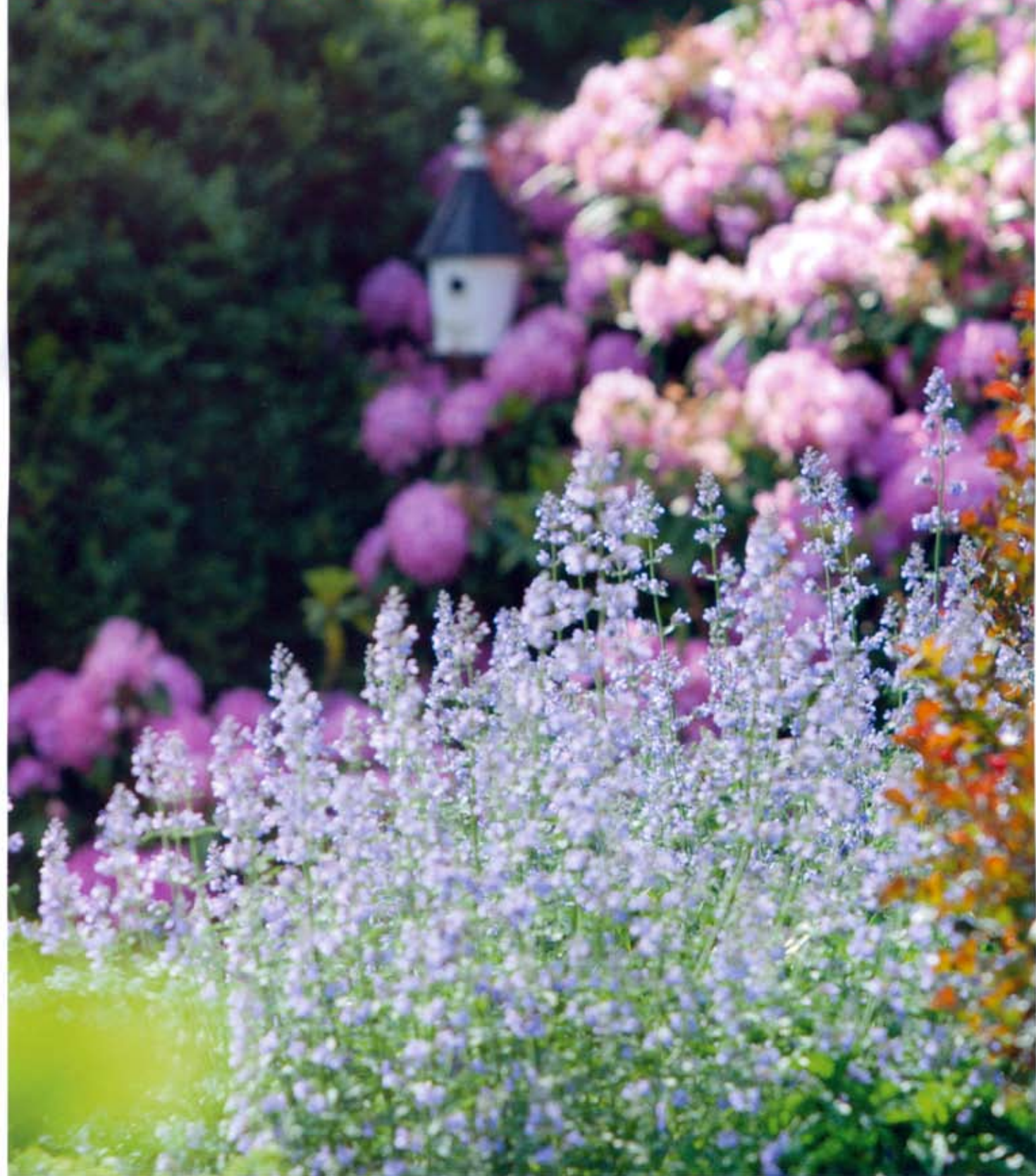


EAST COAST
HOME+DESIGN



In The Field

ANNE DIFRANCESCO +
SUSAN W. CAPPARELLE





The Super Natural



Gardens & the Search for Tranquility in Today's Frenetic World

To say we live in a “super-stress era” is an understatement. Increasingly ‘wired’ into our online, high tech world, we are simultaneously being bombarded with real-time job cuts, economic struggles, as well as over arching concerns like climate change and cataclysmic world events.

These mounting and multiple stressors have led to a deep, juxtaposing need for what we call the “Super Natural.” Transcending all age groups and markets, people yearn to return to a simpler, more “feel good” (some might say safer), place and time. A place filled with sensory elements to satisfy the five human faculties of sight, sense, sound, smell, taste and touch.

Perhaps one of the most obvious areas people can create and foster this oasis of serenity and sanity is in their own backyard.

Year of Bliss

In its 12th annual Garden Trends Report, respected public relations firm Garden Media Group (GMG) notes that people are searching for ways to find their “bliss” by re-considering how gardening and caring for Mother Nature bring joy and satisfaction. They hail 2013 as the “Year of Bliss.”

“People today are searching for ways to find bliss in everyday life. Being in nature – either in a garden

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or park or filling your home with indoor plants – adds immeasurable happiness and wellness to our lives. Connecting with nature is a necessity, not a luxury,” says garden trendspotter Susan McCoy, president of Garden Media.

Emerald Green in 2013

Historically each decade is represented by a host of prevalent colors (Pantone: The Twentieth Century in Color.) During and after WW2, for example, under the influence of full-blown patriotism and a booming economy, the two dominant colors were flamingo pink and powder blue. The disturbance and discord of the Vietnam era saw the rise of gibberish colors better known as tie-dye, while the ‘80s era of influence, fast money and decadence lent itself to black and metallic.

Years have their colors too, and perhaps it should come as no surprise that the choice for 2013 is emerald green.

Pantone LLC, the global authority on color and provider of professional color standards for the fashion, home and beauty industries, has announced PANTONE® 17-5641 Emerald, a lively, radiant, lush green, as the Color of the Year for 2013. ‘A color of elegance and beauty that enhances our sense of well-being, balance and har-

mony,’ touts their website.

Green’s time has come, explains Leatrice Eiseman, executive director of Pantone’s research arm known as the Pantone Color Institute. “It’s a color of growth, renewal, healing, unity and regeneration — words we’re all so in need of at this point of history.”

(<http://news.yahoo.com/emerald-green-pantones-top-color-2013-050449590--finance.html>)

Emerald green is indeed the perfect accompaniment to our perceived search for peace and tranquility amongst the hubbub of our modern lives. ‘Green’ is the new reality and consciousness on many levels, from ‘going green’ to ‘green building’ and ‘green living.’

And in everyday life, what could be a more peaceful and regenerative than a verdant, leafy green garden with smooth green lawns, green trees and beautiful, aromatic and sensual flowering plants?



Hoffman and the Fantasy Backyard

What better place to begin reconnecting with Nature than in your own backyard.

Hoffman Landscapes, a high-end landscape firm from Wilton Connecticut has long recognized clients’ emotional need to experience the ‘super natural’ and made it a cornerstone of all their landscape



Sight

work. The firm's 25 years of experience in creating beauty through the 'fantasy backyard' has allowed them to play a pivotal role in their customers' lives by providing a stress-free environment right outside the home.

In fact your garden can become the perfect oasis for stimulating and/or soothing the senses. You can create this milieu by incorporating different plants, flowers and shrubs to titillate each of the five senses.

"Hardiness zones 5-6, which are based on average temperature minimums, offer a wide array of choices for plantings that will thrive in our climate conditions here in Connecticut," says Brian Cossari, landscape architect at Hoffman.

Sight

What would a garden be without the most splendid colorful specimens to catch your eye and draw it here and there around the property. Shapes and colors galore abound in flower varieties – there's so much to choose from.

For pinks, reds and corals choose rhododendrons, azaleas, Rose of Sharon, peonies, roses, lilies, foxglove, sweet pea and hollyhocks. All provide bright spots in the garden.

For purples, periwinkles and blues choose hydrangea, lilacs, Nepeta, salvia, delphinium, hyacinth, vinca and spiderwort. These complement the other colors in your yard and draw the eye in since blues are rare in the garden color spectrum.

For white, creams and yellows choose dogwood, viburnum, lilacs, hosta, spirea, daffodils, primrose, baby's breath and Shasta daisies. These soft colors planted around more intense colors will blend your garden together.



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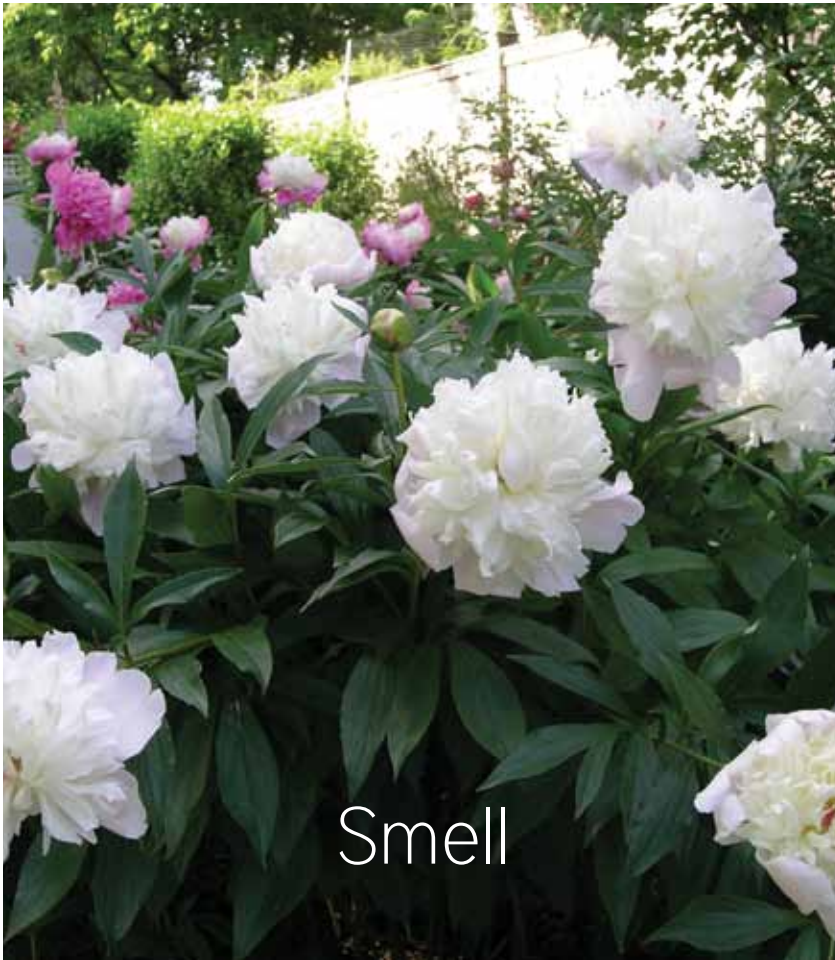
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In The Field



Sound



Smell

Sound

Certain plants and flowers attract birds, bees and insects, all of which can contribute to the lovely lull and sounds emanating from your garden.

Honeysuckle is one of the most flashy and fragrant flowers. It will attract bees, hummingbirds and butterflies all summer long. Nepeta and Annabelle hydrangea as well as coreopsis with their daisy-like flower heads also attract buzzing bees. Or try a cornucopia of coreopsis, cone flowers, clematis, columbine, and lantana to create a truly harmonious symphony in your own backyard.

Smell

It's one of our most powerful senses and can trigger memories that transport us back to long ago times and places.

Take Aromatherapy for example. Since the turn of the last century, Aromatherapy (the treatment or prevention of disease by use of essential oils found in nature) has been accepted and used for the purpose of altering a person's mind, mood, cognitive function or health. The influence of aroma on the brain stimulates the body to find natural ways to de-stress itself. Other stated uses include pain and anxiety reduction, enhancement of energy and short-term memory as well as relaxation.

Whether planted alongside a lawn, on a pathway's borders, or under windows, aromatic blooms guarantee sweet scents throughout your garden, all spring and summer long. Some of the sweetest smelling varieties include peonies, roses, lilacs, Nepeta, lavender



In The Field



Taste

and lemon geraniums. And don't forget herbs like thyme, dill, basil, chives, rosemary and mint all carry their own delicious perfumes.

Taste

Yes, there are such things as edible plantings – more than you may think. These include flora like nasturtiums, pansies, day lilies, and squash blossoms!

And backyard herb gardens filled with delicacies like thyme, dill, basil, chives and cilantro are ubiquitous these days thanks to the popularity of the new and luxurious outdoor kitchen. So create a small herb garden within reach of your outdoor kitchen stove top for easy picking, or for convenient on-site cutting and cooking.

Recipes that incorporate herbs in dishes can add a whole new dazzling array of favor to summertime meals. Try cocktails like mint juleps or mojitos. How about summer rolls with oregano and garlic butter? Or balsamic tomato salad and chives with a cheddar omelet? Try out chef's recipes found in books such as Deborah Madison's *Vegetable Literacy: Cooking and Gardening with Twelve Families from the Edible Plant Kingdom*, Bobby Flay's *Grill It!* or *The Edible Flower Garden* by Rosalind Creasy for more innovative ideas.

Touch

Plants, shrubs and flowers have a wide variety of textures among them. Some are smooth, some waxy, some spiky or even fuzzy. Having contrasting plant textures in the garden makes it an interactive experience that will contribute to the overall look and feel (literally) of your backyard.

Native flora with the most interesting and diverse textures to the touch include lambs ear, astilbe, verbascum, ferns, grasses, boxwood and sunflowers. To get an idea just compare and contrast the soft downy feel of lambs ear's velvet leaves against the spiky shoots of fern, or the rough, coarse centers of sunflower heads.

Let your own backyard become the oasis you seek, whether it's to stimulate the senses or simply soothe your frazzled nerves. You need look no further than out your own back door. ■

RESOURCES

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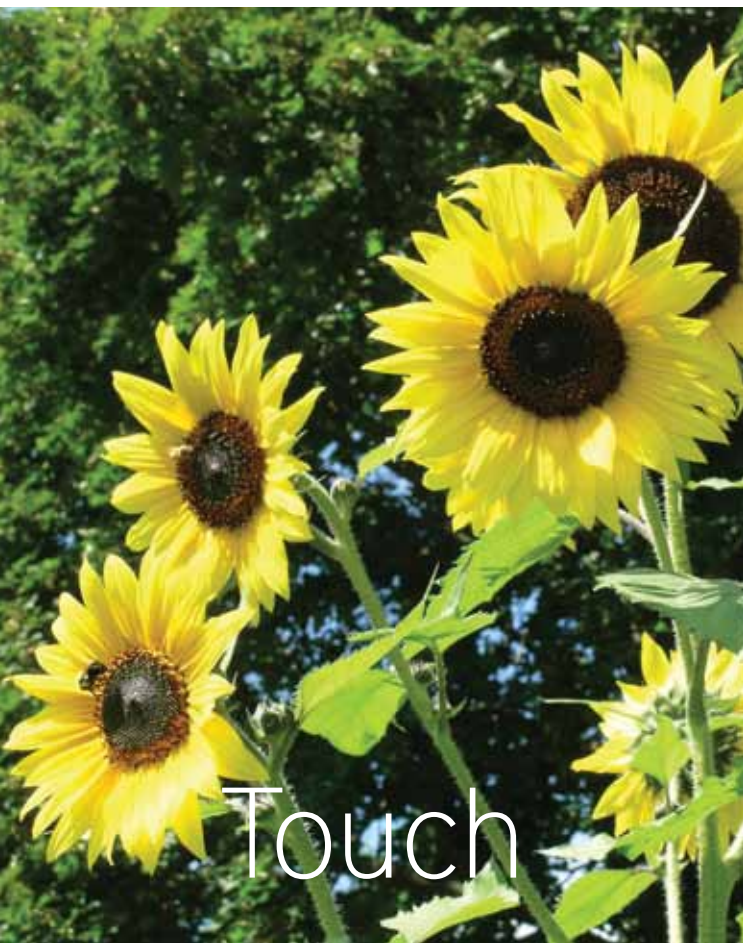
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