

New Canaan Darrien + ROWAYTON

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REAL ESTATE

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tips

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STAND OUT
AND **SELL FAST**

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life and still look fabulous

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How to master this year's
supremely feminine style

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Local designers reimagine
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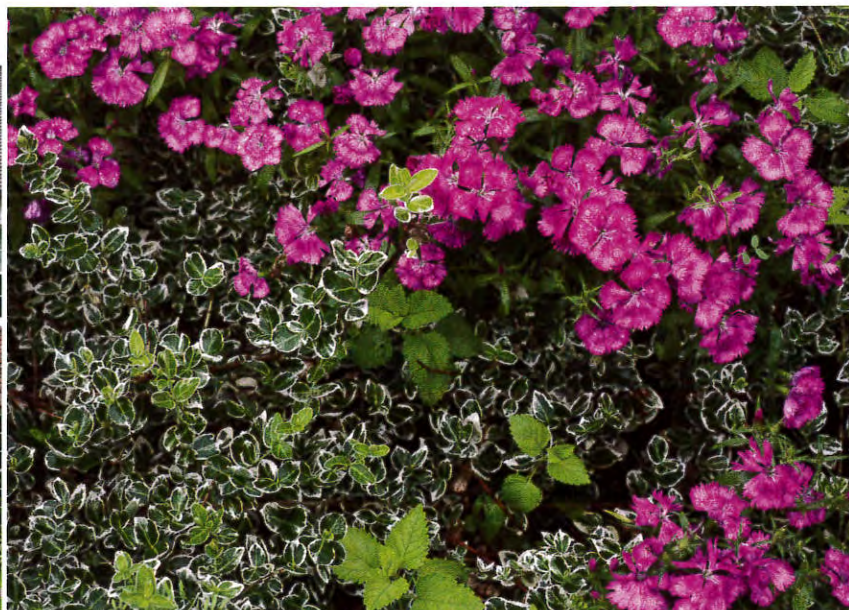


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NATURAL ARTISTRY

Manhattan transplants nurture a budding romance with **a lush garden in New Canaan**



Rare is the property that encompasses all the very best features of country living: woodland, meadow and flowing water, all surrounding a house of the right size and scale. But when a couple from Manhattan took up the hunt for a place in New Canaan a few years ago, the stars had aligned perfectly because they found just such a parcel.

The husband recalls his first visit. “Our agent really understood us, and when she brought us here, she served lunch on the patio,” he says. From that location, the couple could hear the sounds of the nearby Five Mile River, and the songs of the many birds that take refuge in the adjoining conservation land. The place seemed to have it all, including a short commute to the town’s shopping district and the train to New York. They were smitten. The home’s previous owners had been dedicated and thoughtful gardeners. Working with their

sloping parcel, they preserved the wooded area that adjoins a quiet country road, plus the deep shade and native plants that enhance a lovely ramble located just steps from the classic brick Georgian house they built. The previous owners also designed garden beds, as well as hardscape elements for dining, entertaining and pure enjoyment of the natural setting.

Once the new owners acquired the acreage, what remained for them to add were the elements that would appeal to their own tastes. They began by carefully paring back some of the plantings that had grown large over the course of the first owners’ tenure, giving them the opportunity to enhance the landscape’s attractive features even further. This thoughtful pruning exercise created some stunning reveals, opening the property’s boundaries to a neighboring waterfall and bridge, as well as to a forever-wild woodland that remains in the



OPPOSITE: Colorful blooms and a pretty trellis enhance the home's brick facade. THIS PAGE: A fieldstone walkway leads to a path through a natural woodland landscape. Large perennial beds filled with traditional favorites like peonies surround the home and its outdoor entertaining areas. The pool house/greenhouse fills a dual role for tending garden and guests.






care of a land trust. By borrowing these green views, they were able to expand the visual breadth of their parcel so that it appears even larger than its two-plus acres.

“We peeled back areas of old growth around the property, trimming some of the existing specimen trees and shrubs, and removing invasive plants and vines along the boundaries. As we did this, the owners could see that their landscape was even better than they had realized,” says Michael Walker, a horticulturist with Hoffman Landscapes in Wilton, who has worked with the couple over the past several years. As part of the editing process, Walker’s crew addressed the property’s collection of perennials. Part of his team is dedicated to the maintenance of these dependable plants, splitting, dividing and moving them as necessary. “Every landscape has a pulse,” says Walker, “so you need to keep things in check.”

With the basics attended to, it was time to bring in a few elements to complement the landscape’s already elegant bones. Some new plantings were in order.

From the road, after passing through a gate, the driveway’s descending curvature encourages a leisurely pace by car or foot. Woodland greenery—ferns and other shade-loving plants, as well as shrubs with great texture and foliage color—creates a tranquil introduction to the property. “The approach is very attractive,” says the husband. “It feels like coming into a new world, a sanctuary.” As you get closer to the house, you can’t help but notice the row of ornamental pear trees—

A lush green garden scene. In the foreground, a dark brown wooden picket fence runs across the frame. Behind the fence is a well-maintained green lawn. A curved flower bed with various plants and flowers is visible. In the middle ground, a wooden bench sits on the lawn. The background is filled with a dense forest of tall trees, creating a sense of depth and privacy. The overall atmosphere is peaceful and natural.

“When we peeled back areas of old growth, the owners could see that the landscape was even better than they had realized.”





OPPOSITE: Beautiful specimen trees, beds of flowers and herbs, and a fragrant, flowering wisteria atop the poolside pergola encircle the home's main entertaining area. THIS PAGE: The river, a waterfall, and an elegant bridge are part of the view to an adjacent landscape, which can be admired from the owners' property.

part of the couple's landscape efforts—standing sentry as a border for the woodland garden. “One of my favorite times of year is in spring, when the trees are in bloom,” says the wife. “Seeing the lush, flowering row of them makes me smile every single time I drive or walk past.”

Other installations include lush plantings of hydrangea. White “Annabelle” and the softly tinted “Nikko Blue” make a classic New England garden statement with their large, showy blooms. Numerous varieties of hosta enhance the beds in shady spots.

On one side of the driveway, a small stone walkway leads to a path that meanders through a dense carpet of greenery; the comforting sound of water flowing from a stream that passes under the road and over a small waterfall adds to the aural and visual pleasures of this very natural garden room. Take the opposite path from the driveway toward the house and you'll notice a pair of stone Italian greyhounds—a tribute to the couple's much-loved pet—standing at attention at the front door. Walk a bit farther and a garden gate opens onto more beautiful landscaping at the back of the house.

In the backyard there's a brick greenhouse, poolhouse and pool, dining patio, outdoor kitchen and pergola; all are surrounded by garden beds that burst with color throughout spring and summer, and

shaded by beautiful specimen trees. The elevated placement of the terraced seating areas provides pretty views. While the structure of the landscape was in place when they acquired the property, the owners have made many additions to an already rich collection of plants. They also rearranged the interiors of the house so that the garden could be better appreciated from inside.

“We thought it was important to give the outside a place inside,” says the husband. “Even in winter, with a fire roaring in the fireplace, the outside can still be a part of our environment.”

In addition to a floral mix that creates a continual feast of color and fragrance throughout the growing season, the wife, an avid cook, cultivates herbs. Mint, chive, lemon thyme and more are tucked in among other plants in a bed opposite the outdoor kitchen. On a stretch of land that borders the Five Mile River, the couple is adding extensive perennial beds in the center of a broad lawn—a rolling green space that is their pup's favorite place to run.

When asked to pick a beloved spot on the property, neither spouse can name just one. Their contentment with the landscape is apparent. Says the wife, “Anywhere in the gardens where my husband, my dog, and I are together becomes my favorite spot.” 