

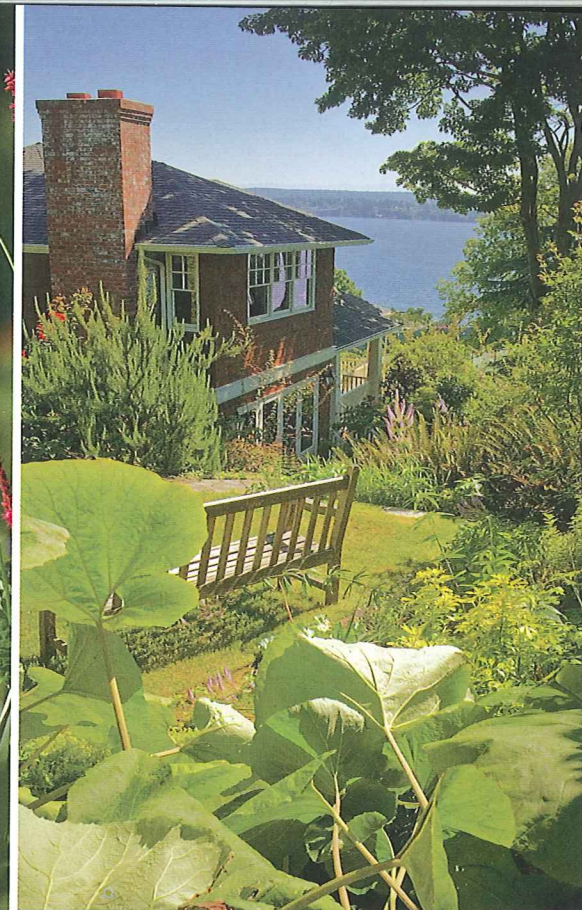


some enchanted GARDEN

A TIMELESS MADISON PARK LANDSCAPE CAPTIVATES TWO SETS OF OWNERS

WRITTEN BY CAROLYN JONES PHOTOGRAPHS BY DAVID PERRY

A WEATHERED BENCH PROVIDES A SPOT TO SEE AND NOT BE SEEN WHILE LOOKING OVER LAKE WASHINGTON TOWARD THE DISTANT MOUNTAINS. ITS SIDEKICK, AN ENORMOUS JAPANESE PERENNIAL KNOWN AS FUKI (*PETASITES JAPONICUS*), WOULD BE OVERWHELMING IN MOST GARDENS, BUT THE SCALE IS PERFECT FOR THIS ROMANTIC GARDEN. THE AMBER-COLORED ROSE BESIDE IT IS 'GOLDEN CELEBRATION.'



ABOVE: A 28-FOOT-TALL VIRGINIA-CREEPER-CLAD RETAINING WALL PROVIDES AN EVOCATIVE BACKDROP FOR PLANTINGS OF ENGLISH LAVENDER, BELLFLOWER, HARDY GERANIUM, CAPE FUCHSIA, LADIES' MANTLE, HOSTA AND SWORD FERN. **OPPOSITE, CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT:** KNOTWEED (*PERSICARIA*); THE VIEW BETWEEN THE HOUSE AND A TALL RED MAPLE TO LAKE WASHINGTON; THE SECRET UPPER GARDEN, WITH AN ORANGE-BARK STEWARTIA (*STEWARTIA PSEUDOCAMELLIA*) ON THE RIGHT, IS UNDERPLANTED WITH THE BOLD BEAR'S BREECHES (*ACANTHUS MOLLIS*) AND A GOLDEN MEXICAN MOCK ORANGE (*CHOISYA TERNATA* 'SUNDANCE').

Perched

on a hillside overlooking Lake Washington, this Madison Park landscape has a captivating secret that casts a spell on all who visit. At the back of the steep site, accessible by a circuitous route along the side of the house, stands the garden's architectural *pièce de résistance*: a 28-foot-high retaining wall that evokes a medieval castle.

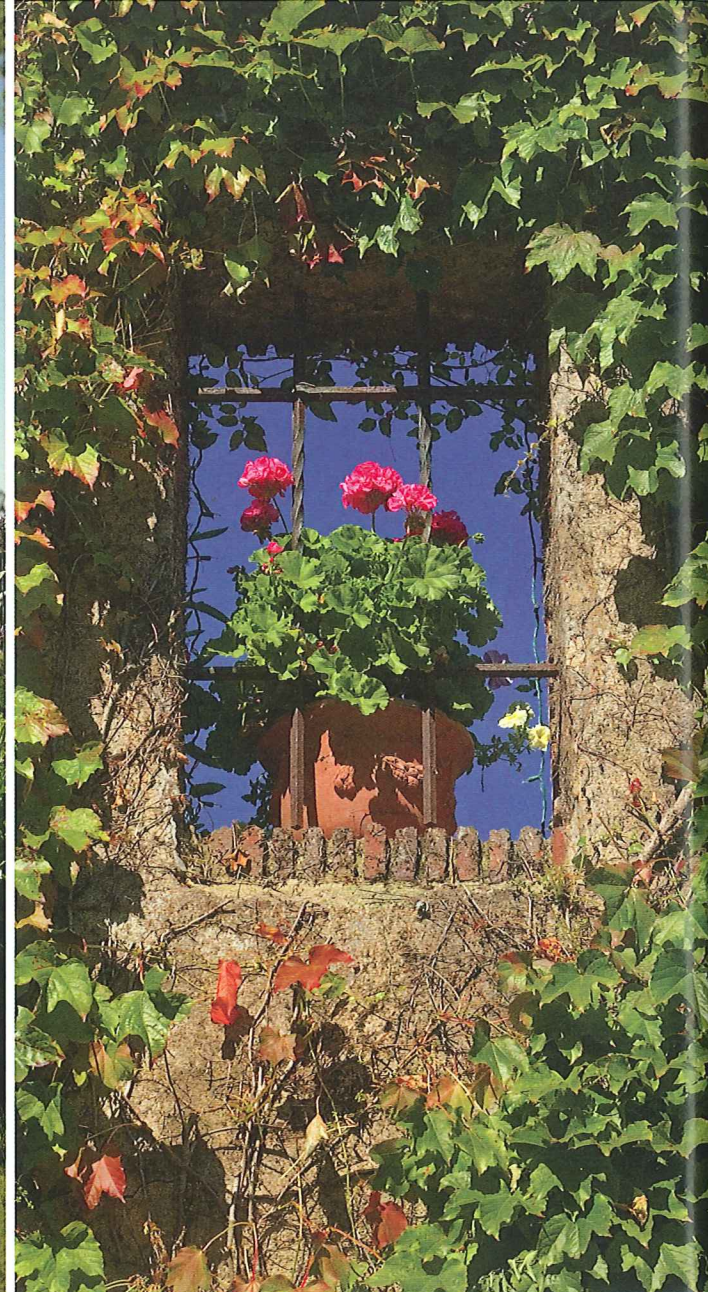
Slightly crumbling but structurally sound, it is draped with Virginia creeper whose green leaves turn flame-red in autumn. Nestled beneath the wall is a secluded lawn enveloped with beds of exuberant perennials and stalwart shrubs. Plantings emphasize the romantic feel and scale of the wall, and roses, lavenders, artemisias, sages and hostas compete for space. The monstrous foliage of the notoriously rambunctious Japanese perennial called fuki (*Petasites*

japonicus) looks right at home, and the scale is matched by an old purple rhododendron and an orange-bark stewartia. A wooden bench invites visitors to sit and gaze across a gnarled rosemary bush to the lake and distant Cascade Range.

Creating this magical landscape was a labor of love for former owners Mary and Stuart Silk and garden designer Diane Szukovathy, of Jello Mold Landscape. The Silks purchased the property in 2003, and after a two-year home renovation turned their attention to the garden. They hired Szukovathy, with whom they had worked in the past, to help realize its possibilities. Over a two-year period, the designer transformed the garden from one that had "little rhyme or reason," Mary Silk says, into the integrated landscape it is today.

Much as they loved their Madison Park garden, Mary and Stuart,





a noted Seattle architect, decided last year to build their own Silk-designed home. They put their house—and garden—on the market last November and sold it to husband and wife physicians with two young children, who agree that the garden factored large in their buying decision.

"Even though it was late autumn when we first saw the garden," the husband says, "it was gorgeous. We fell in love with the place as soon as we walked through it."

"I felt like I had entered a fantasy garden," says his wife. "We had been house hunting for almost two years, looking for a place for our two young children and two small dogs to play safely. We knew it was exactly what we wanted and made an offer within 10 minutes."

THE SECRET UPPER GARDEN under the wall, separated from the street by a series of patios, retaining walls and flights of stairs, is just one of several unique spaces in this landscape. From the sidewalk, an inconspicuous, gated entrance brings visitors through a narrow hall-

way into an outdoor foyer. Adjacent to the home's main entrance, this patio also leads to a spacious, wraparound porch that overlooks Lake Washington. A tall red maple creates a sense of enclosure.

Steps up the slope from the entry patio lead to an al fresco dining room anchored by a brick fireplace and bordered by a low boxwood hedge on the downhill side. Plantings of mint, thyme, chives, sage and oregano flourish in pots. This patio is easily accessible through generous French doors from the family room and adjoining kitchen.

Szukovathy's design for the garden involved several structural changes: Access to the upper garden was improved by a new flight of paved steps and the former rudimentary stacked broken-concrete wall was disguised with trailing plants. A steep bank was stabilized with deep-rooted, drought-tolerant plants such as sword ferns, 'Edward Goucher' abelia and creeping California lilac (*Ceanothus thyrsiflorus Repens*).

The designer's skill is particularly evident in her treatment of the separate front garden, which went from boring to boisterous. "There

were too many rhododendrons, and they had all reached the same size. It felt very dense," she explains. "Luckily, there were some wonderful mature plants, like the red maples and an old witch hazel. We worked layer upon layer."

"I studied drawing and painting in college, so I'm trained to see negative and positive spaces," Szukovathy notes. "This helps when I'm designing a garden." In summer, heavy retaining walls are barely visible behind the burgundy and gold foliage of the new front garden.

But it is the wall in the upper garden that former owner Mary Silk says she will miss most about the home. (She mentions too the out-

door dining area: "We had fires almost every night during summer and autumn," she recalls.)

The new owners have yet to discover their favorite parts of the garden, but look forward to doing so. The husband, an avid bird watcher, anticipates seeing what comes up—and flies in—this spring. "My favorite way to relax is to sit quietly in the garden with my family, pets and wild birds," he says. "What a perfect place to do all three." ■

Carolyn Jones has worked in horticulture in the Pacific Northwest for more than 30 years, including at VanDusen Botanical Garden and as director of Great Plant Picks.

Design Details
GARDEN DESIGNER
Diane Szukovathy, Jello Mold Landscape,
Mount Vernon, (206) 290-3154 or
jellomoldlandscape.com

THIS PAGE: AN INTIMATE AL FRESCO DINING ROOM IS REACHED THROUGH FRENCH DOORS FROM THE NEARBY FAMILY ROOM. THE OUTDOOR FIREPLACE PROVIDES WARMTH ON COOL SEATTLE EVENINGS. A FLIGHT OF PAVED STAIRS LEADS PAST POTS OF FINES HERBES TO THE MAGICAL UPPER GARDEN; TO THE LEFT OF THE STAIRS, THE SLOPE IS PLANTED WITH SPREADING, WINTER-FRAGRANT, SWEET BOX (*SARCOCOCCA HUMILIS*) AND WINTER-BLOOMING CYCLAMEN. **OPPOSITE, LEFT:** OBLIVIOUS TO THE VIEW BEYOND, THE SAW-TOOTH LEAVES OF ORNAMENTAL RHUBARB (*RHEUM PALMATUM* VAR. *TANGUTICA*) BASK IN THE SUN. **OPPOSITE, RIGHT:** THE UPHILL NEIGHBORS ADDED POTS OF GERANIUMS TO THE GRILLED OPENINGS IN THE ENCHANTING WALL.