



Keeping the View

Retain your privacy or exploit expansive views—is it possible to do both? With professional help, the answer for this family was yes.

Story By **Michelle
Byrne Walsh**

Photography By **Linda
Oyama Bryan**

Sometimes the best thing about a landscape project is what you didn't add to it. This family wanted a pool, an entertainment space, an outdoor fireplace, an entry courtyard and a fence. But they also wanted to keep their backyard open and preserve their pastoral golf course views.



The home was nestled within a golf course community teeming with mature oaks, so the biggest challenge for designers from The Garden Consultants, Inc. in Highland Park was to complement those verdant views.

The second challenge was to create a traditional but casual landscape for extended family gatherings that also offered four-season interest. Incorporating low-maintenance plantings that included many native plants was another quest.

"This project was rather large in scope. It has a pool, a large lawn, extensive plantings, custom fencing and multiple spaces for outdoor dining and entertainment," explains David Migdal, president and designer at The Garden Consultants. "But our goal was to create a landscape that was understated so that it would preserve and not overwhelm the view."

Migdal and project landscape architect Deborah Samyn laid out the landscape in four basic areas: the pool area, the terrace, the entry courtyard and the formal lawn area, which features colorful perennial gardens.

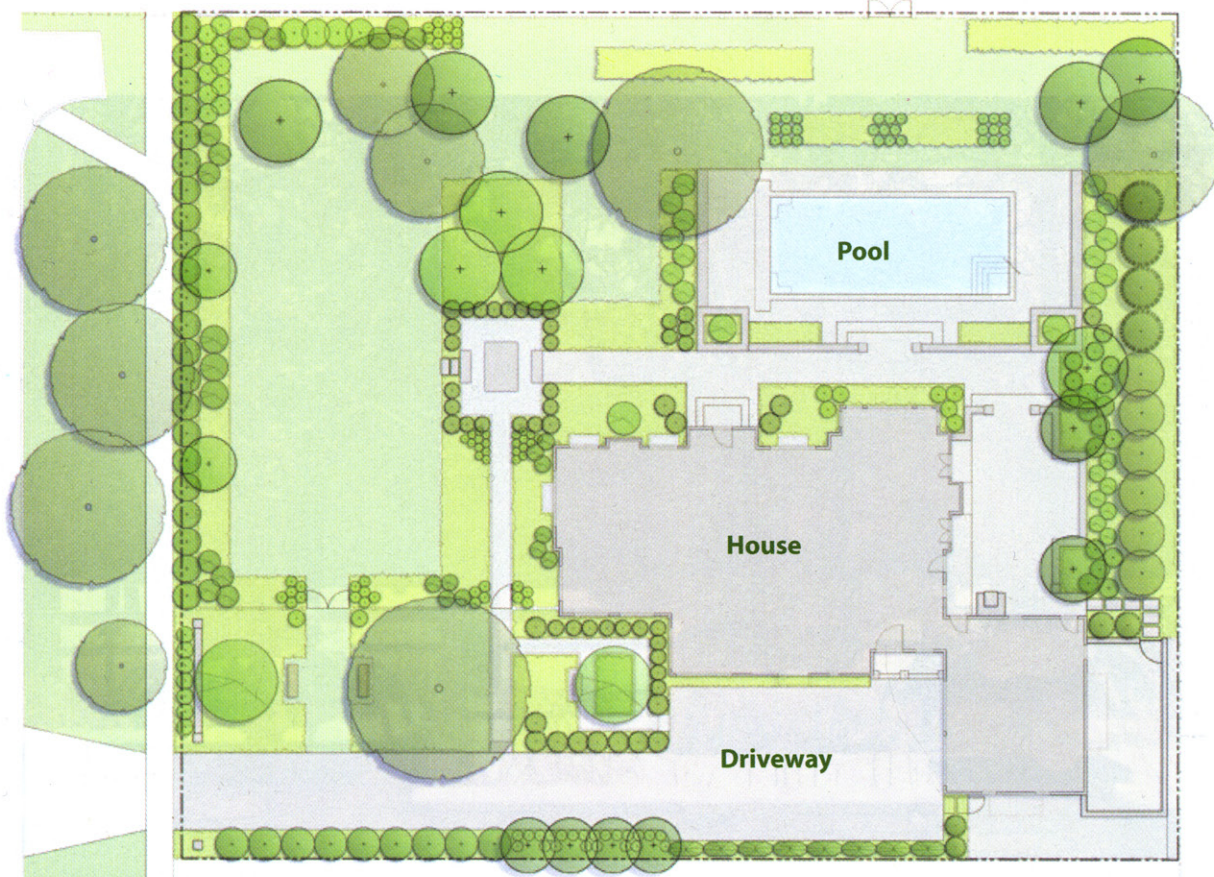
By virtue of its size, the pool could have been a very prominent feature of the design. "So we sunk the pool below the grade of the house and centered it on the large bay window," says Migdal. "From inside the home, this allows

This backyard had beautiful views of the adjacent golf course, so designers augmented the vistas by adding landscape "bones" with hardscapes, trees and perennials that are left to stand all winter.

the homeowners to look out over the pool at the golf course. Sinking the pool also made the space very cozy. Low walls and hedges enclose the pool to make it more private, while still preserving the long views."

Large planters on the pool's low stone walls and the deck provide pops of seasonal color, and they are changed or refreshed three or four times a year. "We used succulents and tropicals to create unusual plant combinations that complement the pool environment," notes Migdal. "We focused on foliage color and texture rather than on flower color. We might pair big leaves with the smaller fine-textured plants. For instance, in one container we used Jerusalem sage (*Phlomis*) with a yellow sedum, which is striking. We used red cordyline, lemon thyme and a reddish sedum in another container."

To meet local codes for the in-ground pool, the team also had to install a fence around the property. But to ensure that the beautiful views remained, the fence had to be all but see-through. "We created a contemporary version of an equestrian fence," says Migdal. "It is made of



A Selection of Grasses and Perennials Used

Perennials

- *Adenophora confusa*
- *Alchemilla* 'Auslese'
- *Amsonia hubrichtii*
- *Calamintha nepeta* subsp. *nepeta*
- *Chelone* 'Hot Lips'
- *Cimicifuga* 'James Compton'
- *Cimicifuga* 'White Pearl'
- *Echinacea tenneeseensis*
- *Eryngium* 'Sapphire Blue'
- *Eupatorium* 'Little Joe'
- *Geranium* 'Johnson's Blue'
- *Geranium macrorrhizum* 'Bevan's Variety'
- *Geranium phaeum* 'Mourning Widow'
- *Nepeta* 'Walker's Low'
- *Phlox* 'Nora Leigh'
- *Salvia* 'Blue Hill'
- *Salvia* 'Purple Rain'
- *Chasmanthium latifolium*
- *Hakonechloa macra* 'Aureola'
- *Imperata* 'Red Baron'
- *Molinia* 'Moorflamme'
- *Sesleria autumnalis*
- *Sporobolus heterolepis*

Grasses

- *Calamagrostis* 'Karl Foerster'
- *Carex* 'Bowles Golden'
- *Carex* 'Ice Dance'
- *Carex pensylvanica*



"The structure of a garden is most apparent in the winter," notes David Migdal. "The herbaceous plantings are gone and you are left with hardscapes and woody plants." When you create rooms with hardscapes and plantings, you create a context and a setting—and a four-season space.





Memories of late summer—here you can see the informal but structured plantings around the pool. The ornamental grasses, which are left to stand over winter, and the variety of trees and shrubs are structural stars in the fall and winter.

cedar and welded wire mesh. The framing detail and caps dress it up, and the cedar will weather without staining or painting. It is a clean and simple design, and it is unobtrusive. The property is about an acre and a half, so there was a lot of fencing involved."

The privacy factor is boosted by perennials that are planted near—but not against—the low walls as well as the fence. "There are three overlapping bands of perennials set into the lawn opposite the pool," Migdal explains. "They create a screen but also allow the kids to run through the grass. The series of bands and taller perennials give the pool privacy without creating a solid barrier between the garden and the landscape beyond."

This lawn and garden area also has four-season interest with loads of spring bulbs, late spring perennials, summer perennials and fall color from trees, shrubs and ornamental grasses. Winter interest is provided by seedheads of sea holly, bee balm and other perennials left standing, evergreen spruce trees at the property line and the interesting bark and structure

of ornamental trees. "This is a relatively low-maintenance garden," Migdal says. "The perennials we chose require minimal special care or supplemental watering. We cut the bulbs back after they flower, but from there on the maintenance is not too fussy."

From the pool area you enter a courtyard that links the open formal lawn with a stone terrace alcove, which features an outdoor hearth and built-in grill. The courtyard, which features a central urn with bluestone stepping stones and crushed bluestone paths, is a transitional walking area, and the designers tried to keep it simple and functional, yet compelling.

Upon entering the terrace alcove, visitors are invited to sit in plush outdoor sofas and chairs by the huge outdoor hearth and casual dining areas. Here the large extended family enjoys relaxing, barbecuing and soaking up the sights and smells of the garden.

The landscape's built-in structure is the main reason it is functional and attractive year round. The fireplace wards away chilly fall nights. The trees, ornamental grasses and



Above: Bands of white camassia (*Camassia leichtlinii* 'Alba') with 'Johnson's Blue' geranium within the lawn create a private feeling in the pool area and provide areas for the homeowners to stroll and experience the plants. **Right:** Containers of Jerusalem sage with *Sedum rupestre* 'Angelina' and lemon thyme visually break up the hardscape and offer definition to the space.

stones endure winter snows. Thousands of bulbs cheer on the coming spring. The pool cools hot summer days.

"We created rooms within the landscape, and in addition to the plantings, these rooms carry the garden through the seasons. Well-designed spaces create a context and setting within which the garden can change. Materials were carefully selected to complement the architecture of the house as well as the site—here we used a simple palette of natural stone and wood. The success of a four-season garden relies on strong building blocks," Migdal explains.

"Ultimately, we preserved and complemented the family's view of the golf course while also giving them a pool with bit of privacy and a place to entertain family and guests," he says, summing up. "Everything about this project was geared toward that. The scope of the project was large, but the site was so special that we needed to celebrate it. It is what made this project unique." 🌿

