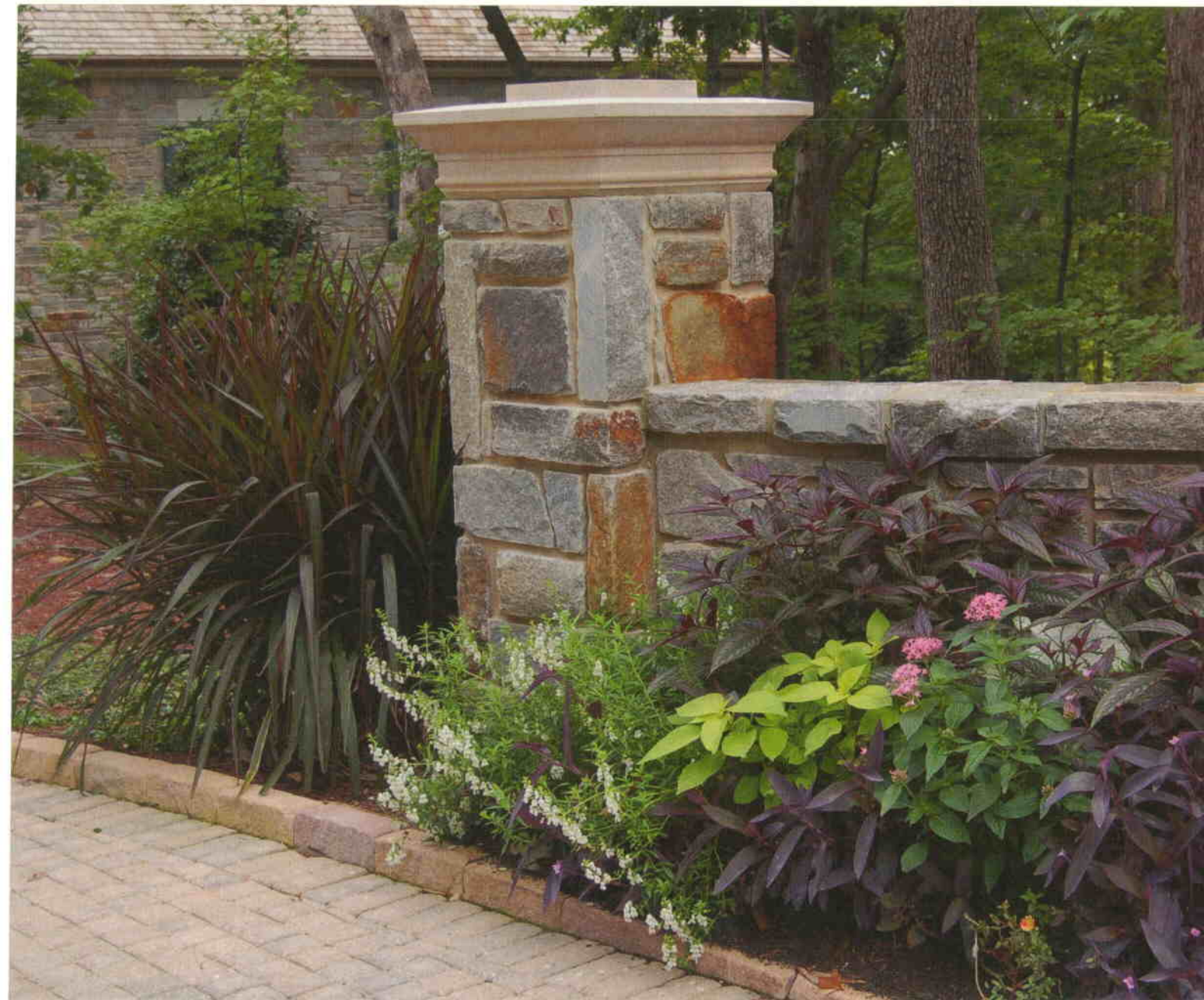


This Chapel Hill, North Carolina home sits on a three-acre mountain knoll surrounded by a forest of hardwood species, with views to the Lake Jordan Valley. The entry drive from the street winds its way through the woodlands. Specialty 4 x 8 pavers designed and manufactured from Envisions of Raleigh, North Carolina have the appearance of being a 4 x 4 cobble.

# Designing for Plant Lovers, *Chapel Hill Style*





#### **Above**

The retaining wall is made of Pennsylvania field stone, with a cast stone cap. Plants here include Angelonia 'Serena White', Strobilanthes, lime coleus, 'Graffiti Pink' pentas, Setcreasea, Caladium 'White Christmas', Zinnia 'Apricot Profusion', and 'Purple Princess' pennisetum.

**This home was designed and built for plant aficionados** on a three-acre hardwood mountain knoll in Chapel Hill, North Carolina. The design stewards the land by preserving trees and long views, manages and harvests storm water, creates a sense of place with numerous gardens of varying environmental conditions that sustain a diverse palette of plants.

Hardscape materials are genuine, timeless and sustainable. Site design features are revealed in a sequence of views and garden spaces. These elements are combined in an elegant yet relaxed manner.

The site is located on a quiet street in a private community that has a unique ecosystem and topography more similar to a mountainous region than the Piedmont of central North Carolina where it exists. The elevation affords seasonal long-distance views.

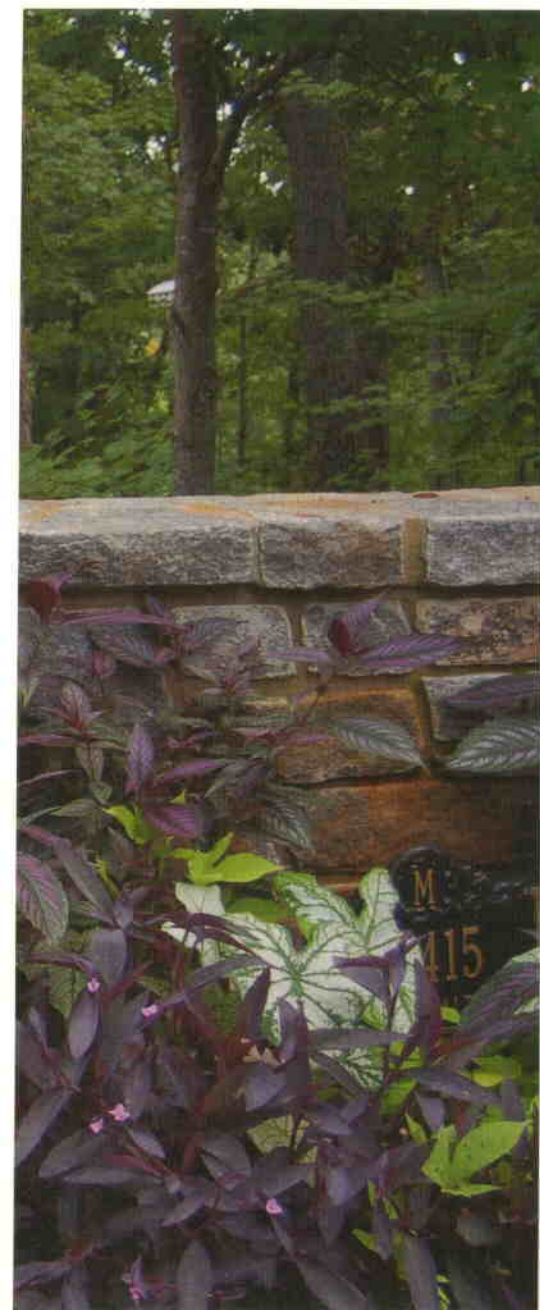
The design vision was to preserve the native woodland character of the site and to softly meld the residence into this mountainous environment.

#### **Natural...but Elegant**

The homeowners wanted a home and landscape that felt natural, but would also be an elegant retreat for their busy lives. The design team worked closely with the owners to tailor the design to their needs, while connecting the home to the beauty of the existing landscape.

The wife, an avid gardener, had the specific goal for the site to remain as undisturbed as possible, but still incorporate a large number of new garden environments for her horticultural activity and collections. The architect and landscape architect worked to minimize construction impact through judicious siting of the home, routing the entry





drive through the existing trees and blending the outdoor living areas with the house and the existing topography and woods. The architect designed and placed the house to allow for a walkout lower level. This created overlook terraces with long views into the Lake Jordan Valley. The outdoor terraces allow easy interaction and flow from indoor to outdoor living.

### Protecting the Trees

The builder constructed heavy timber “bridges” over the root zones of trees on the property to avoid damaging them during construction. Before construction started, a drip irrigation system was designed and installed for the large native trees that were close to the construction.

This provided controlled watering to lessen the stress on the trees during construction. A severe and

prolonged drought during construction was dealt with favorably with little loss or impact to those trees. Where roots were exposed the trees were carefully root pruned to assist in healthy root regeneration.

### Auto Court

In the auto court where grading was desirable for a level surface and a sense of enclosure, and where privacy from the street was desired, the earth was cut about three feet and a retaining wall erected. This preserved the majority of the natural woodland that enhances and makes private the front of the residence. The perimeter of the site was likewise designed to preserve the hardwood trees. Supplemental evergreen trees were planted for privacy at key points around the perimeter.

The entry driveway weaves through the woods and past a stonewall, slowly revealing the home

### Above

A clear cedar arbor constructed by BRW connects the screened porch, cabana and entrance from the walled garden. Armand's clematis vines climb the arbor. Red flowering roses are in the foreground.





#### Above, Left

Limestone, columns, with Pennsylvania bluestone bordering, grace the terraces. The columns are parged masonry with cultured stone caps. The planters on the balcony are flush with 'Graffiti Rose' pentas, 'Sleeping Beauty' Portulacas, Asparagus ferns, Setcreasea, 'Tricolor' Sweet Potato and purple 'Cat's Whiskers'.

#### Above, Right

The home incorporates a conservatory (greenhouse) that connects to the garage/shop area. It was designed by architect William Hirsch Jr., crafted by Amdaga and installed by BRW, who also constructed the home.



to the traveler. A guest auto court is a welcoming amenity and entry into the home. The drive continues, sweeping around and beyond the family motor court and garages. A special paver was designed and manufactured specifically for these surfaces. It is a 4 x 8 unit with the appearance of being a 4 x 4 cobble.

#### Stone Terraces

The stone terraces of limestone, bordering Pennsylvania bluestone and the infinity edged pool, combine to float above the natural topography and provide overlooks with beautiful views of the surrounding woodlands and a view of the valley.

One follows the strategically placed stepping-stones to find the in-ground spa. The spa, built into the natural grade, is

separates from the main pool terrace to offer a more intimate experience. Perennial plantings surround it. The homeowner's favorite garden sculptures were used near the residence to provide interest and accent. They were placed to avoid competing with the larger landscape that lies beyond.

A southeastern Asian bas-relief was placed on the wall in the entry auto court area. Turf areas were minimized and on the east and south side of the residence, a "river lawn" sweeps to connect the front and back gardens. This offers a pleasant contrast with the woodlands. A lawn trail allows for better views of woodlands and the garden collections. In the front of the home the small lawns and crisp parterres present a formal contrast from the woodlands.





## Project Team

### Landscape Architects:

Dan Sears, ASLA, Principal & Ronald Price, ASLA, Project Manager  
Sears Design Group, P.A. Raleigh, North Carolina

### Landscape Contractors:

Todd Myatt & Scott Myatt,  
Myatt Landscaping Concepts, Fuquay-Varina, North Carolina

### Hardscapes:

Gary Mazur & Joe Steele  
ENVISIONS Raleigh, North Carolina

### Landscape Lighting:

John Garner  
Southern Lights of Raleigh, Inc. Raleigh, North Carolina

### Architects:

Bill Hirsch & William Hirsch Jr., AIA  
West End, North Carolina

### Home Contractor:

Glenn Ahrens  
BRW, Inc. Chapel Hill, North Carolina

### Pool Builder:

Trey Marshall  
Aquatic Artists, Inc. Youngsville, North Carolina

## About Chapel Hill, North Carolina...

**Pop:** 57,233.

**Location:** north central part of the state, in Orange County.

**Center of town:** Sits on a hill that was originally the site of a chapel (1752), but now occupied by the Carolina Inn.

**Education/Collegiate Sports:** Home to the University of North Carolina (Bubba Cunningham, athletic director) and the Tar Heels. In colonial days, North Carolina was called the "Tar and Turpentine State."

**Name Calling:** "America's Foodiest Small Town," says Bon Appétit magazine.

**Culture:** Celebrated its bicentennial in 1993 by building the Chapel Hill Museum. One of its permanent exhibits is devoted to a talented native son, musician, singer-song writer James Taylor.

## Top, Right

Hanging blossoms of Peegee hydrangeas (left) with 'Artist Blue' Ageratum beneath the pool side lounge chair area. The wrought iron railing design was a team effort between the owners, the architect, BRW and the Storybook Farm Metal Shop. Fountain grass is the backdrop for the ironworks.

## Bottom, Right

The infinity-edge pool stretches out toward a privacy screening of mature trees. The pool garden in the foreground sports 'Harmony Scarlet' begonias, 'Victoria Blue' salvia and 'Star Gold' zinnias, red geraniums, 'Diamond Frost' euphorbia and blue Scavola. The pool was designed by architect William Hirsch Jr. and built by Trey Marshall of Aquatic Artists, Inc. of Youngsville, N.C.





**Top**

For the homeowner's auto court (there's also a guest auto court) a retaining wall was erected for a greater sense of enclosure and privacy from the street. It was necessary to cut back about three feet of earth to accommodate the retaining wall. Envisions did the paver surfaces; BRW constructed the walls. Floribunda and tea roses decorate the walled garden.

**Bottom, Left**

The home's east façade continues the wrought iron fencing theme on the balcony, behind which are the living areas, with the bedroom wing at left beyond the draped flag. Plantings here are Zhuzhou fuschia, Loropetalum, and Saucer magnolia, with Armand Clematis on the trellises and Boston ivy on the walls.

**Bottom, Right**

At the back pedestrian entrance to the pool garden and the screened porch area, climbing hibiscus shows off its purple-flowering seedpods at the gate.

The landscape architects of Sears Design Group used a diverse plant palette to enhance the indigenous landscape, while meeting the owner's desire for seasonal interest and beauty.

The owner continues to add plants to the gardens as her passions lead her. The plantings are watered from a large cistern that captures rainwater and connects to the irrigation system. The irrigation was designed for effective watering through micro-zoning for precise watering of the plants and turf. As the various plants become better established the irrigation will be adjusted to address their lower water use needs.

This residence serves as an example of a large footprint home successfully integrated with the natural ecology of a wooded site. The home reflects the owners' desire for a more elegant traditional architectural design, while being sensitive to and respectful of the native woodland environment. The entire team was honored to be part of this superb design effort.