

Pleasure Gardens

Torontonians are transforming their lawns, terraces and backyards into opulent oases. Here, a few of the city's most creative landscape designs

BY JEAN GRANT



EMERALD FOREST

A multi-purpose courtyard in Deer Park

When a veteran landscape architect and his wife decided to redo their Deer Park backyard, they knew exactly what they wanted: a contemporary space that felt like an extension of the house's indoor aesthetic. They collaborated with Roundabout Studio, the same firm that helped modernize their home. "We tried to give every outdoor space a purpose," says Roundabout designer Daniel Harland.

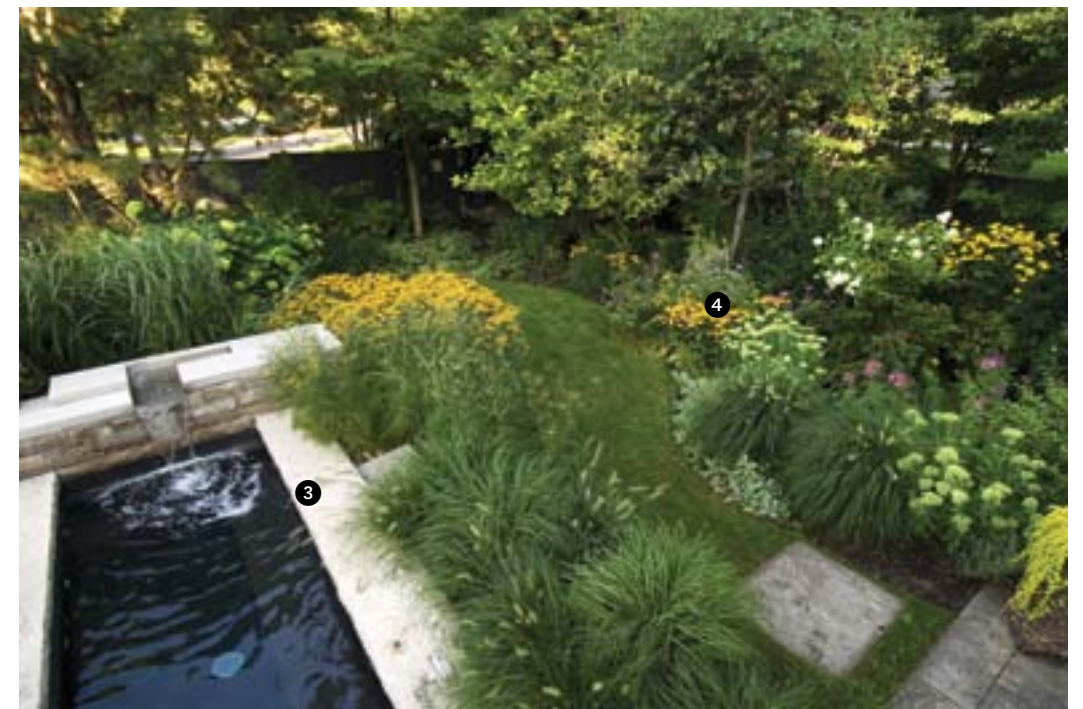
- 1 The yard's terraces are made of ipe, a Brazilian hardwood.
- 2 Lush grasses and hydrangeas complement the existing maples.
- 3 The secluded garden at the back of the yard has a sculptural ipe bench that's ideal for relaxing with a book.
- 4 The loungey dining area off the side of the house is known as the "gin and tonic deck."

EAST MEETS WEST

An eclectic garden in Oakville

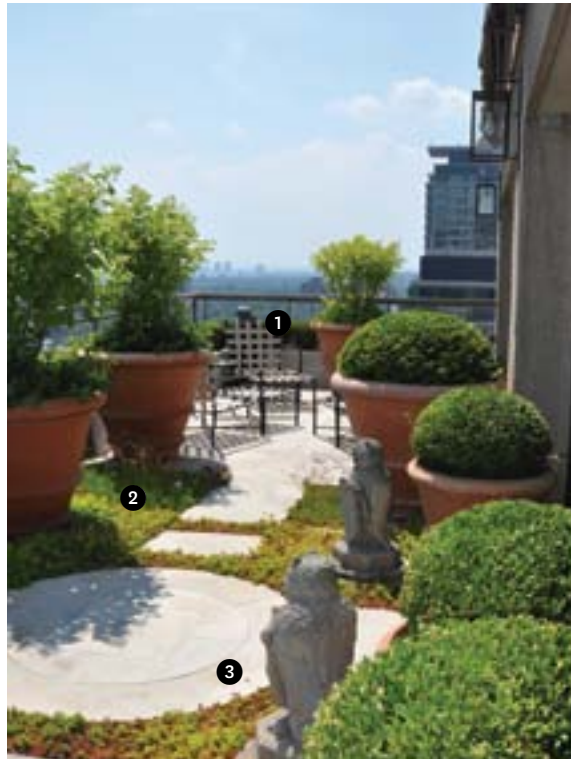
The owners of this Oakville garden transformed their sprawling outdoor space in phases, making sure each piece was perfect before moving on. "It has a painterly quality that's all about adding layer after layer," says landscape designer Janet Rosenberg. The backyard is inspired by the English countryside ("The pool is very David Hockney," she says), while the ultra-modern front yard resembles a Japanese garden.

- 1 A giant concrete bowl filled with moss brings a Zen quality to the entranceway.
- 2 Rosenberg planted low beech hedges, lavender and tall ornamental grasses.
- 3 The eight-person hot tub doubles as a tranquil water feature when not in use.
- 4 The backyard looks like an English garden, with tall trees, shrubs and wildflowers.



HIGH LIFE

A luxurious green roof in Yorkville



When these owners downsized from a mid-town home to a 25th-floor Yorkville condo, the only thing they missed was their garden. They wanted their new terrace to be as lush as possible, but the location proved a challenge: the harsher weather and low soil depth make balconies difficult to greenify. Landscape architect Janet Rosenberg tore out all the concrete and devised a green roof system that changes colour and vibrancy with the seasons. Now, they have a terrace that's just as lush as the garden in their old home—only this one has a stellar view of downtown.

1 A seating area is lined with boxwoods and terracotta planters filled with hydrangeas.

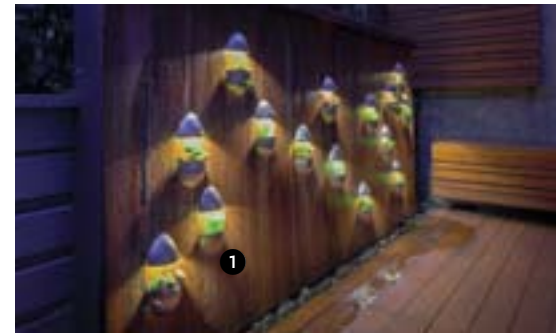
2 Rosenberg layered the terrace in pre-planted strips of perennials and herbs.

3 The natural stone walkway leads from the dining area to the lounge. It will develop a beautiful patina over time.

FANTASY ISLAND

A purple paradise in the Beaches

A pair of art collectors recently transformed their Beaches home into a contemporary paradise, and later enlisted landscape architect Kim Price to do the same for their backyard. They wanted clean lines, modern features and artsy details, plus space for a parking pad at the back of the property. The highlight of the space: an otherworldly water installation on a raw and burnished steel backdrop, which looks like something out of *Avatar*.



1 The water feature is decorated with egg-shaped planters, which light up at night.

2 Price set out to make the yard as inviting as possible, surrounding several lounge areas with hydrangeas and wild grasses.

3 She constructed an architectural cedar structure to block the view of the parking pad.

BOARDWALK EMPIRE

A tropical retreat in Forest Hill

The owners of this three-storey semi in Forest Hill are a brother-sister pair who both work hectic hours and love to entertain. When they hired landscape designer Jennifer Hayman, their yard was a long, skinny strip of grass that sloped down toward a derelict old shed. Instead, they wanted a serene outdoor space that would be equally suited to lazy afternoons and raucous dinner parties. “We tried to use a lot of zen materials that you’d find in Southern climates,” Hayman says.



1 The shed was built into a retaining wall, so Hayman restored it and turned it into a rustic focal point.

2 By day, the pond is a peaceful retreat. At night, floating spheres light up and transform it into a sparkling centerpiece that provides a dreamy ambiance for their guests.

3 The owners love the tropics, so Hayman constructed a Florida-style boardwalk out of ipe.

4 To deal with the sloping terrain, Hayman terraced the property into two levels, so the dining area is slightly higher than the rest of the yard.