, and to make it feel more like its own space, we surrounded it with an aerial linden hedge as well as some taxus hedges. There is lighting for the trees and a sound system down there as well—the clients were really pleased with it.









**What drove your decisions regarding the overall planting palette?**

AC: We were definitely interested in seasonality. That was the choice for using some of the dogwoods in the front as well as the fothergilla, which provide great fall foliage. The perennial garden offers a lot of different colors, with shades of white giving way to shades of purple, with an evergreen structure. Many different layers make up the planting—a tree canopy, evergreen hedging, evergreen shapes, deciduous shrubs, perennials—and it was that thoughtful combination that made the palette come together.

JQ: The overall style is clean punctuated by moments of juxtaposition between really clean hedging and either soft perennial colors or ornamental grass. It varies as you move through the property.

**How did you decide where to use retaining walls and stone walls?**

AC: The architecture helped inform some of the placement of the stone walls. One wall that we think was really successful, and that helped define the entire rear terrace and perennial garden, comes off of the southwestern corner of the house—it eventually turns into the wall near the spa. We really just pulled from the architecture—it must have been fifty to sixty feet—to carve

out the spaces that were closest to the house. In the front, there was an existing freestanding stone wall adjacent to the roadway that we rebuilt, and we inlaid a reclaimed piece of granite, carved the home address into it and painted it black. It really helped enhance the arrival experience.

**Do any of you have a favorite part of the landscape?** AC: The perennial garden—I really fell in love with it. Kathryn had a huge hand in helping the design of that come along, and she introduced a lot of very exquisite plant varieties, which speaks to the depths of her knowledge in plant design.

KH: That's very nice of Adam to say. I would say I love the perennial garden too. There's just something about all of the different textures, shapes, layers and colors, and the fact that it spans every season. Even in the winter, with the massive boxwoods in it, it holds a really interesting form and shape.

JQ: One of the things I'm most proud of that our team did is that we packed a lot of program into the site, yet it doesn't feel that way—it feels graceful, gracious and spacious. It feels right.

**What feedback have you gotten from the clients?** KH: My sense is that

**below left:** Bluestone slab steps lit by copper Hunza Twig Lites lead down from the perennial garden to the expansive play lawn below. Taxus hedges, 'White Giant' alliums and 'Caradonna' sage can be glimpsed above. **below right:** In a corner of the terrace, a Cornelian cherry tree makes a statement in a zinc oval planter by Domani. **opposite:** At one end of the perennial garden, a set of Kettal Basket chairs cozies up to a modern Paloform Bento fire feature set on decomposed granite. 'Caradonna' sage, blue cornflowers and 'White Giant' alliums provide a background of color.





**this page:** The perennial garden is bordered by steel edging, punctuated by boxwood globes, and lit by copper Hunza Twig Lites. **opposite:** A row of Barlow Tyrie Capri lounge chairs are ready for relaxation on the blue-stone pool terrace.

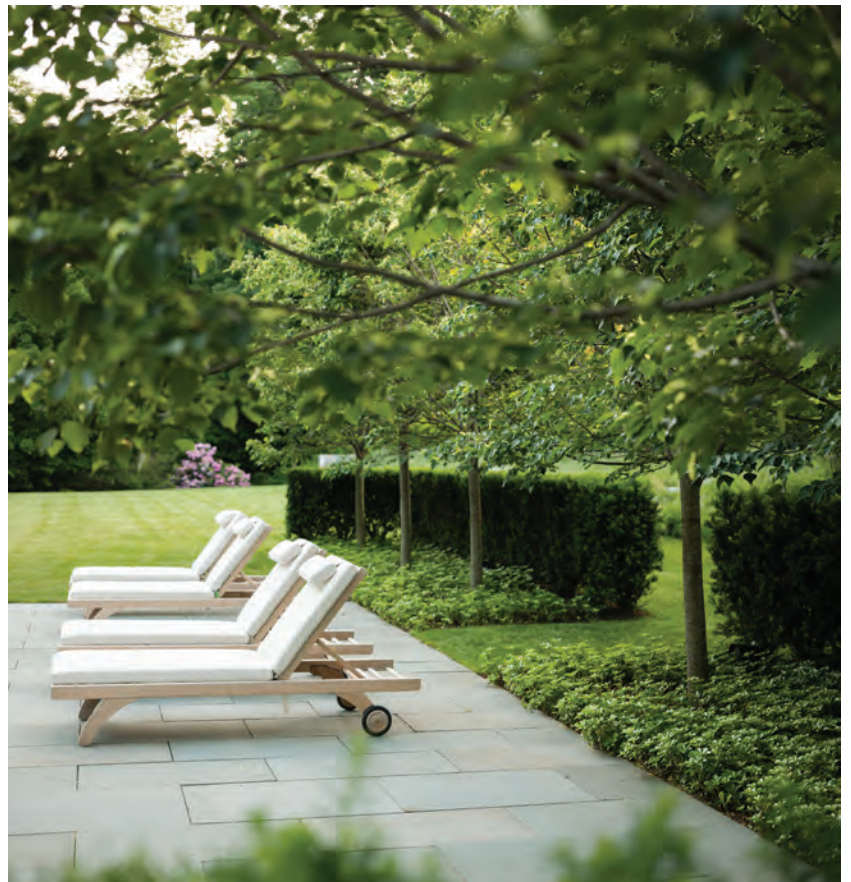







“Many **DIFFERENT LAYERS** make up the planting,  
and it was that thoughtful **COMBINATION** that  
made the palette come together.”

—ADAM CESANEK





A photograph of a modern outdoor pool area. In the foreground, a wooden lounge chair with a white cushion is partially visible. The pool is a long, narrow, rectangular structure with a light-colored stone deck. Beyond the pool is a well-maintained green lawn. In the background, there is a dense forest of tall, leafy trees, with sunlight filtering through the leaves, creating a warm, golden glow. A white building is partially visible on the right side of the image.

“The rear property feels more **CONTEMPORARY** as you go through it. We wanted to respect the architecture of the back of the home—there are a lot of large windows that look out onto the landscape, so it was important to give the clients a **GREAT-LOOKING** one.”

—KATHRYN HERMAN





**this page:** Sited on the eastern-most side of the landscape, the twenty-by-forty-foot pool is framed by a littleleaf linden aerial hedge, taxus hedges and Japanese pachysandra. The setting sun can be glimpsed through the property's existing wood line.





**this page:** Tucked under the pergola, a pair of Kettal Basket chairs flank a Henry Hall Flow side table in front of the poolside fireplace. The pool house was designed by James Schettino Architects.

**opposite:** Centered on the sports barn, an espalier apple tree provides plenty of fruit for holiday pies.





they're deeply proud of what they've created—with the house, the interiors and the landscape. I get the sense that they use everything, and that it's really well loved. They had the house on a local annual kitchen and home tour, and I think it was so nice of them to open up their home to show people what they've done.

**How does it feel as designers to know the clients are so proud of the end result?** KH: It's very gratifying; there's no greater compliment. It also speaks to what great clients they were and how trusting they were, and how much

we've enjoyed working with them.

AC: Absolutely—we're on cloud nine. It's what we sign up for when we get into this. It's always great to see people enjoying their landscapes. That's the best part. —*INTERVIEW BY LAUREN FETTERMAN*

**Resources:**

Landscape designer: Doyle Herman Design Associates, Greenwich; 203-869-2900; [dhda.com](http://dhda.com)

Residence architect: James Schettino Architects, New Canaan; 203-966-5552; [schettinoarchitects.com](http://schettinoarchitects.com)