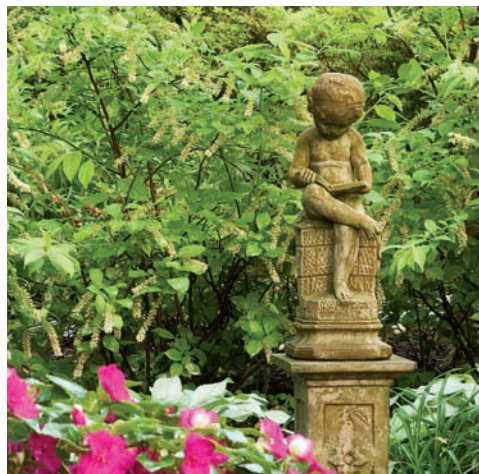


habitat

outdoor

retreats



MELISSA CLARK



An arbor-shaded loggia is an ideal spot for entertaining.

Potomac Mediterranean Retreat

It took her son's wedding to get busy anesthesiologist Charise Petrovitch to redo her Potomac yard. Although she'd lived in the house for 15 years, raising two sons (and paying their tuitions) took precedence over a major yard renovation. Then, faced with the prospects of out-of-town guests and a pre-wedding brunch at her home, Charise decided to bite the bullet. "My yard was ugly. It was very cold. The back of the house looked like a railroad station," she says.

The landscaping is a beautiful example of outdoor garden rooms, which play off the house itself to create stunning views

from inside. Each of the five guest rooms in her home has a different view of the garden, a serendipitous surprise that delights Charise. In this way, the yard becomes even more a part of the landscape of the house. Where there were once aluminum-framed sliding doors leading to outside, there are now heavy, oversized wooden doors, which coordinate with the dark wood of the arbor off the family room. The garden has been created to make the outdoors functional as well as beautiful. There is a spa garden, a loggia that serves as a gathering place with a built-in grill, a kitchen



The colorful, sunny kitchen garden.

COURTESY BOTANICAL DECORATORS

ing at conferences. During those trips, she often stayed in resorts and wanted to replicate that peaceful, visually pleasing “spa feel” in her own backyard. Inspired by the gardens of the Mediterranean, she decided to replace her pool with one that looked more natural and more a part of the landscape. Now the pool is seen through a scrim of grasses—making it appear to be a natural body of water.

Morgan Washburn of Botanical Decorators helped Charise create her garden and its Mediterranean touches, using a variety of indigenous plantings, including deodar cedars, bottlebrush buckeye, winterberry, oakleaf hydrangea, cone-flowers and coreopsis. Because the garden faces south, Mediterranean accents work perfectly. Desert Gold flagstone gives the loggia an exotic look. Containers on the patio hold blue and white plants—such as graceful tree hy-

drangeas—to lend an air of coolness and shade from the south-facing garden. In the kitchen garden, however, which the family sees every day, the colors are bright and festive. Charise’s husband, Paolo Petrovitch, is the family cook and enjoys the assortment of herbs—oregano, parsley, basil, sage, thyme—from the kitchen garden.

Most striking is the circular lawn off the loggia, introduced by a checkerboard paving pattern. Washburn says the circular patch of grass is “an archetypal shape that resonates.” The powerful design element can also function as a stage for a party tent. A series of urns planted with bright red flowers are set in a row around the periphery of the lawn. Nearby, a gothic fountain gurgling in the center of the patio evokes ancient, sultry days and provides a soothing respite for party guests, friends and family.

garden, a pool, and a large, formal circular lawn that Charise calls “drop-dead simple, but stunning.”

For work, Charise has traveled around the world attending seminars and speak-

Gaithersburg Oasis

Pat and Amy Krause had always talked about installing a pool. When they decided to make their dream come true three years ago, they ended up with a spectacular retreat that makes Pat misty-eyed. "I grew up here in Gaithersburg," he says. "I never thought I'd end up in a place like this." From the front, the Krauses' house just "looks like a plain house," says Pat. "Around back, it's this oasis. It's beautiful."

Pat knew he wanted it to be unique and to look as natural as possible—not just a typical pool stuck into the ground. "I like rocks, I like plants, I like water," he says. And, he wanted to hear the soothing sound of running water so he contacted Browning Pools to install a free-form pool.



Pat and Amy Krause's pool creates a unique, natural landscape.

COURTESY BOTANICAL DECORATORS

Stephen Wlodarczyk of Botanical Decorators worked with the Krauses to make the landscape surrounding the pool as natural as possible. The focal point is a dramatic Full Moon maple, perched on an "island" in the middle of the pool and uplift for gorgeous nighttime views. The maple sits on rocks over two waterfalls, which provide the soothing sound of water the couple loves and look as though they sprang from natural rock formations.

Surrounding the pool is a profusion of plants: crepe myrtle, black-eyed Susan, St. John's Wort, lavender, iris, Russian sage and a variety of grasses. The cool blues of the lavender and sage tie in perfectly with blue pots placed throughout the garden. A row of birches keeps the pool private. Stepping stones across the spa area give the feel of a natural hot spring.

Pat says they wanted to design their yard in keeping with their surroundings. Their seven-acre lot borders on a flood plain, which gives the yard a naturally wooded backdrop. "I wander out after work or on a weekend. You can get lost out there, it's so beautiful," Pat says. The proximity to nature opens the yard up to visitors such as deer, fox and squirrels and the garden's flowers attract lots of bumblebees and butterflies. "It's like a little symphony out there all the time," Pat says. In keeping with the natural feel of the garden, the walkways, walls and patios are made of stone.

Construction proved challenging, but doable. Pat wanted the waterfall to run toward the house so he could see it running into the pool, but the grade of the yard sloped away from the house. No problem. Wlodarczyk regraded the entire yard and camouflaged the remaining slope with plants. Beyond the pool, Pat has recently installed a putting green. He says that the couple owns a condo in Fenwick, Del.,—once a weekend getaway. "Now we just stay here," he says. "We have it all in our own backyard." ■

Karen A. Watkins is contributing editor of Bethesda Magazine.