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trends

The pros share 2012's hit list from coast to coast

by **BARBARA BALLINGER**

GOOD GARDEN DESIGN IS EVER-EVOLVING. It reflects certain common trends nationally at any given time—currently, a desire to use less water and be more sustainable in the choice of plants, flowers, trees and even hardscape materials. But different terrains and climates, and varied amounts of rainfall, shade and sun all also influence garden choices, and well they should. Here, five of our favorite landscape and design pros share what they're hearing about—and doing in their clients' backyards.

Photo: Hoffman Landscapes, Inc.

Photo: Courtesy, Christopher Lowell Enterprises

Pondless waterfalls

are a hot trend, as high-maintenance, boring expanses of lawn are being transformed into beautiful, low-maintenance waterscapes. A pondless, or cascading, waterfall is simply a recirculating waterfall and/or stream without a pond. You can enjoy the sight and sound of running water without the pond maintenance, as well as add visual interest to any landscape. These water features can be built on a small scale; they also are energy efficient, affordable and easy-care.

Brian S. Cossari, landscape architect, ASLA, Hoffman Landscapes, Inc., Wilton, CT, hoffmanlandscapes.com, 203-834-9656

Decorative accessories

Outdoor spaces can be a true extension of the home and will increase its value, too. Don't skimp. Remember that all layers of design apply as much outside as inside. But the real accessory is nature, so don't get into competition with it...blend. Color can be dramatic, but keep fabric patterns solid or texture-driven. Get out the paintbrush and customize unsightly cement and other materials to coordinate with almost any color of your house. Use candlelight, terra-cotta containers and outdoor umbrellas to add more personalized color. **Christopher Lowell, home design expert, Christopher Lowell Enterprises, Santa Fe, NM, christopherlowell.com**

Photo: Diana Dolan

Sustainable efficiency

is what we're seeing lots of lately. What does that mean? To achieve a seamless integration of indoor and outdoor living space that is sustainable, functional and aesthetically pleasing. Clients are encouraged when materials are recycled or re-used.

Keith Willig, Keith Willig Landscape Architecture and Construction, Menlo Park, CA, keithwilligdesign.com, 650-326-2294

Vegetable gardens

have become popular lately. I like to design them so they're integral in the landscape—possibly raised up with timbers or with dry stacked stones. They should be pleasant to look at, and doing so also allows for better soil. I also like to build them close to the kitchen, so they're easier to access. Irrigation for the beds is important; these [plants] usually take more water than the rest of the landscape. **Laurie Van Zandt, landscape designer, Ardent Gardener Landscape Design, Huntsville, UT, theardentgardener.net, 801-388-8103**

Photo: Brandpictures/Alison Miksch

Photo: John S. Troy

Going natural

As much of the country experiences summers with intense heat and lack of rain, a concern is to design usable outdoor spaces surrounded by plant varieties that can endure and even thrive in the heat. One option is to keep greater portions of the land natural through, for example, the creation of wildflower meadows without irrigation systems. Another is to showcase native xeric plantings that not only use less water but add vibrant color to the flourishing garden. **John S. Troy, John S. Troy Landscape Architect Inc., San Antonio, TX, johnstroylandarch.com, 210-222-1355**

no stone unturned

>> Behind the Scenes

>> CHALLENGE: Replace the old deck and pool coping while creating a series of focal points for visual interest around the property

>> SOLUTION: Used "all natural" techniques and materials to strike a balance between scale, function and aesthetics

>> SPECIAL FEATURES: Native stone was used for the patio, seating walls and pool coping, as it is less expensive than exotic stone as well as being sustainable

>> MAIN PLANTS: Daylilies, Moonbeam Coreopsis, Spirea, Ghost Fern, Lady Fern, Catmint, Roses, Golden Japanese Forest Grass, Nikko Blue Hydrangea, Boxwood, Japanese Andromeda

>> ZONE RANGE: 5B–6A

Multicolored slabs connect patio, pool and gardens

WHEN THE OWNER WANTED TO MAKE RENOVATIONS TO HIS backyard by adding a patio and pool area, landscape architect Brian Cossari was faced with design challenges. Using "all natural" materials, his design struck a balance between scale and function. A deck off the kitchen became a new stone patio. New stairs transition between the pool and terrace. Low seating walls don't interfere with the view of the pool—keeping children safely in view. Handcrafted bluestone was cut to fit around the pool, while clever use of lattice hides the pool equipment. Cossari installed the homeowners' heirloom roses in a showy border around the pool.

LANDSCAPE ARCHITECT Brian Cossari, ASLA, Hoffman Landscapes, Wilton, CT, hoffmanlandscapes.com, 203-834-9656
PHOTOGRAPHY COURTESY OF HOFFMAN LANDSCAPES

ideas we love

1. **UNIQUE FOCAL POINTS** around the property provide visual enjoyment
2. **PLENTY OF ROOM** for entertaining and relaxing on the patio and around pool
3. **HERB BEDS** in the patio floor planted with basil, rosemary, thyme and chives are within reach of the kitchen and grill station
4. **ROOM FOR FAMILY ROSES** The family's prized roses were preserved and now take center stage around the pool
5. **LOW-COST NATIVE PLANTINGS** provide an easy way to "green up" without breaking the budget

the winding way

Stone, gravel and mulch are leveled to make winding, steady paths

AFTER MORE THAN 50 YEARS OF LIVING IN HER HOME IN WESTPORT, Connecticut, the homeowner, now in her 90s, needed better walking trails around her 1½-acre site, known as Stoneboat Gardens. "The property had evolved slowly, with her and her husband planting flowering beds for color, a raspberry patch for children and now grandchildren, and mature trees through the decades. They had a greenhouse and a green thumb, and grew everything from roses to peonies to alliums and lady's mantle to foxgloves, ferns, boxwood and conifers. But as time went on, it was harder for her to get around and enjoy it all," says landscape designer Mathew Biron of Hoffman Landscapes. His firm worked on the site in several phases, along with Sheri Forster of The Scottish Gardener.

>> Behind the Scenes

>> CHALLENGE: Make heavily wooded property more accessible for aging homeowner

>> SOLUTIONS: Wider and more level paths; walls with flat tops at seat height; a stone bench and wrought-iron chairs

>> SPECIAL FEATURES: A path system winds through the yard with places to rest, including a perennial sun garden, rustic shrub garden and woodland fern garden

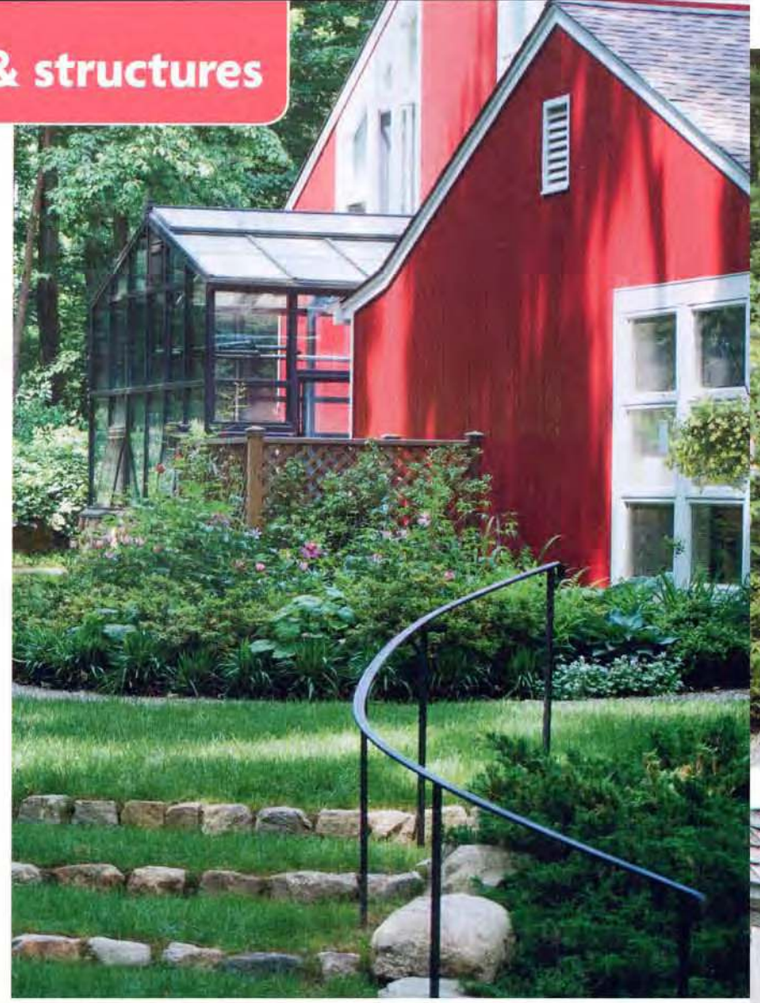
>> MAIN PLANTS: Hemlock, Viburnum, Hydrangea, Mountain Fire Japanese Andromeda, Holly, Peony, Ornamental Onion, Ferns, Anemones, Lenten Rose

>> ZONE: 6

Step-By-Step Garden

"Whether it's a too tight budget to complete an entire garden, the lack of a decision about how a garden will be used, or simply a desire to work in smaller sections and see how parts unfold before proceeding, some homeowners prefer to work in phases—perhaps first the front, then the back and the side yards," says landscape designer Matthew Biron.

Starting with a master plan can provide a good road map; it can be tweaked as functions and preferences change. Important questions to ask, notes Biron, are: How do you envision using the property now, and how might use change down the road? Are you insistent on keeping anything that's there or do you want to start fresh? In the case of this property, an overall gravel trail system was developed to enjoy the entire site and reach different gardens within the whole. And the garden is still being worked on, with the possibility of more walls being constructed.



After the husband passed away, the wife wanted to carry on the daily care of her gardens. The goal was to maintain the rustic, natural look of the stone paths, in keeping with the overall aesthetic, yet make them more maneuverable. Biron reset the original stone pavers in wider, level small courses. Other tactics included adding handrails that the owner insisted should blend into the surroundings. In one area, a banister was made from native tree branches and posts. A sturdy wrought-iron rail was added closer to the house, adjacent to grassy steps that connect garden levels to the patio. Masonry seating with large stones and stacked seating walls were added so the owner and her grandchildren could sit and enjoy the gardens, which are landscaped for colorful, seasonal blooms and texture. "Overall, more than 150 varieties of trees, shrubs, perennials and bulbs have been installed during the three-year project," says Forster.

LANDSCAPE DESIGNER Matthew Biron, Hoffman Landscapes, Wilton, CT, hoffmanlandscapes.com, 203-834-9656 **GARDEN DESIGNER** Sheri Forster, The Scottish Gardener, New York, NY, 917-783-3584 **PHOTOGRAPHY COURTESY** The Scottish Gardener

ideas we love

1. **PLACES TO SIT AND REST,** with seat walls and benches placed sporadically around the grounds as well as a backyard patio
2. **CONTINUOUS BLOOMING** of flowers, plants and trees, providing four-season interest
3. **INDIVIDUAL GARDENS** are featured within the property, including a raspberry patch and a cutting garden
4. **LOOKS NATURAL** The hardscape and softscape elements seamlessly blend into the existing landscape