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Home Improvement

As the snowbells and crocuses begin to peek through the cold, damp soil of March, many of us look around our homes and gardens after New England's deep freeze to see what improvements are needed. I know for my own home, the list is long: repair the side porch, paint the garage, and replace some rotten clapboards on an old shed. While these are must-do chores, I have other "wish list" entries—for one: update my kitchen cabinets and countertops. And I am *always* searching for ideas!

This home-centric issue is chock-full of kitchen design inspiration, whether your tastes are modern or classic or somewhere in between. Designer Patricia Finn remodels an outdated kitchen in Beverly, creating a clean, bright eat-in space for two empty nesters. The couple's tall-order wish list for the 13- by 13-foot space included new cabinetry, additional storage, and better appliances. Traditional cabinets and a butcher block island offer ample storage in this timeless space, while stainless steel appliances make kitchen tasks super efficient.

Designer Dennis Duffy takes a different approach to a kitchen remodel in Swampscott. A dark, somber space, it needed a major face-lift and better workflow. Duffy gutted and rebuilt the entire room, adding surfaces in granite and glass that create a sleek yet functional space for the family.

We visit with Christian Tosi, owner of the Regatta Group, who recently took over TRK Design in Marblehead. Tosi is a master craftsman with an eye toward detail, creating dream kitchens for his clients all over the region.

Local designers also give great advice and ideas on how to take alfresco dining to the next level by adding an outdoor kitchen. Speaking of alfresco, we pay a visit to antiques dealer Andrew Spindler and his Cape Ann garden by the sea. A rock garden in the truest sense, the grounds are bursting with boulders left behind by ancient glaciers. Spindler and his husband, Hiram Butler, have created structure and beauty in this wonderful "secret" garden.

And we visit executive director Lara Lepionka to learn about Gloucester's Backyard Growers, a nonprofit program that helps homeowners create their own food-producing gardens. Since its inception, the program has fostered 150 raised-bed gardens in the city.

We hope this issue of *Northshore* offers ideas, inspiration, and the resources to help get your house projects under way this spring.

Nancy Berry

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page 64

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page 206

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Patricia Finn's kitchen design

features

182

SUMMER DELIGHT

Carpenter & MacNeille turns a Manchester-by-the-Sea house into a family retreat.

BY REGINA COLE

190

GET GROWING

Lara Lepionka is turning the city of Gloucester into a veggie garden mecca.

BY KILEY JACQUES

198

BARN SALVAGE

Ipswich architect Mathew Cummings transforms an old barn into a sun-filled living space.

BY NANCY E. BERRY

206

COLORFUL ESCAPE

Wilson Kelsey Design updates an Ipswich cottage for relaxing summer stays.

BY ALEXANDRA PECCI

216

STONE STRUCTURE

Antiques dealer Andrew Spindler's breathtaking Cape Ann gardens.

BY KATHERINE GUSTAFSON

ON THE COVER

Coastal cottage in Ipswich by Wilson Kelsey Design

photograph by Michael J. Lee

THIS PAGE

Andrew Spindler's Gloucester garden

photograph by Eric Roth

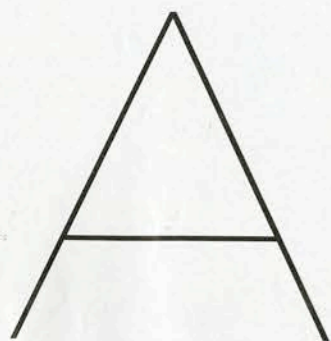


Stone Structure

Andrew Spindler has an eye, not only for fine antiques, but also for nature's boldest elements.

by Katherine Gustafson | photographs by Eric Roth and Trent Bell

photograph by Eric Roth



Andrew Spindler loves his boulders. It might be a surprising devotion for an antiques dealer, a man of refined tastes whose airy home on an East Gloucester bluff and well-established shop in Essex are devoted to objects ornate and fragile.

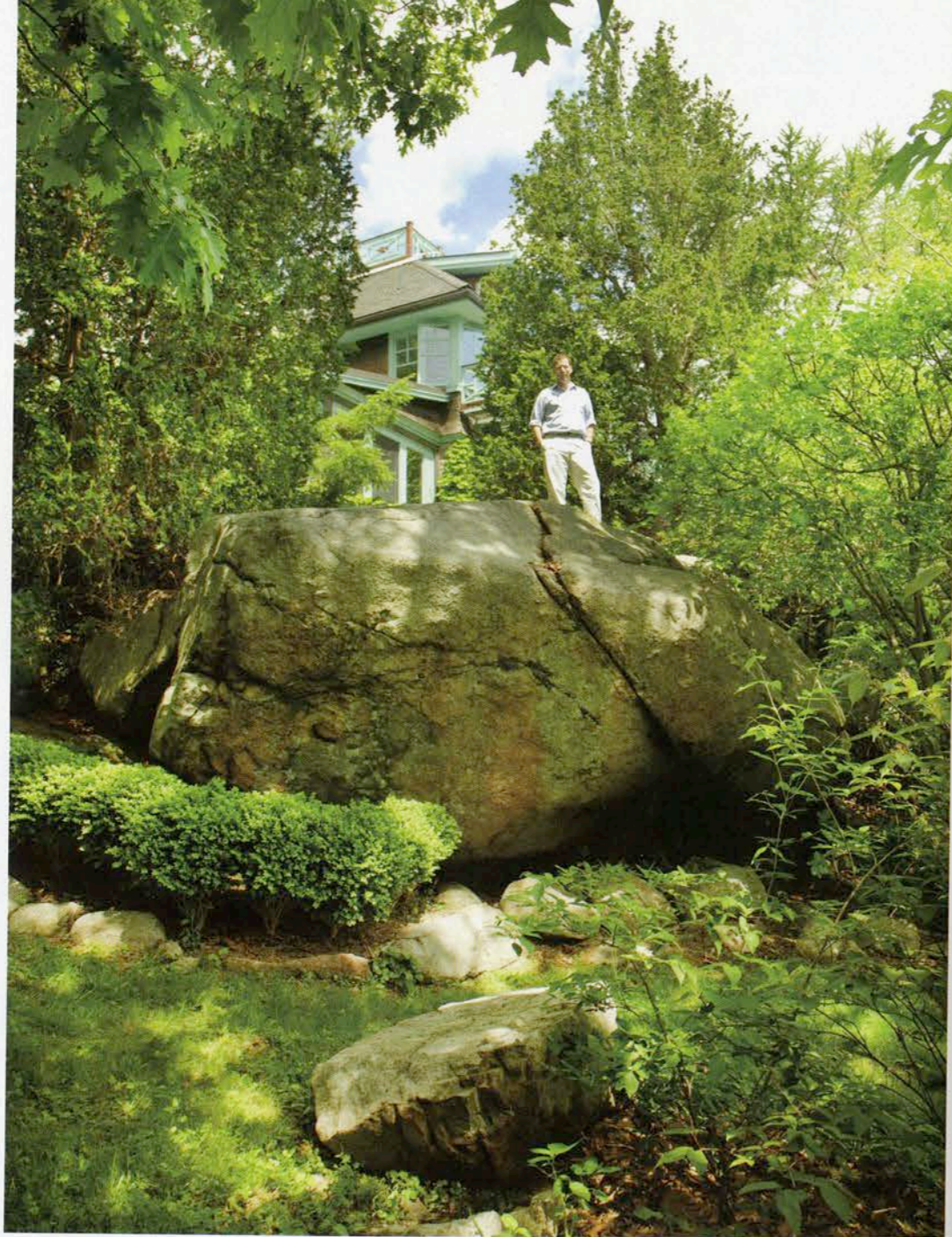
But he insists that the boulders—massive glacial remnants called “erratics”—are an essential element of the magical, labyrinthine 1.5-acre garden that winds and twists away from the back door. The presence of these erratics makes this garden unique—and uniquely Cape Ann.

“In this garden, the stone creates this field of amazing, sculptural presence,” says Spindler, who has lived in the lovely 1937 Arts and Crafts house since 1990 and now shares it with his husband, Hiram Butler, a contemporary art dealer who lives most of the time in Houston, Texas. “It gives a lot of structure to the garden. There’s a real shape to it.”

It’s this shapeliness that accounts for the garden’s secretive and somewhat fantastical sensibility.

“There’s hardly any level ground,” says Spindler. To stroll its pathways, over rocks and under tunnels of junipers, is “like going on a little adventure. You have to walk through it and find plants and benches and passageways. It’s kind of a secret garden in that way.”

The varied features of the landscape naturally divide the space



Above, Andrew Spindler. The massive boulders in Spindler’s garden are known as erratics.

into sections with different characters and purposes—from the upper garden, with its stone-lined terraced beds, to the inward-looking Japanese-inspired garden with its two ponds.

“It doesn’t reveal itself in one view,” says Spindler. “You have to move through it to discover it.”

What a visitor will discover is a wide variety of native plants, including hardy varieties that can burrow

between the rocks and bloom in the North Shore’s short growing season: diverse grasses, climbing hydrangea, irises, peonies, daylilies, flaming arborvitae, and a katsura tree.

Western larch trees flank the terrace outside the living room, framing the house and adding a splash of brilliant color in the fall, when their soft needles turn orange before falling off. In the winter, their shapes match the vigorous





quality of the garden's craggy landscape. "Their limbs are very sculptural, like a Japanese woodcut," says Spindler.

The garden was first conjured from the hillside by Mr. and Mrs. William H. Taylor, who built the house as a summer home in 1937. The Bass Rocks area of Gloucester,

where the house is situated, was a popular seasonal retreat for the elite in the early 20th century. Mrs. Taylor was an avid gardener and a member of the American Rock Garden Society.

When Mr. Spindler arrived a few owners later, he made improvements focused on strengthening the

relationship between the interior and exterior spaces. The terrace was seven feet lower than the house, so he added granite to bring it level with the living room floor and installed French doors to link the two spaces.

The terrace now provides a kind of outdoor "room" and offers

The house and garden sit on an East Gloucester bluff.

striking sea views, which are as expansive as the garden's nooks and crannies are hidden. The terrace features a sculpture titled *Revelation* by Gloucester artist Walker Hancock, one of the "Monuments Men" tasked with saving art from destruction during World War II. The bronze figure's dramatic





Above, Andrew Spindler. The conservatory is simultaneously functional and a place for respite.

upward gesture seems intended to greet the sun and moon as they rise.

Beside the terrace, the leaves of an espaliered pear tree lick the light-green kitchen window, which overlooks the Japanese garden. Spindler designed this intimate space tucked amidst boulders and enlarged the window to bring a sense of lush greenery inside the kitchen.

The indoor-outdoor connection is also apparent in the garden's various outbuildings. A stone teahouse, which previous owners had named "Petra," fits snugly amid rocks and trees. A greenhouse to the west side of the house and a detached stone garage on the north side of the property interspersed the living and working spaces throughout the site's natural landscape.

Trying to tame this craggy bluff is a difficult task, and while Spindler has continued the effort to create an inviting and delightful outdoor space to match the grace of the house's interior, the strong natural character of the site is the garden's strongest attribute.

"It's a very North Atlantic landscape," he says. And indeed, the ancient history of this region can be read in those beloved glacier-deposited boulders.

"We've added stone walls and pathways to domesticate it and temper the enormity of the stone," Spindler says. "But the part that nature did is absolutely astounding and very special."

He is finding nature's strong presence in his life to be increasingly valuable as time goes by.

"I find the connection to nature incredibly important, especially as I get older," he reflects. "There's a great sense of security and wonder and peace in nature. I get to experience it every single day, which makes me very, very grateful." njs



A teahouse seemingly grows from the natural landscape.

