



MATTHEW
CUNNINGHAM
LANDSCAPE
DESIGN LLC

matthew-cunningham.com



MATTHEW CUNNINGHAM LANDSCAPE DESIGN LLC

ESTABLISHED 2004

PHILOSOPHY

A garden is a living organism, evolving over time.

Matthew Cunningham Landscape Design LLC creates lush, award-winning residential landscapes throughout the Northeast. Our unique understanding of what it means to live in seasonal New England drives our environmentally distinctive approach. Our patron-focused process is dedicated to creating and implementing meaningful, authentic design solutions that grow directly from the geometry and materiality of our clients' homes. Our plant-centric projects strengthen the connections between interior and exterior spaces, bridge indoor and outdoor lifestyles, and grasp the dynamic rhythms of everyday life.

We derive immeasurable passion from the region's landscapes and combine traditional Yankee building techniques with high design. We personally engage with clients and their design teams and work with only the finest craftspeople to ensure beautiful and robust landscapes that quickly feel contextual, established, and mature. The results are lush, contemporary landscapes for people's homes, built from a collaborative process with our clients.

ABOUT MATTHEW CUNNINGHAM

Matthew Cunningham has quickly established himself in New England's design community as an award-winning landscape architect who derives immeasurable passion from the landscapes of the region and from his rural roots in the verdant, rocky coast of Maine. He combines 25 years of plant expertise with a deep appreciation for local history and traditional Yankee building techniques. Matthew has committed his career to projects that merge excellence in design with ecologically sustainable principles. With each landscape, he seeks to bridge his clients' indoor and outdoor lifestyles. He is a hands-on professional and works closely with only the finest craftspeople to ensure beautiful and robust landscapes that feel almost instantly contextual, established, and mature.

Matthew holds degrees in landscape architecture from the Harvard University Graduate School of Design (MLA II) and from the College of Social and Behavioral Sciences at the University of Massachusetts Amherst (BSLA). His distinguished academic record includes Certificates of Honor from the American Society of Landscape Architects at both institutions. Prior to starting his practice in 2004, he worked for the renowned firm Reed Hilderbrand Associates where he contributed to dozens of institutional and residential design projects that have been celebrated nationally.

Matthew's gardens have been widely published in New England Home, Design New England, Architectural Digest, The Designer, Design Bureau, and Garden Design Magazine. His firm was named "Best of Boston Home 2013" by Boston Home Magazine and "Best of Houzz" by Houzz.com for 2013 and 2014. In April of 2013, Matthew was also named a 2013 "Five Under Forty" award winner by New England Home Magazine, the first landscape architect to receive the honor.

MATTHEW CUNNINGHAM LANDSCAPE DESIGN LLC

OUR TALENTED TEAM



MATTHEW CUNNINGHAM
PRINCIPAL



JUSTIN CORBETT
DESIGNER



JULIA ROSE SIM
DESIGNER



JEN STEPHENS
ASSOCIATE



RYAN WAMPLER
SENIOR ASSOCIATE

LE PETIT CHALET

SOUTHWEST HARBOR, MAINE | 2009

A durable, meaningful design heals a devastated residential property bordering Acadia National Park and Somes Sound on Maine's Mount Desert Island. Comprehensive stormwater management strategies shape new landforms, resulting in elegant grading and thoughtful drainage solutions. Native plant colonies stabilize the site, regenerate habitat, and reveal wildlife patterns. Exquisitely crafted new masonry, built from an authentic palette of local reclaimed materials, gives the garden a unified, established feel. Lichen-encrusted stone retaining walls define edges, thresholds, and overlooks, and thick slabs of salvaged granite embedded in the earth provide gathering terraces and pathways. With balance restored, brilliant seasonal drama unfolds.

The exceptional site presented extraordinary challenges because the property was in a state of complete destruction before MCLD was engaged in the project. Storm after storm scoured the property to bare gravel, after hurricane-force winds toppled century-old trees, uprooting thick, protective layers of existing vegetation. Only an exposed, depleted, and raw cross-section of earth remained, and it was rapidly eroding into the sea. MCLD was the prime consultant on this project and he was enlisted to restore the site after severe weather events caused extreme soil erosion across much of the property. The project grew out of a spirit of collaboration between the designer and the client, whose immediate commitment was to restore her devastated property. The true purpose of the project was to regenerate a fragmented landscape and to restore damaged site systems.

The rehabilitation of this damaged landscape required creative design solutions that embraced environmentally sustainable concepts. Low-maintenance strategies would need to heal as many damaged site systems as possible. The scope of the project was clear and included four primary goals: (1) to stabilize the site and prevent damage from migrating further into the sensitive surroundings; (2) to develop a site master plan that quickly moved stormwater away from the house; (3) to regenerate the fragmented vegetation community; and (4) to craft durable and meaningful outdoor spaces that capture the spirit of Acadia.

We coordinated the stabilization of the heavily damaged site; analyzed and assessed all existing conditions, vegetation systems, and wildlife patterns; generated the site master plan and stormwater management concepts; prepared construction drawings; coordinated bids; selected materials; oversaw all forestry management operations; enlisted a civil engineer to confirm stormwater management calculations; coordinated multiple sub-consultants; led the construction process; managed the budget; selected lighting and garden ornaments; and directed property maintenance. Site visits are still scheduled to observe site conditions and to provide on-going management recommendations.

Team: Matthew Cunningham Landscape Design LLC; Gardenform Landscape Construction; Andrew McCullough Engineering; Richmond So Engineers; Coastal Irrigation; McEnroe Builders; MCM Electric; Lucia Lighting; MDI Tree Service; Sara Bengur Interiors; William McHenry Architects; Victoria MacDonald Fine Gardening.

2012 Merit Award from the Boston Society of Landscape Architects

2011 International Gold Award from Association of Professional Landscape Designers





Thick carpets of moss cover the adjacent woodlands of Acadia



A new terrace composed of rugged slabs of salvaged granite are embedded in the earth



Soils are stabilized, and diverse habitat takes hold



Swaths of hayscented fern and low-bush blueberry blanket newly graded landforms with thick, fibrous roots systems



An infiltration trench collects and disperses stormwater from Flying Mountain



The house appears purposefully located and nestled within context



Swaths of native plantings stabilize and protect slopes from erosion



Native mosses are hand-tucked between joints, giving an established feel



Reclaimed stone terrace and seat wall overlooking Somes Sound at low tide, during sunset



Lichen and moss-encrusted stones patina newly-crafted masonry features



Fragmented habitat is quickly regenerated and wildlife patterns are restored



Acadia-inspired masonry details provide elegant and meaningful experiences



Granite wood-crib and fire bowl punctuate the sitting circle



Dense coastal fog creates amazing silhouettes in the garden



Afternoon sunlight washes the dining terrace and lawn



With balance restored, brilliant seasonal drama unfolds



The sun rises to illuminate a rich palette of native plants in early autumn



Spaces appear nestled into adjacent landforms and the property is healed



Morning sunlight illuminates a spectacular white pine

VALENTINE PARK

WEST NEWTON, MASSACHUSETTS | 2011

A new, shingle-style gambrel home is sited upon a gently-sloping, one-acre corner-lot in a gorgeous suburb of Boston. Mature trees populate surrounding properties in a long-established neighborhood. A lengthy house construction process erased valuable features from the landscape, revealing a stark and compacted canvas.

Restored ecological health is made visible by strategically locating new vegetation communities, and a vibrant new landscape is formed. Tightly-crafted Pennsylvania fieldstone retaining walls rise from the ground to retaining crisp landforms—the foundation of a lush, terraced garden. Rich perennial gardens surround the pool and spa, spilling over walls in dazzling multi-seasonal displays of color. The footprint of the new home appears firmly rooted, and intuitive planning reveals functional connections between the house and garden. Individual spaces host intimate gatherings and flow freely into one another to accommodate larger groups. Stone staircases glide through walls and connect bluestone terraces, and crisp wood fencing creates a private setting. The new landscape feels structured, contemporary, and permanent.

The property belongs to a busy family who sought guidance on the placement of a swimming pool and spa, pool house, tennis court, putting green, areas for entertaining, activity, and relaxation, driveways and parking, terraces, walls, grading, and planting design. The goal was to craft durable, memorable outdoor spaces that capture the spirit of the family's busy lifestyle, and to reestablish ecological balance to the property within the framework of a carefully monitored budget. Strict zoning guidelines defined design tactics, and site improvements incorporate sustainable, low-maintenance concepts, that heal damaged site systems. Heat and drought-tolerant plantings artfully reveal New England's exceptional multi-seasonal color palette. These prerequisites informed all stages of the design process.

The project received LEED Gold certification from the U.S. Green Building Council, and water conservation plays a lead role in the landscape design. A 3,400-gallon rainwater-capture system collects over 50% of the precipitation from the roof and is used to irrigate the property. A high-efficiency irrigation system maximizes coverage and minimizes water consumption. Areas of lawn are modestly scaled (only 30% of the site is carpeted with turf). A low-maintenance 95% native plant palette maximizes drought tolerance, providing spectacular fall color. All stones utilized in wall and terrace construction are sourced within a 500 mile radius of the site, and hand-picked slabs of reclaimed granite and antique cobblestones were used to construct the front walkway. Areas of porous peastone are located to allow water to percolate into the ground.

The project grew from a spirit of collaboration between the design team and the client. MCLD's role in the project included analyzing and assessing existing conditions; masterplanning; conceptualizing stormwater management and irrigation systems; designing the pool, spa, tennis court, fencing, terraces, walls, walks, planting, lighting, etc.; integrating site-related LEED sustainability concepts; preparing construction drawings; coordinating bids; coordinating consultants; hand-selecting masonry and plant materials; and overseeing property management.

Team: Matthew Cunningham Landscape Design LLC; LDa Architects & Interiors; Wellen Construction; Phil Mastroianni Construction; Everett M. Brooks; Snelling & Hamel; Columbia Design Group; Roome & Guarracino; Combined Energy Systems; Bisco Irrigation; Jill Litner Kaplan Interiors; Maverick Home Integration; Price Sustainability; Nina Farmer Interiors; Boston Tennis Court; Southwest Greens; Walpole Woodworkers.

2014 "Best Pool House of 2013" — Nanawall's Photo Story Contest

2013 Merit Award from the Association of Professional Landscape Designers

2012 LEED Gold Designation by the U.S. Green Building Council





The new landscape feels structured, contemporary, and permanent



Dappled morning sunlight washes the lawn and dining terrace



Interesting geometric juxtapositions are softened by drought-resistant perennials



The two-phased landscape is seamlessly integrated



Vibrant perennial gardens surround the pool and cascade over walls



Meticulously-crafted stonework and durable carpentry creates a private setting



Crisp masonry features reveal purposeful detailing



Hard and soft materials combine; the garden feels sophisticated, yet relaxed



Terraces are positioned to take advantage of sun and shade



Below-grade rainwater harvest tanks are carefully embedded below lush perennial beds



Interior and exterior spaces are thoughtfully linked



Carefully orchestrated changes in topography provide unique storage opportunities



Restrained detailing creates clean and refined spaces



The dream landscape fuses luxury vacation amenities with everyday living



Traditional and contemporary materials create unique landscape experiences that relate well to the home



Plants with interesting forms, textures, and growing habits soften spaces



Low-maintenance woodland plantings anchor the new gambrel home



A path of reclaimed granite slabs gives the home an established presence



Adaptive reuse of reclaimed and antique materials enriches the landscape



Plants with stunning fall and winter character are thoughtfully planted to help extend the seasonality of the garden

FRONT RIDGE RESIDENCE

PENOBSCOT, MAINE | 2007

A rural hillside residence in Downeast Maine serves as a model for regenerating fragmented native plant communities and restoring damaged site systems. Spaces carved from the landscape overlook stunning panoramic regional views, while new shrubs and trees define edges and thresholds. Vibrant perennial gardens encircle domestic areas, drawing eyes inward on foggy days. Sensible management practices guide the homeowner's effort to rehabilitate expansive areas of mown lawn. The property receives no supplemental seeding or irrigation, and the lush, seasonal meadow continually evolves. Low-mow zones are established and adjacent agricultural patterns are acknowledged. Brilliant seasonal drama is heightened along mown paths meandering through a rich tapestry of managed native meadow.

A contemporary farmhouse situated at the high point of a two-acre property floated in a sea of rough turf. Intensive site-wide mowing and fertilizing had destroyed site biodiversity. The yard immediately surrounding the house was void of character and related poorly to the agricultural context of the neighborhood. The south-sloping parcel offered gorgeous panoramic views of Downeast Maine and the Acadia National Park region, but provided little protection from intense seasonal weather patterns. With no identifiable microclimates, it was evident that the landscape was missing valuable layers of vegetation.

Our primary challenge for this project was to develop a site masterplan that could be installed in phases by the clients—a retired couple with grandchildren and pets. Each improvement had to heighten awareness of the changing seasons, incorporate low-maintenance strategies, and heal as many damaged site systems as possible within the constraints of a modest budget. The project grew from a shared passion between the client and the designer for the pastoral landscapes of Downeast Maine. The new design philosophy hinged on a solid core of vegetation management principles that revived fragmented native plant communities. These management strategies guided the site design process.

This landscape combats common and problematic environmental issues associated with the rapid suburbanization and commercialization of rural places. The work completed on this property protects scenic character, and establishes easy-to-implement property management techniques for any do-it-yourself homeowner. Expansive areas of turf are transformed into vibrant habitats that enrich local biodiversity. Excessive water and gasoline consumption is eliminated, and the long-term health of soils and the local watershed are improved.

MCLD's role in this project was to analyze existing vegetation systems and to prepare a property master plan that guided land management strategies for the site. Drawings provided to the client were used to install their own plants in phases. The homeowners continue to manage their own property and follow the initial management recommendations. Periodic visits are scheduled and the designer provides on-going advice.

Team: Landscape construction was completed by homeowners; MCLD directed planting layout.

2013 Merit Award from the Association of Professional Landscape Designers

2010 Merit Award from the Boston Society of Landscape Architects

2010 Exhibitor for Suburbia Transformed at the James Rose Center in Ridgewood, NJ





Sensible land management practices transform lawn into habitat



Spaces carved from the landscape overlook stunning panoramic regional views



New vegetation encircles the house providing enclosure, scale, and privacy



Mown paths are carefully woven through managed meadow



Reduced mowing encourages lawn to regenerate into a lush meadow



Vibrant perennials define spaces and provide rich layers of seasonal color



Lush perennial gardens draw eyes inward on a foggy morning



A rambunctious lab plays catch on a soft patch of mown lawn



Afternoon sunlight in late summer illuminates the meadow



Brilliant seasonal drama is experienced along thoughtfully mown paths

SOUTH END COURTYARD

BOSTON, MASSACHUSETTS | 2009

Historic Boston rises above a contemporary private courtyard in the city's South End. Steel-framed, whitewashed fir walls enclose a vibrant, durable garden. Innovative storage solutions make efficient use of limited space. Soothing geometric patterns visually extend the volume of the courtyard, and bright plantings punctuate the landscape. Native moss joints create a soft, porous carpet between antique cobblestones. A salvaged Maine granite pier rises from the earth to form the pedestal of a table—the centerpiece of the garden. Interior and exterior spaces blend to expand urban living.

This 415-square-foot, garden-level courtyard located in Boston's South End fits neatly into one of the City's most densely populated neighborhoods. Five and-six story brick row houses tower above providing a rich, urban backdrop. Surrounding buildings block much of the direct sunlight and form a sheltered space in a hectic city. The purpose of the project was to resolve privacy issues between the courtyard and an exposed corridor—all within a limited budget. Spatial limitations called for creative, space-saving details that could be installed without disrupting existing site infrastructure. The immediate goal was to unify and enclose the house entrance and courtyard. Every inch of space that belonged to the client had to be claimed. The new outdoor space needed to feel clean and minimal, while respecting its historic urban context. Privacy had to be restored, and the garden had to blend seamlessly with the crisp modern interiors of the home. New perennial plantings had to be hardy, shade tolerant, and thrive with minimal irrigation. In short, the client sought a durable garden with efficient storage solutions that could be easily maintained.

The transformation is exquisitely crafted and provides memorable, functional outdoor living space sensitive to the client's needs. A water-conscious plant palette was introduced in the garden. All existing hardscaping remains in place and the porous moss joints create a moist atmosphere in an otherwise impervious context. The project has significantly improved the aesthetic quality and visual character of this property, and the transformation has erased an awkward, poorly functioning space.

The project grew out of a spirit of collaboration between Matthew, the client, and the builder. A consistent and exciting dialog was maintained throughout the entire installation of the garden. MCLD analyzed and assessed all existing conditions; generated character and precedent studies; designed the site master plan; prepared construction drawings; selected materials; coordinated multiple sub-consultants; managed construction; selected plants, lighting fixtures, and garden ornaments; and guided property maintenance. MCLD personally planted all of the perennials, and continues to assist the owner with assembling annuals for containers.

Team: Matthew Cunningham Landscape Design LLC; Gardenform Landscape Construction; Cormac Byrne Builders; Cor Metals.

2011 International Gold Award from Association of Professional Landscape Designers

2010 Featured Property in the South End Garden Tour





A gliding corrugated steel door forms a crisp architectural threshold



Historic Boston rises above the contemporary garden



Verdant joints of native mosses create a soft, textural carpet



A finely crafted table is the centerpiece of the garden



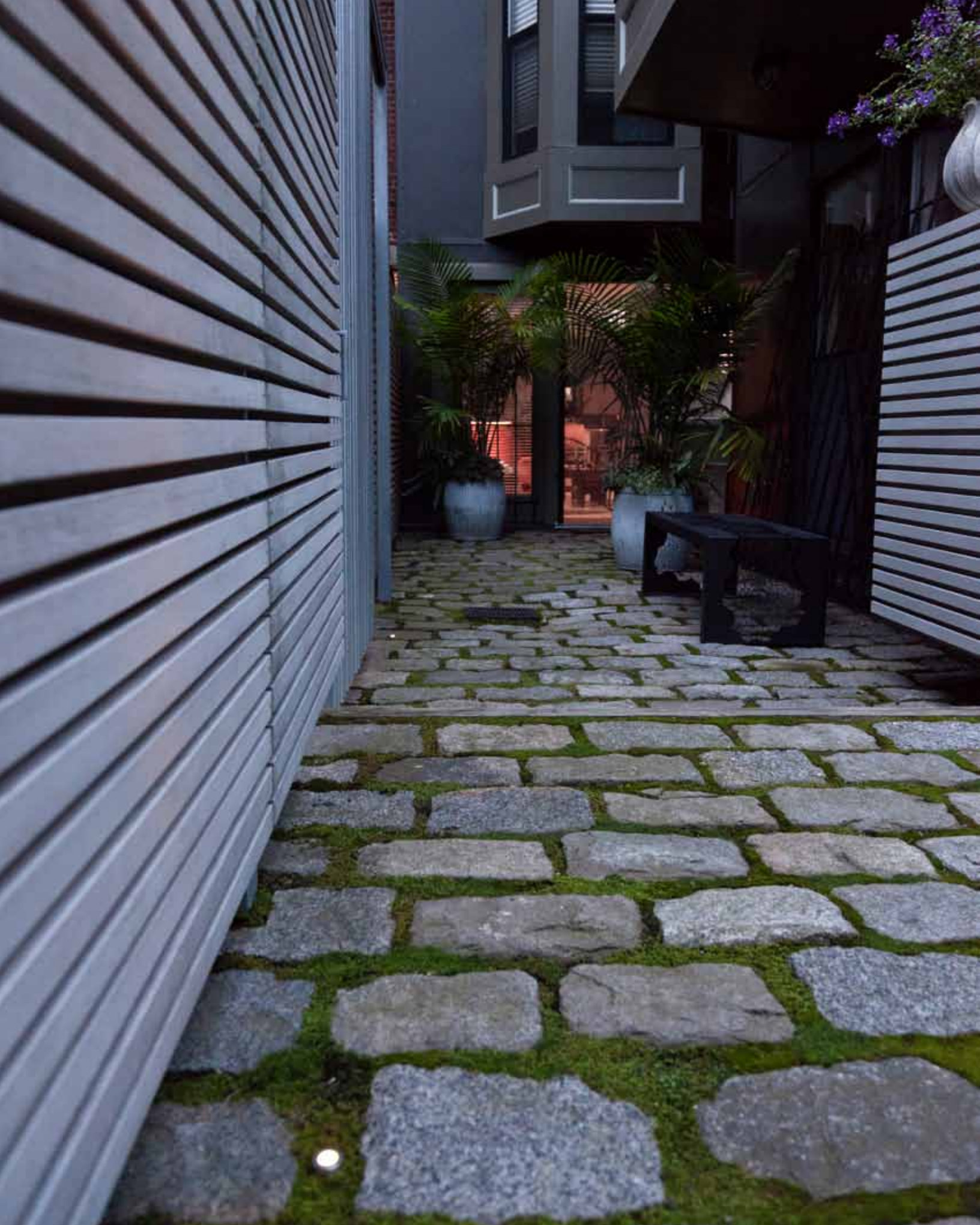
Custom-crafted removable brackets sit atop an antique granite pier



Seasonal containers provide screening and visual interest



Innovative storage makes use of limited space



Geometric patterns extend the volume of the courtyard



Outdoor urban living is redefined under evening skies

BELMONT HILL RESIDENCE

BELMONT, MASSACHUSETTS | 2006

An early-twentieth-century brick home situated at the high point of a 1.35-acre parcel enjoys dramatic south-facing topography, gorgeous views of conservation land, muscular canopy trees, remnant fieldstone walls, and native stone outcroppings. The design for this south-facing property reveals the true character of the woodland and celebrates the surrounding context. Sound vegetation management principles guide each phase of installation and long-term management strategies are identified. A crisp palette of traditional and contemporary materials merge. Exquisite dry-laid stone walls form terraces that traverse native topography, while meticulously crafted stone staircases provide casual passage to a gently sloping lawn knoll carved from the hillside. An intricately patterned brick patio, an herb garden, and lawn terrace overlook conservation land. Low-maintenance, drought-resistant perennial gardens and native plants create edges and thresholds.

The clients requested a thoughtful, phased master plan. Their goal was to artfully reclaim areas lost to invasive plants and to create new spaces that responded to the woodland context. Interior and exterior connections needed to be defined, and improvements had to be contemporary and inviting. The new garden needed to blend unique materials and make the existing topography and woodland more evident. In short, the new landscape had to encourage exploration of the sloping site and increase awareness of the adjacent conservation land.

Our work focused immediately on developing solid vegetation management principles, which included the removal of invasives and the rehabilitation of depleted soils. This strategy guided all subsequent stages of his site design process, resulting in the establishment of several unique vegetation zones on site. In short, spaces within the landscape needed to physically and visually engage the aforementioned zones.

Massive colonies of invasive and overgrown plants were eradicated and replaced with drought-tolerant vegetation. Soils were improved and the woodland continues to be carefully managed. The clients are committed to maintaining the property organically, without dangerous herbicides and pesticides. New swaths of native plants provide habitat, an abundant garden full of life.

MCLD led the analysis and assessment of the existing site conditions and systems; prepared character studies; developed the master plan; prepared construction documentation; coordinated bids; collaborated with arborists and transplant specialists; orchestrated invasive plant removal; monitored construction; and developed property management strategies.

Team: Matthew Cunningham Landscape Design LLC; Gardenform Landscape Construction; Mass Tree Land Trust; Rehl Gardens; Hartney Greymont.

2013 Gold Award from the Association of Professional Landscape Designers

2009 Merit Award from the Boston Society of Landscape Architects





A gravel path passes through a multi-seasonal perennial border



Mid-summer plants provide a fantastic vegetative threshold into the property



Dappled morning sunlight washes a tightly-crafted, dry-laid Massachusetts Goshenstone wall



Drought-resistant, aromatic perennials spill over path edges in late summer



Colorful plants with bold form and texture provide continuous, multi-seasonal excitement



Salvia, peony, and other spring favorites mingle throughout the drought tolerant perennial border



Interesting materials are thoughtfully juxtaposed



A mature oak provides dappled shade above the thoughtfully positioned terrace



Fall leaves scatter upon a richly-patterned brick terrace



Alternating bands of peastone and brick overlook muscular birches



A sunlit promontory provides stunning panoramic views of conservation land



The Massachusetts Goshenstone wall blends gracefully into the lawn slope



A meticulously crafted stone staircase slices through retaining walls, connecting multiple outdoor spaces

BEECH LEDGE RESIDENCE

BROOKLINE, MASSACHUSETTS | 2012

An impeccably restored manor-style home from the early 20th century stands prominently on a two-acre parcel dotted with ledges and rocky outcrops in an established Boston neighborhood. The home feels secluded and private, with mature trees populating surrounding properties. At the start of the project, the only element that anchored the house to the landscape was a magnificent copper beech. The home was otherwise surrounded by vast areas of asphalt and lawn, stark remnants of construction staging zones from the extensive renovation.

The primary design goals were, first, to use plants to shape memorable outdoor spaces that enrich the established features of the land and, second, to restore and make visible a greater sense of ecological balance. The family sought guidance in creating a masterplan to introduce and exploit the seasonal attributes of plants to highlight the home and draw the family outside throughout the year. They needed a garden with thoughtful integration of sophisticated, yet kid-friendly, entertainment spaces, resilient activity zones, and serene areas for contemplation and relaxation. The clients also wanted an inviting drive, parking solutions, new terraces and walkways to take advantage of the surrounding amenities, and concepts for making the house feel integrated and contextual.

A hauntingly beautiful garden, evolving with a sense of abandon, brings a timeless quality to this house. The elegant centennial beech, which once felt haphazardly relegated to one edge of the property, is now spotlighted all year long, with new garden elements oriented around it. Substantial areas of lawn are converted to managed meadow with knee-height grasses to strike textural contrast with the building. Durable swaths of native hayscented fern are spread along woodland edges, and select puddingstone outcrops are enhanced with carefully positioned colonies of viburnums and flowering dogwoods. The ledges become a celebrated feature of the property. The new landscape is structured, calm, and crisp. Bluestone paths lead to a central peastone court, and the expansive asphalt parking area is artfully split into two separate zones, one for everyday vehicle use and a second for active play. Formal fothergilla hedges create dynamic, all-season structure at the entry court, where parallel bands of natural cleft bluestone slice through bold masses of hakonechloa grass. Gorgeous displays of seasonal color and texture are positioned within full view from the first floor, where a linear parterre filled with an abundance of low-maintenance perennials and herbs produce armfuls of fragrant flowers, spring through fall. These elements integrate poetically into the family's kitchen-centered lifestyle. The flower garden becomes a favored spot to enjoy a cup of tea beneath the dappled morning shade of the preserved copper beech between the moments of bustle.

With new, robust colonies of vegetation established, the rejuvenated landscape and house are alive and buzzing with wildlife. Remaining turf areas are preserved for open play, and a meandering path system is carved into surrounding woodland edges. Soft, fragrant masses of lavender overflow a planting bed between the house and terrace, where furniture and seasonal planters are arranged to create a cozy, contemporary atmosphere. The landscape incorporates new spaces that invite activity and that merge seamlessly with the established context.

Team: Matthew Cunningham Landscape Design LLC; Gardenform Landscape Construction; Titan Irrigation; CIS Bailey Landscape; The Garden Concierge.

2014 Merit Award from the Association of Professional Landscape Designers





Formal fothergilla hedges create dynamic, multi-season structure



The new landscape is structured, calm, and crisp



Inviting spaces merge seamlessly with context



Areas of turf are converted to managed meadow



Yoshino cherry trees are thoughtfully placed in the managed meadow



Grasses move gently in the breeze; the landscape is serene



A hauntingly beautiful garden evolves with timeless abandon



Fresh, inviting plantings highlight the home's entrance



Natural cleft bluestone bands slice through bold masses of hakonechloa



A linear parterre garden is abundant with gorgeous perennials



The beds produce armfuls of fragrant bouquets spring through fall



Fragrant masses of lavender soften the terrace threshold



A magnificent copper beech anchors the house to the landscape



Remaining turf areas are preserved for open play



Brilliant displays of seasonal color and texture define spaces



Select Puddingstone outcrops are enhanced with viburnum and flowering dogwoods

FARLOW HILL RESIDENCE

NEWTON, MASSACHUSETTS | 2008

A classic wood clapboard and brick Colonial home built in 1916 stands proudly on a sloped, north-facing lot. While two prominent yews frame the house, creating a lovely threshold, its façade suffered from overgrown perimeter plantings, which blocked sunlight from the modern interior.

A vertical height of 9 feet (~3m) separated the main floor from the landscape. Rotten wood decks and staircases restricted movement in the yard. The property suffered from significant drainage problems, with water penetrating basement walls and causing erosion. A gorgeous specimen tree hydrangea loomed awkwardly above a loosely stacked Pennsylvania fieldstone wall that bisected the yard, and an aged bluestone terrace with frost-heaved stones had failed. The garden was overgrown and had fallen into disrepair.

The property belongs to a busy professional couple with teenage children and pets. Their primary goal was to create a unified, contemporary garden that made use of wasted space. Design solutions had to adhere to a local 3-foot (~1m) maximum grade change ordinance, and storm water had to be directed away from the house. The maximum grade change ordinance along with spatial limitations and topographic extremes dictated the design approach. Connecting indoor and outdoor spaces required creative space-saving solutions. Thoughtful grading concepts resolved drainage problems and remedied tricky spatial and circulation issues.

A durable, contemporary garden provides context-sensitive gathering spaces that celebrate dramatic topographic changes on a northern slope. New stone retaining walls rise from a carpet of native ferns, forming the foundation of a lush, terraced garden. A multi-level mahogany deck with stainless-steel railings extends over site walls and overlooks a stunning stand of mature hemlocks. New wood staircases provide several flexible circulation routes from the house and encourage movement across the platforms. The garden accommodates both large and small gatherings. An elegant in-wall staircase exhibits efficient beauty and becomes a conversation piece. A new sugar maple blocks unappealing views, and a transplanted tree hydrangea becomes a dazzling late-summer focal point. Fountain grasses soften deck edges, while a casual grove of lilacs spill flowers through the railings in late spring. In the front, the removal of overgrown perimeter plants reveals an elegant façade, and a new perennial garden merges with the existing yews to create an inviting threshold into the property.

The design seamlessly weaves site-stockpiles of salvaged Pennsylvania fieldstone and bluestone with new materials. The sturdy mahogany decking is FSC certified. Fresh plantings require little maintenance, and much of the property is replete with native, moisture-conserving plants. MCLD analyzed and assessed existing conditions, developed precedent studies, prepared construction drawings, coordinated sub-consultants, and arranged bids. Responsibilities included coordinating demolition, guiding transplants, identifying materials for stockpiling, monitoring construction, selecting site furnishings, and coordinating garden maintenance.

Team: Matthew Cunningham Landscape Design LLC; Robert Hanss Landscape Construction; Ricci Brothers Construction; Bay State Irrigation; Snelling & Hamel.

2013 Gold Award from the Association of Professional Landscape Designers



Newly constructed stone walls and lush native plantings retain landforms



Creative details make efficient use of limited space



Dapples sunlight gently illuminates the garden throughout the day



A salvaged bluestone sitting terrace nestles beneath a transplanted tree hydrangea



Sculptural stonework rises prominently from a verdant fern carpet



Creative and contemporary materials merge to create fantastic visual contrasts



Stainless steel cable railings and mahogany posts provide safe, airy enclosure



Ornamental grasses casually spill over the hard edges



The elevated dining deck optimizes space and overlooks a mature grove of hemlocks



The removal of overgrown foundations plantings reveals an elegant facade



A reclaimed granite slab becomes a new number post set within a lush perennial border

LONGWOOD GARDEN

BROOKLINE, MASSACHUSETTS | 2012

A stunning new home and landscape reinvent a dated ranch-style developer property for outdoor-focused, contemporary living in the busy heart of urban Brookline, near the Emerald Necklace and Fenway Park. The clients, an accomplished professional couple with two young boys, jump at any opportunity to be outdoors, especially to surf and to be near the ocean. They requested a landscape that would fuse “California-style outdoor living” with a fantastic New England vernacular.

The success of any masterplan would hinge on creative stormwater management, include low-maintenance, drought-tolerant plantings that thrive with minimal care and on flexible areas for active play and entertaining. The new interior and exterior spaces, by intention and design, would be sparse with minimalist decorations and furnishings.

Beautifully textured board-form concrete walls retain and elevate a new front garden, where a fantastic porch and steel vine structure overlook the busy urban streetscape. The inviting new setting includes a contrasting plant palette of native “beachy” meadow plants with incredible foliage that drapes softly over the wall to break up hard edges. A stunning new concrete staircase glides from the front door to the sidewalk and circulation is cleanly defined. An auspicious new parking court utilizes charcoal-colored porous unit pavers above an 18-inch bed of crushed stone to allow stormwater to percolate into the watershed.

Permeable peastone paths flank both sides of the house, providing passage between the front and back yards. A steel and wood screen planted with dwarf American wisteria provide important structure and privacy to the northern edge of the garden. Separate dining and sitting terraces are consciously sited to avoid cluttered views from the two-story floor to ceiling windows on the rear façade of the house; the inside and outside are visually interconnected. A wood pergola provides dappled shade to the dining terrace, and a small kitchen garden provides fresh herbs for outdoor grilling. The entire rear yard is re-graded and stormwater is directed away from the home. A new flat lawn is cut into the slope becoming an incredible amenity. The slope is densely planted with coastal woodland species and provides a wonderful green buffer between a shared fence-line along the back of the property. Reclaimed granite slabs from a local, decommissioned sea wall become fantastic new benches and risers in the garden. The stones retain landforms and provide impromptu overflow seating for cookouts. Their history becomes part of the garden’s story.

This project brings calm to a neglected, city dwelling, drawing an active family outside even when they cannot be engaged in more distant pursuits. The work illustrates concepts using simple materials that can be replicated at any scale and budget. It provides a model of easy living in an intense urban place and embraces complications caused by extreme weather and more limited plant options than in a warmer climate.

Team: Matthew Cunningham Landscape Design LLC; Martin Lucyk Landscape Construction; Brite Builders; Stern McCafferty Architects; Corbett Irrigation; The Stone Farm.

2014 Merit Award from the Boston Society of Landscape Architects

2014 Exhibitor for Suburbia Transformed at the James Rose Center in Ridgewood, NJ



Board-form concrete walls retain and elevate the front yard



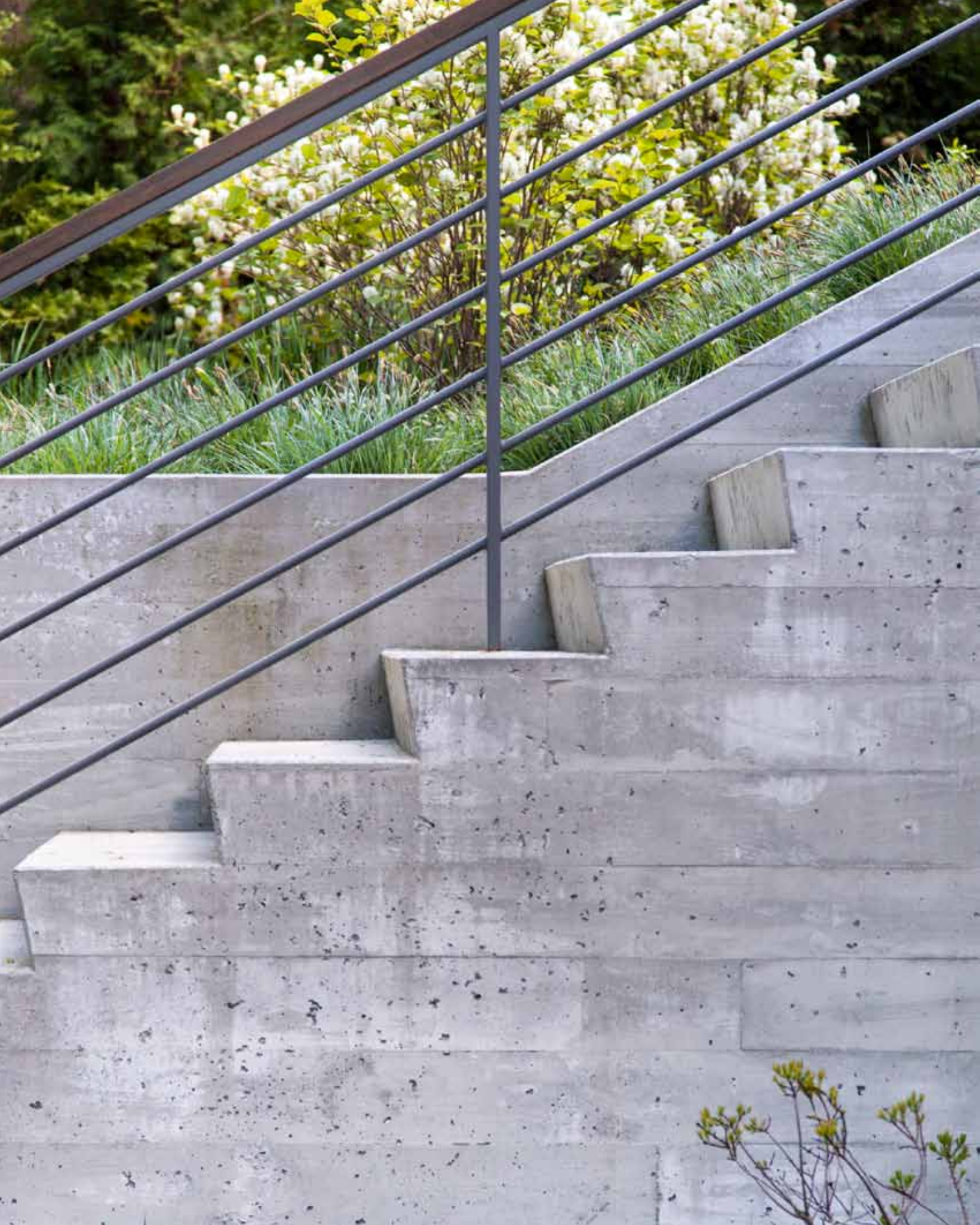
Native plants are the backbone of the garden



Porous pavers allow stormwater to percolate into the watershed



Plants with contrasting foliage drape softly over the walls



Circulation is cleanly defined and the home is inviting



A fantastic front porch overlooks the busy urban streetscape



The densely-planted slope is replete with coastal woodland species



Ornamental grasses glow in afternoon sunshine



Linear bluestone paving spills onto a lush activity lawn



A wood pergola provides dappled shade to the dining terrace



The densely-planted slope is replete with coastal woodland species



An historic, reclaimed granite bench becomes an excellent conversation piece



Reclaimed stones retain landforms and lush natives stabilize soils



Drought-tolerant plantings thrive with minimal care



Terraces are sited to avoid cluttered views from inside



The garden provides areas to enjoy both sun or shade



A stunning mature burr oak becomes a property highlight



Vibrant groundcovers are a nice alternative to the status quo



The yard emulates calmness in an otherwise hectic urban place



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