



Nancy Lowry Moitrier, APLD
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Annapolis, Maryland

When an email to participate in an internationally televised garden makeover show came thru the wire on a snowy winter's day, team members working towards improving the company for the soon to-be-spring rush responded. The garden makeover show featured a bay front cottage in Anne Arundel County, Maryland. This recently purchased cottage was a step taken by the homeowners to downsize after the children had left the nest. This couple's goals for living were to relax, enjoy their friends, family and the recreation of the Chesapeake Bay. The clients love to entertain and love the Florida Keys. The outdoor 'living' space, all 2300 square feet, needed to be utilized, maximized and respected for the health of The Bay.

THE REQUIREMENTS

- Elimination of the 12" of unavigatable pea gravel covering one-half of the outdoor space was a priority not only for function, but also for environmental impact on The Bay. This depth of pea gravel constitutes an impervious surface.
- Elimination of the large unsightly pond built by the previous homeowners was a priority because it was dangerous and again, because of the environmental effects on drainage towards the Chesapeake Bay. Man made ponds with rubber liners are considered impervious surface.
- Elimination of the existing four-foot fence obscuring the view of the Chesapeake Bay.
- Creation of an outdoor barbeque area comfortable enough for a few guests and easily expandable for 100 guests. The homeowners frequently entertain.
- Creation of a Jimmy Buffet-esque, tropical paradise.
- Incorporation of bright and colorful flowers for **her** and a bit of perfect turf for **him**.
- Integration of a recently purchased hot tub.
- Low maintenance.

THE EXISTING CONDITIONS & LIMITING FACTORS

The 2300 square foot outdoor living space, covered with a variety of impermeable surfaces, includes a 1200 square foot of 12" deep pea gravel, a 250 square foot pond with a rubber liner, a 400 square foot bluestone surface surrounding the pond. 300 square foot planting beds house large sun-tolerant varieties of Hostas. Located within the critical area (within 100') of The Chesapeake Bay, impermeable surface limitations were a driving force for the bay-sensitive design.

The adjacent houses hug this long narrow property . While the property sits within 100' of the Chesapeake Bay, the garden limits are 75' from the water's edge. A 75' public community easement of turf needs to be preserved.

To keep within the budget, efforts made to re-use materials from the previous landscape drive aspects of the design. Removal of the tons of existing pea gravel is cost prohibitive. The pea gravel is recycled for the terrace base. Worthy bluestone pieces are reused forcing the materials selection of the terrace and walkway surfaces.

THE DESIGN

Division of five separate garden rooms creates the illusion of a larger outdoor space. Each garden room

has a different personality. Garden rooms are defined with plant materials and organic structural creations. The use of a variety of ground-plane materials and placement of trees creating overhead canopies help to distinguish the character of each space. Changes in elevation provide transition from one room to the next. The design is cohesive overall because of the repetition and interweaving of key plants and a similar color palette. Focal points lead visitors from one garden room to the next. All lines defining the garden rooms were set at 45 degrees from the house to slow the eye, carrying the viewer, unknowingly, from one side of the garden to the next, slowly traversing the length of the space. Proportions based on measurements taken from the house were applied throughout the entire garden to create a unified, comfortably stable, but visually discreet harmony.



The Entry Garden: Front of house and door
Place cursor over image to see before and after

After



The Entry Garden: Front of house and door
Place cursor over image to see before and after

Before

I. THE ENTRY GARDEN

The entry garden is separate from the utility, parking area by an open, four foot, organic fence of Eastern Red Cedar. Perennial *Nepeta fassennii* (Catmint) and *Thalictrum rochebrunianum* (Meadow Rue) caress the fence with their soft flowing lavender flowers from May thru August. The partial shade from the *Lagerstroemia indica* (Crepe Myrtle) canopy proved a hospitable environment for both plants to thrive.

The focal point of the entry garden is the main entrance of the house. Berms were created to provide another layer of interest to the otherwise flat property, to create a more hospitable environment for the culture of the *Lagerstroemia indica* and to create a swale for water flow.

The grade change, designed not only for the experience but also for function lead visitors down a slight grade and up again to the blue-stone porch. Rain water is carried thru an ingeniously invisible French drain created with thick stones in the low point of the walkway.

The overhead canopy of three *Lagerstroemia indica* (Crepe Myrtle) provide lacey shade while their sinuous, branchless trunks of cinnamon colored bark create a walled illusion defining the entry garden room. The first sighting of a *Musa 'Basjoo'* (Hardy Banana), the bold textures of recycled sun-tolerant Hostas and the brightly colored bloom sequence provided by bulbs, annuals and Crepe Myrtles give inklings of the bodacious ambiance of the tropics in this central Maryland Garden.



The Terrace Garden: Organic Arbor of Eastern Red Cedar

Place cursor over image to see before and after

After



The Terrace Garden: A sea of pea gravel and neighboring garage
Place cursor over image to see before and after

Before

II. THE TERRACE GARDEN

Stepping off the bluestone walk, up three large stone steps, and through an organic arbor of Eastern Red Cedar visitors arrive into the next garden room- the terrace garden. A *Cladrastis kentuckeya* (Yellowwood) provides a focal point while also creating a visual screen for the neighboring rooftop of the adjacent house. The terrace garden houses the hot tub with easy access to the house and apartment/garage. The hot tub, softened with native grasses, *Panicum virgatum* 'Shenandoah' (Switch Grass), is screened with evergreen *Prunus lauracerasus* 'Schkipkaensis' (Skip Laurel) and will eventually be shrouded by the canopy of the *Cladrastis kentuckeya* (Yellowwood).

The terrace garden, located between the outdoor barbeque area and indoor prep-kitchen makes for easy cooking. The clear, but subtle passage to the multi-purpose garage provides easy access to where party necessities are stored and where a bathroom is located. The smooth bluestone surface of the terrace is perfect for bare feet exiting the hot tub. The terrace garden 'room' is the highest elevation of the entire garden, providing an exceptional view of the Chesapeake Bay. The house, the garage and an artfully embellished cedar privacy fence define the terrace garden. The Outdoor Barbeque area forms the final wall of this garden room.



The Outdoor Barbeque:
Hollywood TV Crew filming around the barbeque
Place cursor over image to see before and after
Before



The Outdoor Barbeque: Large pond and fence obscuring view
of the bay
Place cursor over image to see before and after
After



Grassy morning view of the bay

III. THE OUTDOOR BARBEQUE

The outdoor barbeque is the highlight of the outdoor living area.

With an elevation difference for seating along each side of the outdoor barbeque guests can choose, bar-stool style seating or typical table height seating. At this well located entertainment space not only do guests have an excellent view of the bay, but the chef also has a wonderful, centrally located position where interaction with guests is easy. Preparation occurs facing guests, storage for barbeque tools is provided under the countertop. An outdoor refrigerator keeps drinks fresh while a generously proportioned counter provides adequate space for both chef and guests.

The stone material selected for the body of the outdoor barbeque repeat the butter yellow colored siding of the house. The engineered stone countertop harmonizes well with the recycled bluestone terrace.



Native plants dominate the perennial rose garden after

Place cursor over image to see before and after

After



Pond area before

Place cursor over image to see before and after

Before

IV. THE PERENNIAL ROSE GARDEN



Native perennial garden

Two steps down from the terrace garden puts the visitor at the bar-stool style seating of the outdoor barbeque and into the most floriferous area of the garden. The butter yellow siding of the house, the artfully embellished cedar privacy fence and a bountiful, yet simple, perennial bed define this garden room. Repetition of two more *Musa 'Basjoo'* (Hardy Banana) help to emphasize the tropical oasis desired by the homeowners.

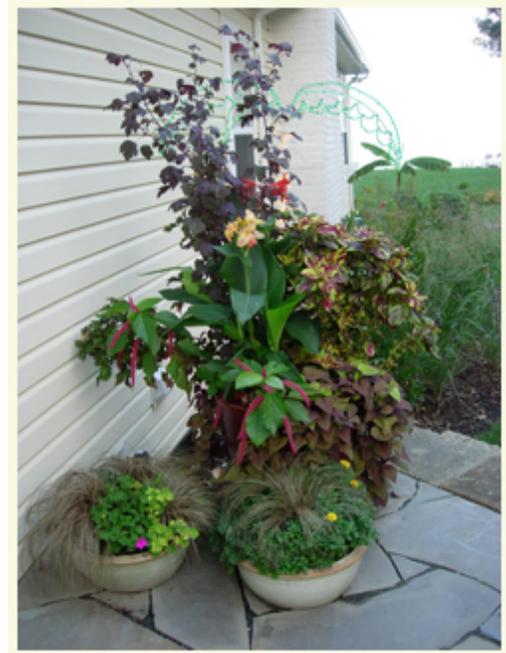
Climbing, repeat bloom *Rosa 'Dortmund'* (Dortmund Rose) cloak Eastern Red Cedar trellises providing interest to the walls of the house while creating vertical layers of growth so prominent in tropical landscapes. Native *Morella pennsylvanica* (Bayberry) and native *Hibiscus coccineus* (Swamp hibiscus) are right at home along the shores of the Chesapeake Bay. Inclusion of other native perennials with extended bloom time, low maintenance and similar color value help to emphasize the tropical ambiance desired by the homeowners while respecting the ecology of the area.

V. THE BAYSIDE GARDEN

The previously existing deck and renovated garden beds located at the waterside of the house form the final garden room. The unobstructed view towards the Chesapeake Bay provides a soothing space to relax and a level open space for recreation (badminton, volleyball, croquet) and play. Large hanging baskets suspended from the ceiling of the covered porch and overflowing with annuals provide a splash of color while framing the view of the water.

Designers Bio

Nancy Lowry Moitrier began her life surrounded by plants and everything horticulture. The passion for plants is surely a genetic trait. Becoming a garden designer was a natural evolution for her as a child in a family actively involved in the nursery industry where she began absorbing plant's cultural information while performing garden chores. Initial work experience in a variety of garden centers, [grower] nurseries, at the US National Arboretum and with landscape contractors enabled her to swiftly absorb a plethora of information applicable to the many facets of garden design and creation.



Nancy began pursuit of a degree in Landscape Architecture to apply her artistic talent to her love of all things green. After three years of course-work, she realized the importance of plant science, soil science and biology in the creation of sustainable gardens. She opted to change her pursuit eventually receiving a degree in Horticulture. The combination of degrees ultimately created an invaluable education truly capable of combining the art of landscape architecture and the science of horticulture.

Nancy Lowry Moitrier, APLD is also an Internationally Certified Arborist, Maryland Certified Horticulturist and a Maryland Licensed Tree Expert. She is the principal designer at Designs for Greener Gardens, Inc, a fine gardening and design/ build company that she started in 1989 and now operates with her husband Pierre Moitrier. Designs for Greener Gardens has been published in numerous trade magazines and most recently in Taunton's Fine Gardening special container gardening issue. They have appeared on the internationally televised Home and Garden Television show, Landscaper's Challenge where Nancy's design won the challenge.