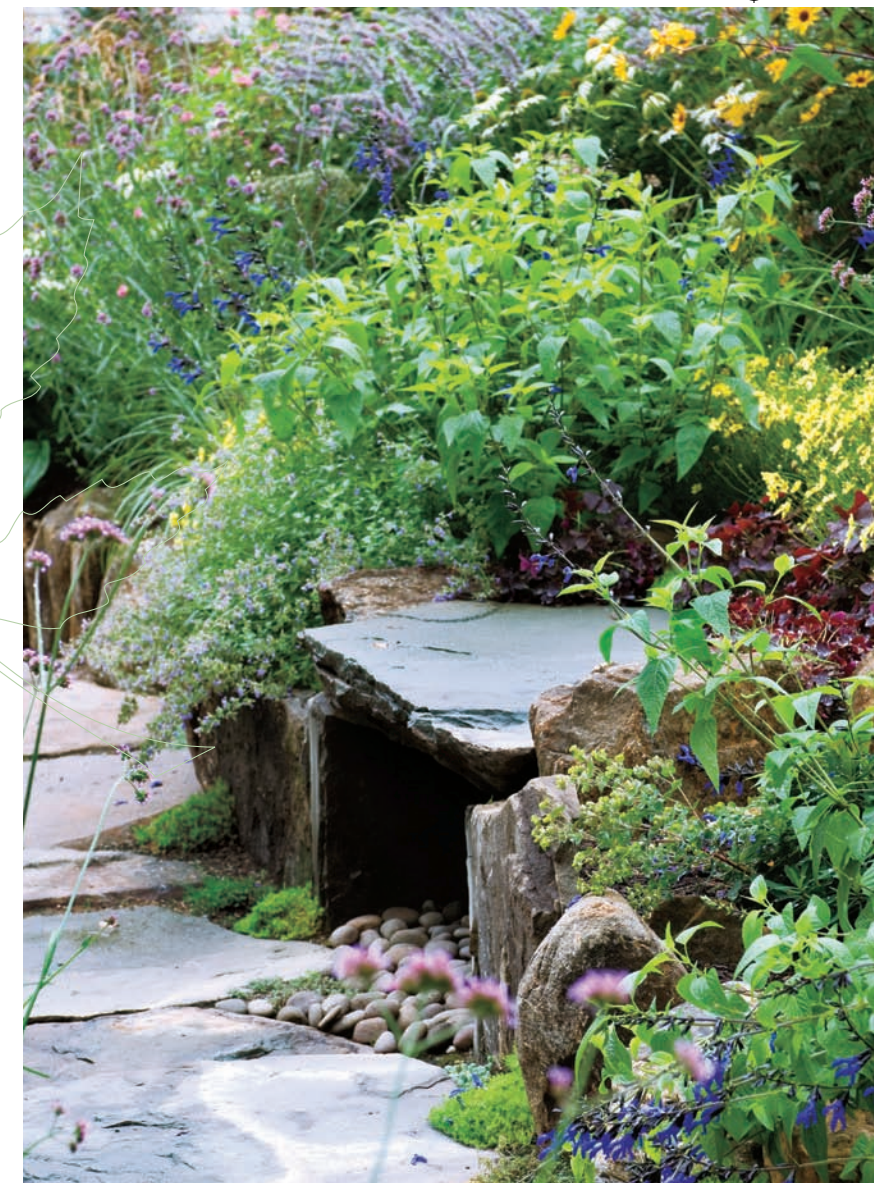


A lush garden scene featuring a waterfall cascading over a stone wall. The wall is constructed from large, stacked stones and is covered in moss and various plants, including tall grasses, ferns, and large-leafed plants. A Buddha statue is visible in the lower left corner. The overall atmosphere is serene and natural.

BUDDHA DREAMS

A ROCK-STREWN SLOPE BECOMES AN OASIS OF CALM FOR AN INDIAN BRONXVILLE FAMILY
BY JANE STUART | PHOTOGRAPHS BY KAREN BUSSOLINI

Falling Water | Robert Welsh cleaned up and replanted an overgrown rock garden (PREVIOUS SPREAD) adding texture and color with, among others, yellow-green Japanese forest grass, Lady's Mantle, Coral Bell and purple ajuga, as well as a rare rhododendron. **Bench Warranted** | A stone seat in the prairie garden (RIGHT), says Welsh, "is to encourage anybody strolling by to take a moment from our rusted urban life to simply sit and watch a butterfly or a hummingbird sip nectar." **Guiding Lights** | By a rear entryway, Arts & Crafts-style lanterns sit atop a stone wall (MIDDLE RIGHT), plectranthus cascading between them, imparting an Asian feel. **Path-ological** | The prairie garden also features a stone path (FAR RIGHT), fragrant with creeping thyme and scotch moss, as well as wild-looking plantings of grasses, sedum, moonbeam coreopsis and white coneflowers. **Soft Touch** | Welsh made the potentially forbidding entrance (BOTTOM RIGHT), with its imposing stone lions, more welcoming by deploying a quiet palette of green and white. On either side of the door are potted hydrangea 'Tardiva' standards whose white cone-shaped blossoms turn dusty pink in the fall. **What's the Buzz?** | Many of the plantings in the prairie garden are designed to attract butterflies, hummingbirds and bees, like this veronicastrum 'Virginicum,' also called Culver's Root (BOTTOM LEFT) where a bee is hard at work on some blossoms. See Resources.



Borrow a little from English garden design, add some Japanese and other Asian touches and throw in a dash of American prairie. Sound like a horticultural hodgepodge?

Not in the capable hands of landscape designer Robert Welsh of Westover Landscape Design in Tarrytown, who combined those elements to create a harmonious Bronxville garden worthy of its official name: Shanti, from the Sanskrit word for "peace."

The garden's owners, who are originally from India, wanted a tranquil retreat to share with family members who visit each summer to escape monsoon season. "A pleasure garden in the Indian sense is all about sensual delight, appealing not only to the eye but to the sense of smell," says Welsh. "And because they wanted a lot of color and fragrance in July and August, the focus had to be on late bloomers."

The house, a handsome 1910 stone Tudor, sits amid mature trees—white pines, Norway maples and a graceful old cherry. Already in place were a large flagstone dining terrace (complete with tandoor oven for Indian meals) and a mahogany pergola. A waterfall trickled down to a small fishpond next to the terrace. Otherwise, the one-acre plot presented a challenge. "The property is on a tremendous slope, and there was quite a bit of rubble and debris left by the mason who built the dining terrace," says Welsh. "It looked like the Flintstones had lived there."

Welsh began by reclaiming the overgrown rock garden by the waterfall, thinning iris and sweet flag and filling gaps with gold Japanese forest grass, each clump flopping over the stones like a little waterfall itself, then added spring color with several thousand crocuses, daffodils and tulips. For interest, he included a dwarf Japanese maple and a prize collectible rhododendron.

Peace would remain elusive, however, unless Welsh tackled the sloping rock ledge. "We brought in 160 yards of fill and top soil, and about five tons of stone and boulders to create planting terraces and retaining walls," he says, as well as more fill to create an





elegant broad “staircase”—it measures 20 feet wide—of grassy treads and stone risers. Now, the dining terrace overlooks a formal garden, where lushly planted beds of specimen magnolia, hydrangea, Asiatic lilies, caryopteris, peonies and irises surround a pristine rectangular lawn edged in stone pavers. Lamb’s ears create a silvery velvet ribbon hemming in the beds.

Welsch screened the garage with a zigzagging row of Wichita blue juniper, adding textural contrast with a *Cryptomeria japonica*, or Japanese temple tree. “It’s a sacred tree, planted near Buddhist temples in Kyoto,” he notes. “It’s a wonderful, underused conifer for our region—exotic, with lovely texture and an ornate seed pod that looks like a little carved piece of dark wood with intricate cutouts.”

Beyond the rectangular terrace, the grass “staircase” leads past a shade garden to the lower lawn where dogwoods, hydrangea, rhododendrons and heptacodium flourish, as well as one of Welsch’s favorites: bear’s breeches, an acanthus with spectacular three-foot-high purple and white flower spikes.

An imposing black granite Buddha sits on a marble slab overlooking the shade

Descending Order | Using some 160 yards of fill and top soil, Welsch created an elegant 20-foot-wide “staircase” (OPPOSITE) with grass treads and stone risers to lead visitors more gently and elegantly down the slope to the garden. To the left of the staircase, behind a densely planted perennial border, is a shade garden. **Om Shanti** | The black granite Buddha statue overlooking the shade garden (ABOVE) may seem serene now, but “moving it and placing it was quite an experience,” remembers Welsch, who says it took “seven strong, burly landscapers half a day to roll it into position. But it adds a powerful presence,” he concedes. See Resources.



Water Baby | A purple water lily pokes up from the fishpond next to the flagstone dining terrace (RIGHT). The waterfall that feeds it is visible in the background, and the Japanese forest grass mimics its cascading stream. **Lush Life** | The prairie garden alongside the house (FAR RIGHT) features Welsch's characteristically dense plantings, their wild, natural look helping to soften the formidable 1910 Tudor stone structure. The mahogany pergola of the dining terrace is visible to the left. The owners, who are Indian, also installed a tandoor oven on the terrace. **Rock Stars** | Welsch had about five tons of stone and boulders hauled in to create planting terraces, retaining walls and stone steps. Around one such set of steps (BOTTOM RIGHT), Japanese forest grass stands in again for a waterfall, below which is a glazed stoneware pot-turned-water feature. **Mauve Over** | Purple-tinged ajuga, also called Carpet Bugle or Bugleweed, forms a grounding border (BOTTOM MIDDLE) along the terraced rock garden by the pergola. **Croquet Anyone?** | The centerpiece of the garden is a pristine lawn (BOTTOM LEFT) framed by stone pavers and a ribbon of lamb's ear, behind which Welsch planted borders of specimen magnolia, hydrangea, Asiatic lilies, peonies, irises and, at rear, a line of conifers. "I toyed with the idea of putting a fountain or statue in the middle of the lawn," says Welsch. "But it's almost like a sacred relic—nobody steps on it." See Resources.



garden on one side of the grassy stairs. The statue was made by an Indian artisan on the subcontinent whose family creates them for temples, and was brought to Bronxville by the owners, who kept it indoors for years.

Anyone wanting a little high-summer color can head to the side of the house, where stone steps wind past a bench in the prairie. Welsch replaced turf grass that scorched every summer with thousands of spring bulbs and hundreds of ornamental grasses and perennials. In late summer, vibrant reds and yellows blaze here, with moonbeam coreopsis, scarlet monarda, red hot pokers, shasta daisies and purple echinacea attracting butterflies and birds. Welsch says he used nepeta as "a main stitching plant for continuity—that and a low mounding perennial grass called Moudry fountain grass, with purple flowers." Splashes of yellow annual helianthus add airy height. "The prairie garden was an instant hit with local flora and fauna," says Welsch, who plants for the life cycle of butterflies (including their less delightful, and often devouring, caterpillar stage).

In a single acre, Welsch has conjured serenity by blending formal elegance with the exuberance of nature, the permanence of stone with the ephemeral quality of flowers. "He really created a tranquil place for us to relax," say the delighted owners. 🌸

The Shanti Garden will be open on July 20th as part of the Garden Conservancy's Open Days program. For more information: (888) 842-2442 or www.opendaysprogram.org