

# HOME GROWN

A Greenwich couple's elegant landscape and an all-season  
potting shed show that beauty starts at home

landscape design HOMEOWNER

potting shed design AMY AIDINIS HIRSCH INTERIOR DESIGN

photographs AMY VISCHIO

The homeowner worked with the builder to design the property's hardscape, including the stone wall at the entrance, the curvature of the driveway and the front and back courtyards. The home's stone façade is softened by pruned nine-foot crabapple trees underplanted with 'Tide Hill' boxwood.







Lined with hornbeam hedges, the back courtyard features a grove of white birch trees underplanted with 'Green Gem' boxwood and grass. opposite: The front courtyard beckons with a gravel driveway lined with Belgian block. The potting shed resides on the right side of the porte-cochère.

**Amy, how did you begin working with the homeowners?**

Amy Hirsch: Initially they hired me just to accessorize their home. But one thing led to another, and soon we were updating rooms and editing rooms. They're wonderful and really genuine.

**That led to you eventually designing a beautiful potting shed for them—who is the gardener in the family?**

AH: The husband is a true horticulturist. It's a passion for him to care for the exterior of his home and the gardens. I was always joking that it was so funny that his work area in one of the garage bays was so tiny. He was creating this amazing, magical place outside and operating these majestic gardens while working in a four-by-two-foot space. I said, "This is crazy. He needs his own space." Homeowner: I think the phrase she used was, "That's pathetic!" I had commandeered one of the three garages, the single one on the other side of the porte-cochère. I had racks on the wall for my tools, shovels and rakes, and I had this little potting table that I bought out of a Smith & Hawken catalog and assembled myself. When Amy saw that, she said, "Your workroom doesn't do your garden justice. What would you think if we turned this into a potting shed?" I said, "Fantastic."

**It sounds like everyone was on board with the idea immediately!**

AH: Totally. We've had this trust going on for quite some time

with the interiors of their home, and now that we had moved out to this other area, it was a playground where we could be a bit more artistic. We were able to create this jewel box for a gardener, and the homeowners had an amazing contractor who executed the vision of what we were looking for.

**So the potting shed supports a real passion?**

Homeowner: Gardening is my therapy. I work in an office all week, so I can't wait to get my hands in the dirt on the weekends. It's a combination of instant gratification—taking a part of your yard that was just grass and turning it into an outdoor room—and watching it grow and evolve. Short-term, you get the four seasons of interest from it, and long-term, everything grows and matures and takes shape, and you do a bit of relocating. I love that you get both.

**What were some of the essential components of the potting shed?**

AH: The most important part was the flagstone on the floor; it was a concrete block before. The other big component was the reclaimed wood on the walls and beams—that's a huge moment of what encompasses this space. And the homeowners were an integral part of that; they sourced the wood. We went through three or four different companies to get the right kind.

Homeowner: I actually found the wood in Wisconsin; it's from a 100-year-old barn. They shipped out a piece, and Amy loved it and

approved it. We never would have used it if Amy hadn't approved it! It was a real collaboration with her, and my wife was really involved with it. My only contribution to the shed was tracking down the place that could supply the wood.

**Can this space be used year-round?**

AH: Yes. We put in a fan because the space isn't necessarily cooled by air-conditioning, and there's a heating unit.

Homeowner: But you won't find the heater if you tried, and you won't find the thermostat. It's all very discreet.

**How did you incorporate the existing garage door into the design?**

AH: We took the door off the track, cut it down the middle and put it on hinges. We added great twig hardware from Rocky Mountain Hardware, and now the door expands open. It's more inviting and adds character to the space, so we were able to repurpose it.

Homeowner: From the outside, it looks like a garage because all three garage doors are exactly the same, but on the inside, it looks and functions like a potting shed, where you can open the doors

and haul things in and out. It gets a ton of use. Amy's always admonishing me to mess it up a little bit, but it gets plenty messy.

**Speaking of messes, it looks like the sink can easily handle those.**

AH: The sink was a huge thing. You could put in a counter and make a cabinet underneath for storage, but I wanted the sink to be substantial and functional and also an element within the space that sat on its own. We created the base out of the same reclaimed wood, and the top is honed jet mist stone. It's really deep so you can put plantings and buckets in it, and you can hose things down with the sprayer. The sink isn't dainty—what drove that was more function than aesthetic.

**On the opposite side, the workspace looks substantial as well.**

AH: It's pretty big, close to ten feet long. The idea was that it was a working space, so we did a zinc countertop. The beauty of zinc is the more you beat it up, the more beautiful it becomes. This is a place for him to work and grow seeds. Above are lights from Restoration Hardware with grow bulbs in them, so in early spring,





"We were able to create this **JEWEL BOX** for a gardener!"

—AMY HIRSCH







The patina on a 1950s American concrete urn from Barbara Israel adds interest in the front courtyard.

or even before spring, he's able to grow seeds. He can also have his books out there for reference. Underneath is storage for containers and watering cans, and we gave him a seat so he can be comfortable.

**Where else were you able to accommodate storage?**

AH: On the left and right of the window are closets, and trowels, hoes and all the things you would utilize within a garden are in those. The seat in front of the window also lifts up for more storage.

**With this shed, you now have a dedicated space for your gardens. Do you do all the garden and landscape work yourself?**

Homeowner: I'm sort of the general contractor and chief laborer on the job, but I do get help. I have a great guy who's been with me for a long time who helps with planting, and he also does a lot of the maintenance. I always say that I've created a monster—it's grown beyond my ability to keep up with it! From April through October, I probably spend all day on Saturday and half a day on Sunday. On Saturday, I generally have two or three guys here with me, and on Sunday, it's just me.

**How would you describe your planting palette?**

Homeowner: We like to do things pretty simply. It's greens and

whites, and we don't tend to mix a bunch of different plants; we stick to a pattern of two or three plants in each of the gardens. It's different textures of green, like boxwood, holly, andromeda and evergreens, and then different seasons of white. My wife says I can plant anything as long as it's white. That makes my life easier!

**There are several different garden venues on your property. How did the pool area and formal garden come together?**

Homeowner: The pool area was a major project. We put in the pool deck and pavilion and refinished the existing pool interior with Pebble Tec. We also put in the stone walls, hornbeam hedges and the teahouse. The house was something I saw in a book, and I had it made in New Hampshire—it's all timber-framed post and beam cedar. In front of the teahouse is the formal garden. It's very formal in structure with evergreens and boxwood and the urn in the middle, but we softened it up with some grasses, and in June, it's a profusion of peonies with roses.

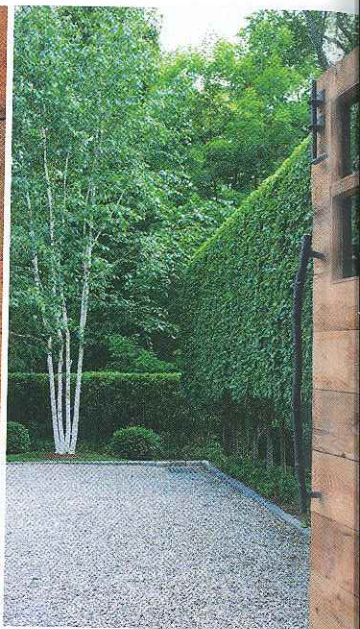
**Amy, did you help design or furnish any of the outdoor entertaining spaces?**

AH: We updated the finish of the interior of the teahouse to make it look more aged and authentic, and we also assisted in furnishing

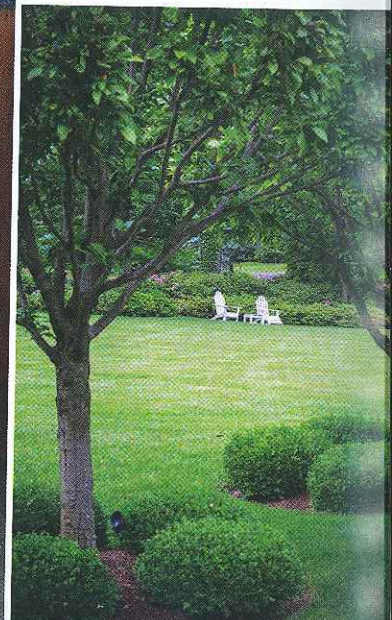


"I get a **HEAD START** on each **SEASON** because I have a place to do it."

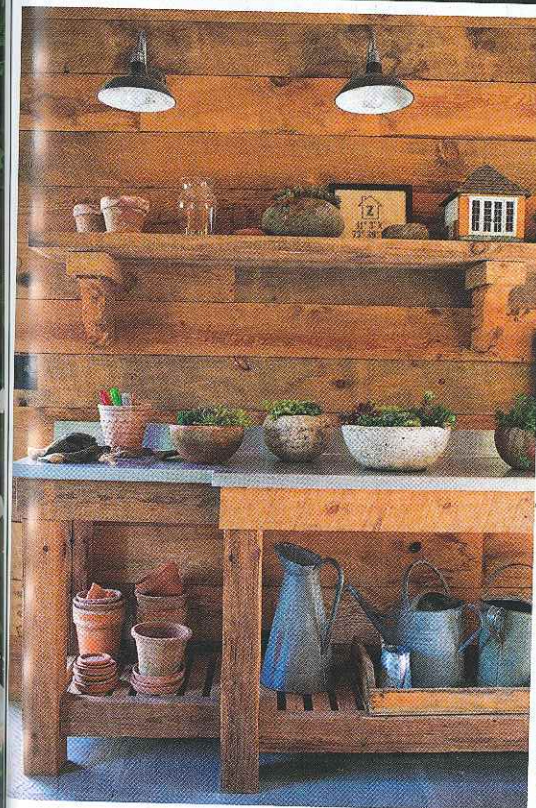
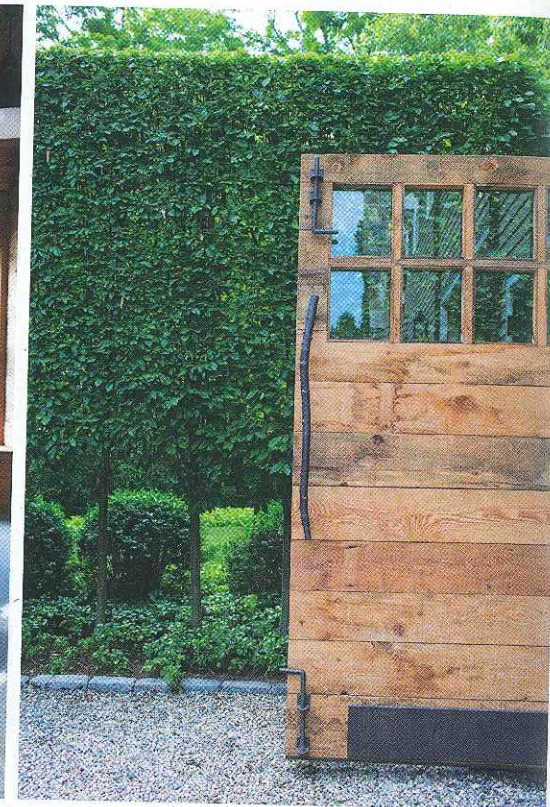
—HOMEOWNER



above: The shed opens up to the back courtyard, making it easy to haul materials and tools to and from various areas of the property. left: A commercial-grade faucet handles planters and buckets with ease. below: 'Harvest Gold' crabapple trees bloom with pink-tipped white flowers in the spring and debut yellow berries in the fall. In the front corner of the property, Adirondack chairs offer a moment of respite.

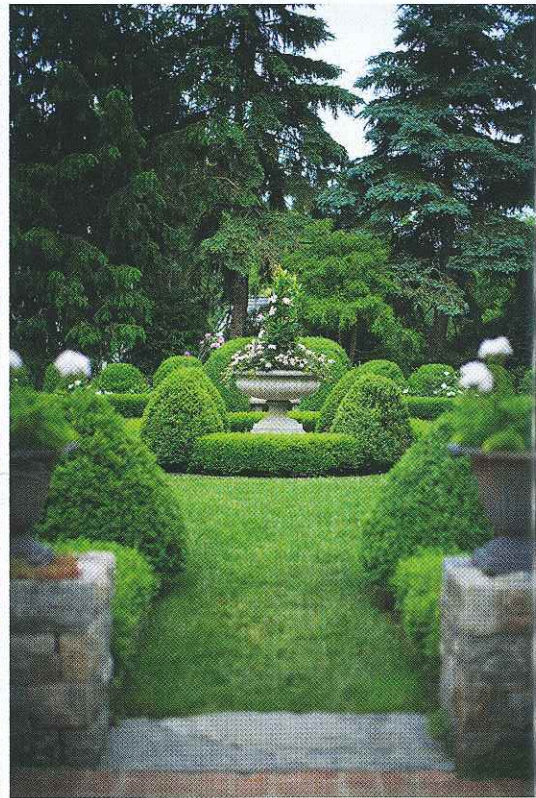
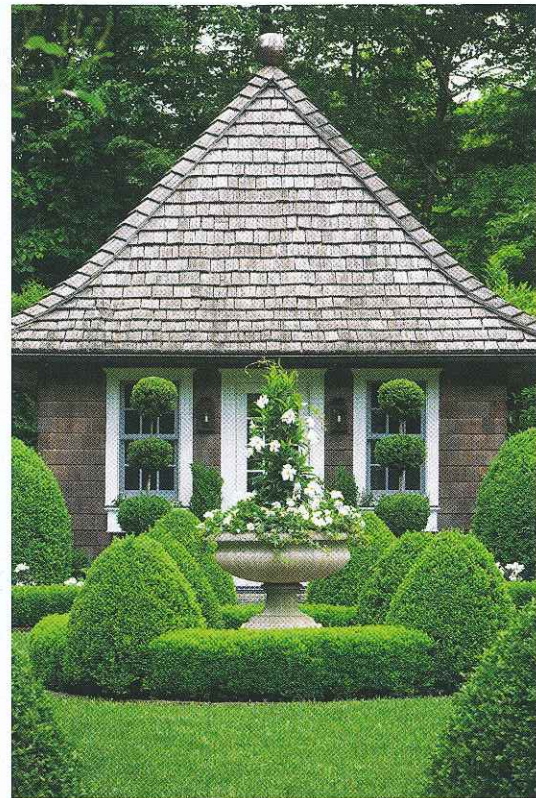






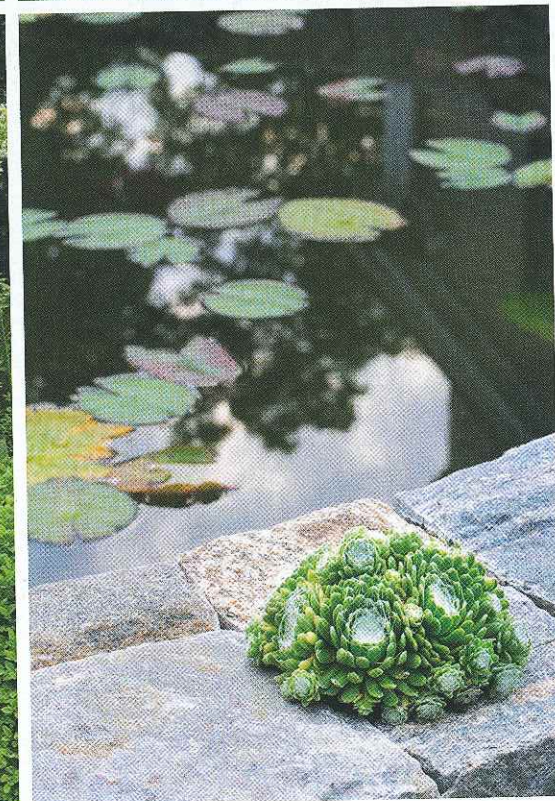
top left: In the back courtyard, the white bark of the Himalayan birch trees provides a pleasing contrast to their shiny green leaves. top center: The sink's reclaimed wood base offers plenty of accessible storage. top right: The existing garage door was cut down the middle and transformed into two doors that open out. above left: Restoration Hardware lights installed with grow bulbs are used to cultivate seeds. opposite: A white mahogany gate nestled into a hornbeam hedge leads from the back courtyard to the rear garden venues.





top: The pool terrace and pavilion encourage lingering and relaxation during family gatherings. above left: Seating by Restoration Hardware makes the pavilion a perfect sunny-day escape. The resin wicker provides additional texture against the Perennials outdoor fabric. above, center and right: Anchored by a large urn and featuring sculpted evergreens, boxwood and roses, the formal garden is a profusion of white peonies in the summer. opposite: The homeowner was able to find and maintain the unique four-ball boxwood topiaries that flank the entrance to the teahouse.



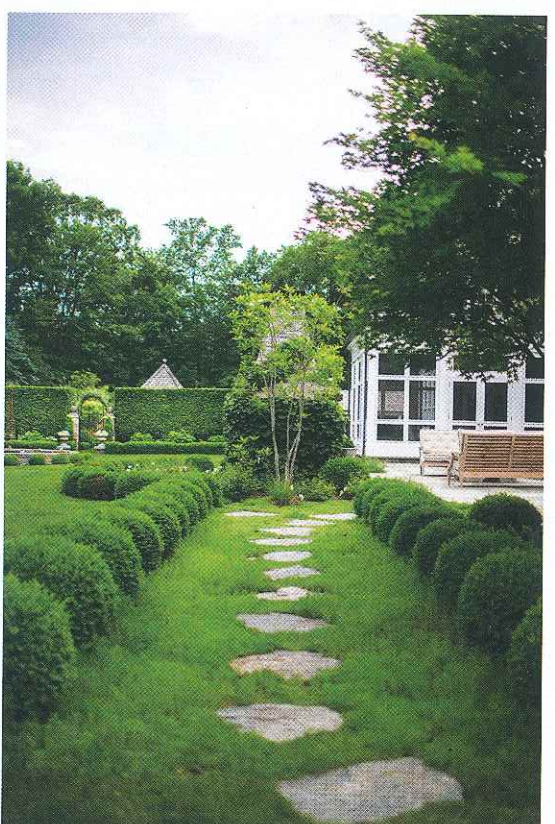
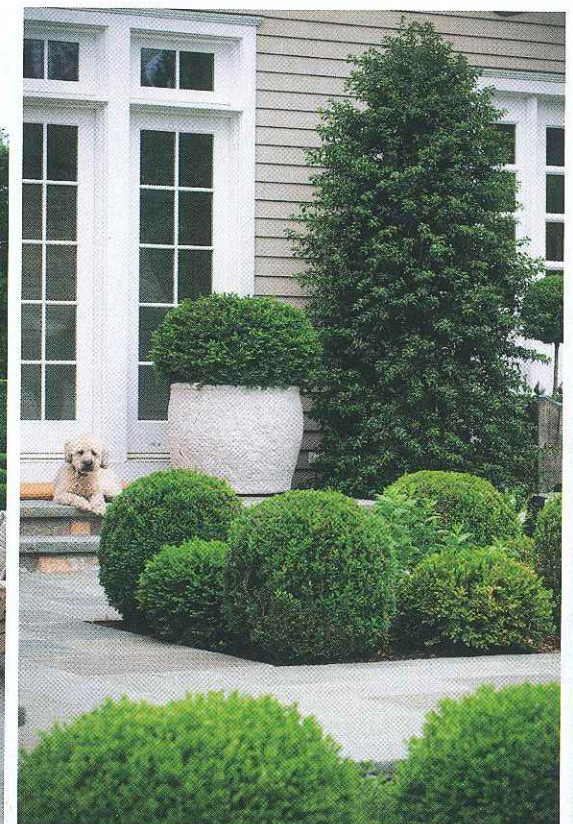


top right: An allée of 'Winter King' hawthorn trees showcases their mottled bark. above left: In a corner of the rear lawn, a wire ball sculpture is an artistic touch. opposite: A lily pond encircled with 'Justin Brouwers' boxwood enchants with an iron bowl fountain that lights up at night. Sited on an axis with the home's kitchen and screened porch, the lily pond houses frogs that the homeowners' grandchildren love to look for when they visit.

"I work in an office all week, so I **CAN'T WAIT** to get **MY HANDS IN THE DIRT** on the weekends."

—HOMEOWNER





left: The back patio fireplace was intentionally aligned with the glass-windowed back door to ensure a welcoming view. "When you come in the front door, you can look through the foyer and out the back door and see that fireplace," says the homeowner. "It looks great when it's lit." center: The family dog relaxes among clipped boxwood, 'Dragon Lady' holly and a reproduction rain barrel planter. right: A path of stepping stones rests on top of chamomile. "It's unbelievably fragrant when it's crushed as it's walked on," says the homeowner.

the pool pavilion. There's a lot of sun there, and the wife wanted to retreat under the pavilion without having to go inside or into the teahouse, where you could feel disconnected from the family. They have children and grandchildren, and it's really important that everyone comes together and interacts.

**Did the back patio furniture get updated as well?**

AH: The Sutherland furniture was existing, and we refurbished the cushions. The homeowners loved the idea of a mattress cushion, so we changed out all the cushions for mattress cushions for a more charming, English feel. We also changed out the top of the coffee table with a great black absolute trenched top.

**Looking back, how has the potting shed impacted your gardening?**

Homeowner: I'm more organized. My tools get sharpened in the winter because I have a place to do it. My to-do list gets made because I have a place to do it. I get a head start on each season because I have a place to do it. I'm able to do everything I need to do.

**Were you able to check off everything on the wish list for the shed?**

AH: We did everything we wanted to do. Anything was better than this tiny, shoved-in-a-corner desk; he deserved something more. You could see how he needed to function, and there were

certain requirements—places to work, and the idea to grow his own seeds was huge because he didn't really have that before. Nothing could be fragile; I like the fact that it gets dirty because that's the whole point. And it's very easy to clean—there's a drain in the middle of the floor, and you can hose it down or sweep it out into the courtyard.

**What was your favorite part about creating this space?**

AH: The idea really blossomed into this creative space for him. We turned what was once a garage into an incredible workspace, and I love that he uses it. The most rewarding projects are the ones that aren't just seen from afar; he interacts with it almost daily. That's really rewarding, and it makes him happy. For me, that's success. Homeowner: Amy is fantastic. She's great at so many things, and one of the things she's really great at is she works with you to make your crude idea a really good one. I think her happiness comes from helping clients do something they could never do on their own, and that was the potting shed.

**RESOURCES**

Landscape design: Homeowner  
 Landscape construction: Eloy Vera Landscaping, White Plains; 914-328-1135  
 Potting shed design: Amy Aidinis Hirsch Interior Design, Greenwich; 203-661-1266; amyhirsch.com