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AUGUST 2019



# HOME & GARDEN

BEAUTIFUL SPACES—INSIDE AND OUT

The diversity of plants here ensures vibrancy and interest in every season.

GARDEN DESIGN

## Patience Gets the Garden

Twenty-four years ago, Barbara Katz designed this hillside plot for a client. Enthralled by the results, she purchased it for herself and gave us a tour

BY STEVE BENDER | PHOTOGRAPHS BY ROBBIE CAPONETTO

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**Yellow Japanese** forest grass, 'Red Dragon' dwarf Japanese maple, and dwarf mugo pine woven in with other plants create a tapestry of varying hues, textures, and shapes beside the backyard waterfall.



**GARDEN DESIGNER** Barbara Katz of Bethesda, Maryland, isn't a cruel person. She doesn't tear the wings from flies or push baby robins from the nest. Yet woe betide the impertinent shrub or perennial that's not up to its assigned task in her garden. "The soil here does not drain well, so lots of things die," she admits. "I just keep trying new ones."

Repeated failures earn slackers a well-deserved ban. "I am done with delphiniums!" she proclaims.

Her experience with this beautiful property proves that despite what novelist Thomas Wolfe wrote, you *can* go home again. Now the proprietor of London Landscapes, she first designed the gardens here in 1995 for friends

who owned the house. Over the years, she continued to work in and refine the beds. One day, she ran into the owners at a local grocery store and they mentioned plans to sell the house and move to Boston.

"I burst into tears," Katz recalls. Then she wondered if she and her husband, Howard, could buy it. The





▶ **A marbled 'Goshiki'** holly osmanthus and 'Feelin' Blue' dwarf deodar cedar greet you at the foot of a stone path that leads to a gazebo shaded by a stunning 'Bloodgood' Japanese maple.

first asking price was too high, but when it eventually dropped into their range, they pounced. "All the blood, sweat, and tears I had dedicated to the garden years before returned to me on a silver platter," she says.

Back when Katz began designing the garden, the most pressing issue was runoff. The backyard slopes steeply toward the house, and water went with it. So she stairstepped the hill into several levels and used stones to guide the runoff. French drains at the base of each level carry the water around the house and to the front. Plantings and a compact lawn slow the water too. A recirculating waterfall



▶ **Bordered by stone,**

a circular lawn is positioned about halfway up the slope. "The garden would be too exhausting visually without it," notes Katz. "This area allows you to rest as you come up from the main patio and also serves as a counterbalance to the round gazebo that's up higher."



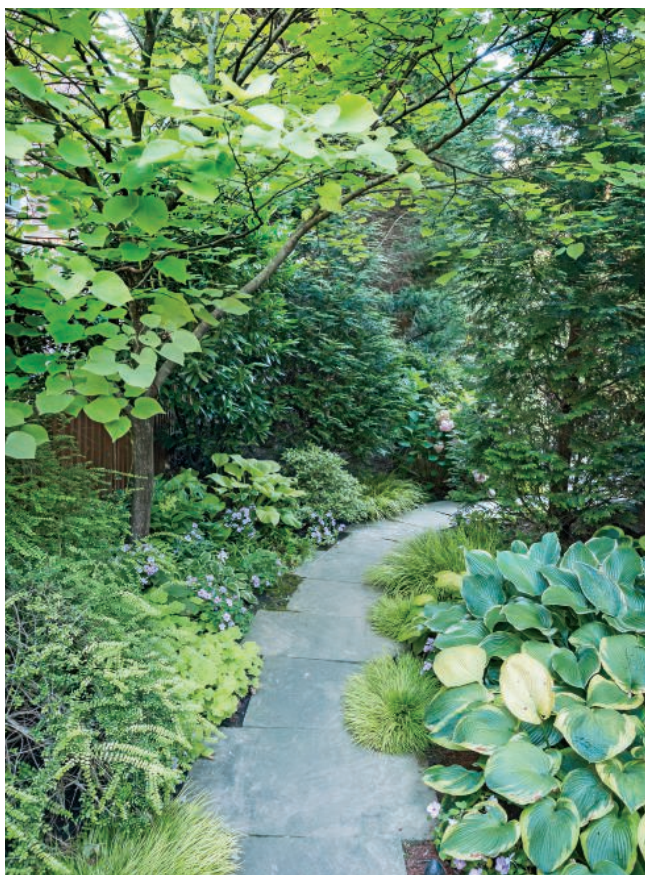
**PERSISTENCE PAYS**

**"PROFESSIONAL OR NOT,  
EVERY GARDENER KILLS  
PLANTS. BUT DON'T BEAT  
YOURSELF UP ABOUT IT.  
JUST CHANGE IT NEXT YEAR."**





▶ **Katz reminds us** that there are as many fabulous plant combinations as there are plants. Here we see variegated 'Autumn Charm' sedum, pink 'Millenium' allium, red coleus, 'Ruby Star' purple coneflower, and yellow 'Aurea' Tatarian dogwood.



◀ **Yellow-leaved** plants including 'Ogon' Japanese sweet flag, 'Citronelle' heuchera, 'Zounds' hosta, and 'Hearts of Gold' Eastern redbud look like spots of sunlight along the shady path.

**This container** filled with a mix of succulents (far left) captures the spirit of the garden in miniature, blending different forms and colors.

plunging down the slope ties together a gazebo at the top with a stone terrace next to the house.

As you can see, this is not a simple flower garden. Its appeal depends on combinations of forms, textures, and foliage colors rather than oft ephemeral blooms. A self-described plant nerd who grows hundreds of different things, Katz keeps it from looking chaotic by restricting hues to certain areas. "So right now, the left hillside is maroon, yellow, pink, and blue while the right is orange, purple, and white," she explains.

Asked what lesson her garden teaches, she replies, "Professional or not, every gardener kills plants. But don't beat yourself up about it. Just change it next year. Gardening is one of the most humbling endeavors—we are perpetually thwarted in our efforts. Try to revel in that instead of resisting. The patience we learn is priceless." **SL**