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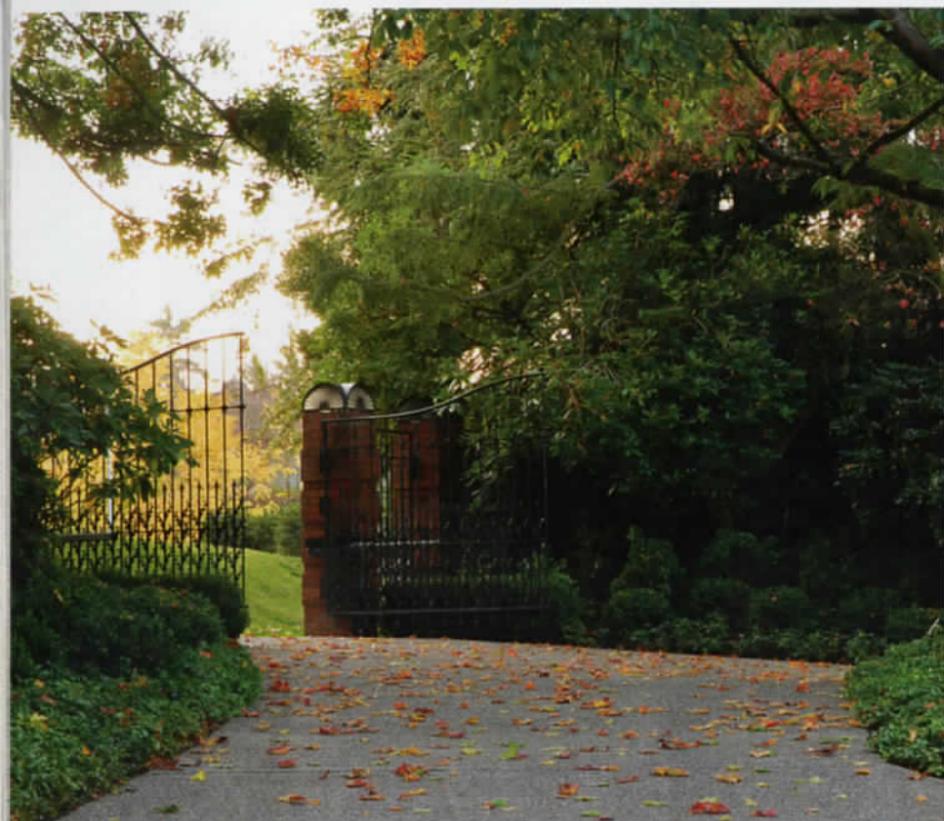
# *Crown Jewel*

THE REDESIGN OF A MAGNOLIA BLUFF LANDSCAPE  
KEEPS THE BEST OF THE OLD AND ADDS NEW LIFE

WRITTEN BY **MARTY WINGATE** PHOTOGRAPHS BY **ANDREW DRAKE**

A BROAD LAWN AND TERRACES ON THE WEST SIDE OF THIS MAGNOLIA HOME STEP DOWN TO THE POOL, HOT TUB AND FORMAL GARDENS PLANTED WITH SEASONAL BLOOMS. ALL LEVELS SHARE THE EXPANSIVE VIEW OF PUGET SOUND AND THE WEST POINT LIGHTHOUSE AT DISCOVERY PARK.





AT THE FRONT GATE AND RUNNING THROUGH THE GARDEN, A CARPET OF GREEN (*PACHYSANDRA TERMINALIS*) CREATES A LUSH GROUND COVER FROM WHICH CLIPPED BOXWOODS AND OLD RHODODENDRONS EMERGE. **OPPOSITE:** WHITE AND GREEN CREATE A CRISP EFFECT WITH WHITE HYDRANGEAS IN THE REPRODUCTION FRANK LLOYD WRIGHT CONCRETE POTS AND 'ST. MARY' SOUTHERN MAGNOLIAS (*MAGNOLIA GRANDIFLORA*) PAIRED ON EITHER SIDE OF THE FRONT DOOR.

inding the jewel hidden in the jungle was an assignment that landscape architect Randy Allworth took to heart. He carved out a serene landscape from a dense forest of rhododendrons and other 80-year-old trees and shrubs that closed in on this Magnolia bluff home.

"It was an overgrown hodgepodge—you couldn't see the façade of the house," Allworth says. "We wanted to give the landscape more transparency."

The approximately 92,000-square-foot property is set back from the bluff; it includes a level approach from the street and a broad lawn behind the house to the west. Terraces above the lawn and a lower level with a pool and hot tub overlook Puget Sound. The house and original garden dated from 1930, and both needed revision: The owners wanted to add on to their house, and though the garden contained many lovely, mature specimen plants, it needed an update.

While the addition (by Seattle architecture firm Suyama Peterson Deguchi) was under way, Allworth redesigned the garden, with construction by the Nussbaum Group, led by Dale Nussbaum and Brian Rogness. Allworth took advantage of the upheaval, clearing out the understory and moving mature plants away from the house. He edited out some plants and moved others to an on-site nursery until it was time to replant.

The homeowner researched garden styles and looked through stacks of magazines to discover what she wanted their garden to

become. "We learned your eye doesn't want to go to so many things," she says. "I need to see repetition. It's a palette that's easy to look at."

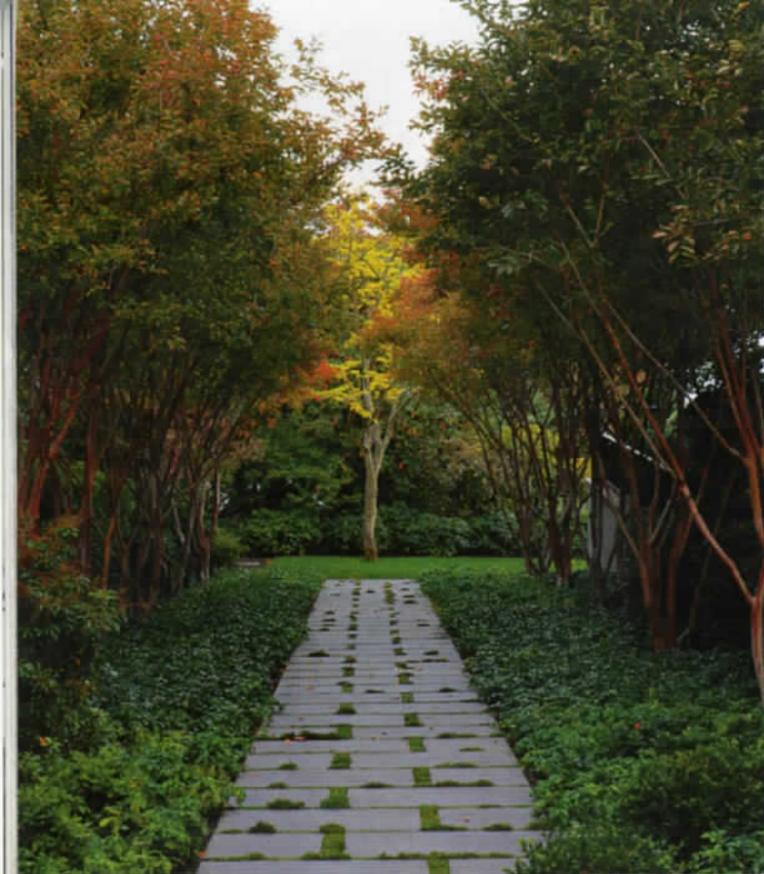
In addition to bringing in new, large rhododendrons, Allworth saw potential in many of the existing plants. Keeping older plants makes the finished garden look well-established—like the house—rather than new. Allworth moved dogwoods, a Japanese snowbell tree (*Styrax japonicus*) and rhododendrons—some as tall as 15 feet—about the property like pieces on a chessboard. The result is a quietly refined garden with less congestion, where visitors can better appreciate the plants' forms.

The view from the front gate presents a composed picture along the drive, with the ground a carpet of evergreen *Pachysandra* and an allée of multistemmed crape myrtles (*Lagerstroemia 'Natchez'*) leading to a lawn where the Japanese snowbell stands.

"It's all about the house. You want to welcome people into your house, not hide from them," the owner says of the change from overwhelming growth to simplified elegance. "You couldn't see the house before—it felt like *Gone With the Wind* when Scarlett couldn't find Tara in the fog."

Art accents the garden, beginning near the allée, where a large copper pig stands amid the ground cover. The owners bought Seattle artist Reilly Jensen's *Penny the Inside Out Pig* from the 2001 Pigs on Parade, a fund-raiser for the Pike Place Market Foundation.





**ABOVE:** ONE'S EYE IS LED THROUGH AN ALLÉE OF MULTISTEMMED CRAPE MYRTLES (*LAGERSTROEMIA 'NATCHEZ'*) TO REST ON THE FRAMED VIEW OF A JAPANESE SNOWBELL (*STYRAX JAPONICUS*), RESCUED FROM ITS ORIGINAL POSITION TOO CLOSE TO THE HOUSE.  
**BELOW AND OPPOSITE:** HUMMOCKY GROUND AND STYLIZED CONIFERS INDICATE A SHIFT IN ATMOSPHERE FROM THE FORMAL GARDEN TO THE JAPANESE GARDEN, WHERE ALLWORTH REBUILT A WOODEN BRIDGE.



The interior of the garden, enclosed by the perimeter wall of green created by conifers, rhododendrons and other tall evergreens, feels spacious. "The backdrop gives the space depth," Allworth says.

Limbing up the rhododendrons—removing lower branches—created space between the ground cover and the canopy of tall shrubs. "One thing we tried to do was to change the cliché of the Northwest garden: rhody, rhody, rhody," Allworth says. "We wanted to reveal them in a way by editing out other things and [let visitors] see them all the way to the ground."

The drive loops around a planted island to the porte-cochère—the covered area at the front door—where Allworth took advantage of space nearest the house for the most architectural plantings. At the corner of the house, a large copper beech (*Fagus sylvatica 'Riversii'*) from the original garden serves as a majestic backdrop.

At the end of the allée, lawn takes over from the black Britannia granite stone path. The expanse of grass keeps a low profile so that nothing gets in the way of the Sound view. As a focal point at the end of the lawn, perfect for contemplating a sunset, sits a white Chinese marble bench with bronze base by Washington artist Julie Speidel. "It's a hard-edged thing on soft grass," Allworth explains.

Formal garden style allows the designer to juxtapose strong lines with contrasting textures and forms for visual appeal no matter what is in bloom. In the front garden and along the allée, soft mounds of Japanese boxwood (*Buxus microphylla* var. *japonica* and its cultivar "Winter Gem") emerge from the carpet of pachysandra. Boxwood is used again as a low hedge behind the house, where it delineates the railing around the lawn, and also at the top of the terrace and on the pool level.

"I like to keep my color palette simple," Allworth says. The older rhododendrons put on a spring show of white and pink, but for the majority of the year the garden is serene in its greenery, yet interesting in texture and form. In spring, dwarf rhododendrons bloom with a background of white dogwoods, and in late summer, the crape myrtles flower white. Fall warms up the show, with brilliant color from the crape myrtles, dogwoods and viburnums.

Repetition in all forms reinforces the formal landscape design. The planters at the front door are repeated along the sunroom terrace.

Allworth's intentional geometry makes the secret Japanese garden even more of a surprise. It is found down rustic stone steps off the pool terrace, perfectly hidden from view. The garden offers a quiet respite or the opportunity for a brief stroll up to the gate and out onto the lawn.

The transformation—or, perhaps, reenvisioning—of this garden is as remarkable to the owners as it is to casual admirers. The entrance had been all grass ("It looked good about two days a year," the owner says), with crowded, overgrown plants hiding the house. Simplifying the garden by removing some plants and clearing the space between ground and canopy resulted in a calm visual appeal.

"We wanted to quiet everything down, to appreciate what was here," Allworth says. ■

**Professionals who worked on this project include:** Landscape Design: Randy Allworth, Allworth Design, (206) 623-7396, allworthdesign.com; Construction: Dale Nussbaum, Nussbaum Group, (206) 545-0111, nussbaum-group.com; and Architecture: Suyama Peterson Deguchi, s-pd.com.

**For resource information, see page 79.**

