

summer cottage living

A site lends itself to formal and informal outdoor rooms

With renovations of a Victorian Connecticut home almost completed, the owners looked to Hoffman Landscapes, Inc. to develop a garden that would look appropriate stylistically, satisfy their desire for formal and informal outdoor spaces and provide additional outdoor living area.

Although the confines of the site make it small, both narrow and long, the configuration of the house allowed the designer to build not one but three different gardens, each with distinct personality.

A front garden with a handsome sweep of lawn and a gazebo is framed by boxwood, lirioppe, Nikko blue hydrangea as well as arborvitae and leads to the second garden through a charming gate and leafy overhead canopy. The traditional wrought-iron fence that separates the house and property from the street definitely says, "keep off the grass" to those strolling by, yet it encourages views of the property through its fancy iron openings rather than a solid wall. There, nepeta entwined with fairy roses entices people walking by to stop and take a peek.

A formal and sunny side garden was positioned to align with a kitchen

behind the scenes

Landscape designer: Hoffman Landscapes, Inc., Michael O. Hoffman, president, www.hoffmanlandscapes.com

Main plants used: Dwarf Alberta spruce (*Picea glauca* 'Conica'), weeping Higan cherry (*Prunus subhirtella* 'Pendula'), yarrow (*Achillea millefolium*), hemlock (*Tsuga canadensis*), Chinese astilbe (*Astilbe* cv.), hosta (*Hosta*), daylily (*Hemerocallis*), English ivy (*Hedera helix*), black-eyed Susan (*Rudbeckia* spp.), lirioppe (*Lirioppe muscari*), boxwood (*Buxus* spp.), butterfly bush (*Buddleja davidii*), Nikko blue hydrangea (*Hydrangea macrophyllus* 'Nikko Blue'), arborvitae (*Thuja occidentalis*), fairy rose (*Rosa* 'The Fairy' - polyantha)

Zones: 4-8

Challenge: Very small site that's both narrow and long

Favorite outcome: Three distinctly different gardens on one small site

Tapered arborvitae invite peeks beyond the ivy-covered gate.

Photography: Hoffman Landscapes, Inc.



Faux brick cuts a swath to the little gate, framing a petite fountain along the way.

window and has a walkway framed with boxwood, four Allegheny spruce and 10 arbutus. The walk paved in a material that mimics brick but is much more indestructible come winter since it doesn't crack. Leads around a fountain planted with blue muscadinia and fairy rose. A rear entertaining garden is more informal in design, which Hoffman felt appropriate since it is shady and lends itself to casual plant materials such as Chinese ostia and hosta. The urban location prevents invasion from deer so English ivy, black-eyed Susans, day lilies and caryopteris thrive. The area is large enough to accommodate a dining table and six stone walls act as additional seating.

Hoffman considers the best part of the garden to be its enchanting design. It's a tease for people who drive or stroll by. They tend to peer through the portal on the arbor and see what lies beyond.

How pros direct a viewer's eye

The right materials and architectural elements can direct a viewer's eye toward a focal point and spark curiosity but also offer some degree of privacy.

Curve beds toward a garden gate.

By filling beds with boxwood, limelight hydrangea and angling them in a curve toward a garden gate, all attention is directed at what lies beyond.

Keep the gate low and somewhat open.

Although it's meant to offer some privacy, the gate's slatted openings and soft green canopy above allow partial views and spur more interest.

Arrange a higher green wall behind.

A row of arbutus on either side of the gate offers additional screening, but the shrubs are clipped so that they, too, are a bit open at the top to encourage some additional peeks.



Low stone walls offer additional opportunities to lounge.

