

captivating cottage mood

A cottage garden, brick path and picket fence came from an Englishman's heart

The Sag Harbor, New York, site presented unusual challenges. It was 70 percent in the open and 30 percent in the woods; it had considerable elevation changes and was too much in view of neighboring houses and a busy road, which meant considerable noise. As he usually does, landscape architect John Cowen designed a number of possible layouts for the entire property.

These included a variety of garden rooms, landscape elements and architectural features—a cottage garden, lawns, brick paths, a driveway, a deck off the house, a raised pool with sitting area, a privet hedge in front, and a retaining wall that winds from the front to the back and all around the property. Evergreens were used to screen nearby houses, and additional plantings were added to absorb noise from a busy

road. One of Cowen's favorite features is the cottage garden he designed at the front of the house, where there had been nothing. The style of "organized chaos," as he defines it, reflects his English heritage. One reason he likes including this genre here, he says, is that it can help make the entrance very warm and welcoming, a place of beauty to view from the outside and inside of the home. A curving brick walkway leads from

the driveway to the front door and veers off to the cottage garden, which is enclosed by a white picket fence that adds charm and protects plantings from hungry deer. The 4'-wide path allows two to stroll together. The garden shows off most of its color in summer, which appeals to the homeowners, who use it as a weekend/summer home. Cowen kept the palette mostly to pastel blues, purples, pinks and whites for visual clarity.

behind the scenes

Landscape architect: John Cowen, ASLA, John Cowen Landscape Associates Ltd., 44 Tyndall Road, Sag Harbor, NY 11963, 631-725-3410, www.jcowenlandscape.com

Architect: R.S. Granoff Architects

Builder: Charles Rich LLC

Masonry: Stone Quest Corporation

Main plants used: *Buxus sempervirens* 'Suffruticosa' (Edging Boxwood); *Prunus serrulata* 'Kwanzan' (Kwanzan Cherry); *Nepeta mussini* (Catmint); *Pennisetum alopecuroides* (Fountain Grass); *Spiraea x bumalda* 'Anthony Waterer' (Anthony Waterer Spiraea)

Zones: 5–7

Challenges: Locating the swimming pool into a hillside; finding the right proportion of materials for the garden areas and different styles the homeowners wanted

Solution: An organized but slightly chaotic garden to create a warm, welcoming entry

Favorite solution: The cottage garden represents the designer's English heart



Photography: Ron Papageorge

"Organized chaos," as landscape architect John Cowen calls it, is typical of English cottage gardens. This yard with its brick path and picket fence, above and left, reflects the designer's British heritage.

Pick the right fence and the best plantings

A fence should reflect the architectural style of the home and the garden it encloses. For the cottage garden here, planted close to its cedar-shingle home, landscape designer John Cowen felt a classic picket fence would work best. His tip for what makes it look so inviting: Groupings of plants are large and lush and add a sense of continuity. "You need large groupings of a single kind rather than a little bit of this and that," he explains. The garden requires tender loving care but not excessively so; weeding, deadheading and pruning of roses are sufficient.