

NEW HAMPSHIRE HOME

Inspired design and décor for the home and garden

Oceanside living

A fabulous Adirondack Style lake house

A traditional July fourth dinner

Luscious peaches

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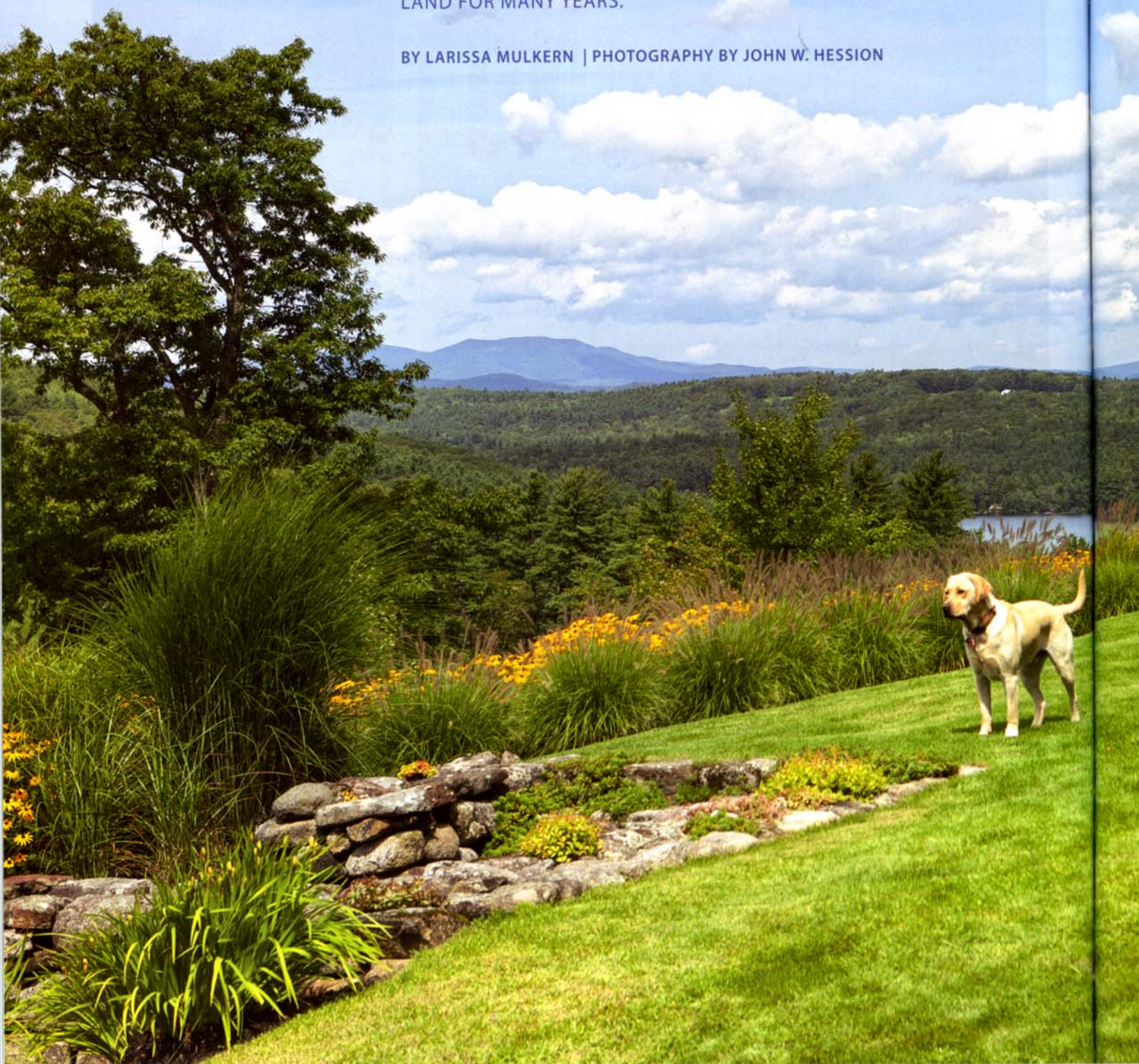


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Designed for **Comfort**

A COUPLE FINDS THE PERFECT SITE TO BUILD A NEW HOME THAT LOOKS LIKE IT HAS BEEN ON THE FAMILY'S LAND FOR MANY YEARS.

BY LARISSA MULKERN | PHOTOGRAPHY BY JOHN W. HESSION





The homeowners took their time—and took special care—when selecting the perfect site for their home. Landscape architect Peter Cummin helped find a spot that maximized views once some white pines were taken down.



The hand-built stone retaining walls blend in with older stone walls on the property.

Open to mountain and lake views and backed by woodlands, a Merrimack county hill-top home fits into the landscape as if they had been paired for centuries.

For generations, the property—with its original gazebo and barn—had been in the homeowners' family. This gave them the time they needed to think and plan for a new home (completed in 2003) and an office above a three-bay garage (completed in 2011).

FIRST, CHOOSE A SITE

Connecting with renowned landscape architect Peter Cummin, of Cummin Associates in Stonington, Connecticut, the homeowners walked the hillside property and considered several potential home sites. At the time—this was in 1998—much of the land was covered with a thicket of white pines, making it difficult to envision a “view” from the forest. The trio walked the land anyway, looking at various spots. During that visit—as the homeowners recall—

with an almost magical sense of place, Cummin marched through the forest, took a Prussian turn, marched another fifty yards north and stopped.

“This is where you want to build the house,” he said, with the conviction of a dowser with a divining rod.

Once the trees were cleared, the site offered lovely views of the mountains and a nearby lake, and was located in close proximity to the gazebo and barn, which had stood on the land for ages.



The home's entrance faces out to a woodland garden designed by the homeowners.

"Making the house sit properly on the land is the first job," Cummin says. "We did a grading stud just to make sure the slopes were reasonable and that the driveway wasn't too steep, especially in the winter."

The homeowners praised Cummin's seemingly natural ability to choose the best location for the project at hand.

"He is really good at what he does," they say. "He has an innate sense of place. He is an artist in that way."

Cummin commented on his instincts: "Yes, it's very much like having a divining rod—it's a mind-bending process. You look around and take dimensions, see what you want to do. You find what's special and different about the space. Some spaces have a sense of place. It really is a special feeling, a space that calls out to you."

Cummin also provided the homeowners with a planting plan, comprising many low-maintenance, native plant va-

Open to mountain and lake views and backed by woodlands, a Merrimack county hilltop home fits into the landscape as if they had been paired for centuries.

Right: A screened porch brings the outdoors in while keeping the elements out.

Below: The homeowners chose a soothing, neutral palette for this bedroom, where a window seat invites relaxation.





Left: One unique feature of the home is a mudroom that also functions as a potting room. It was inspired by an entranceway the homeowners encountered on their travels to Scotland.

Below: The stairway pops with color and architectural detail in the banisters.



rieties for the front, open space and the more shaded woodland garden at the home's entranceway.

"We always thought 'landscape first,'" the homeowner says. "Establish the site and landscape plan, and let the house rise out of that."

The hardscape includes a one-hundred-foot retaining wall with steps and stone walls bordering the long driveway.

"The house looks like it has been there for one hundred years," the homeowners say.

NEXT, BEGIN CONSTRUCTION

The site work was substantial, as contractors excavated into the side of the hill of solid bedrock to prepare the spot where the home would nestle.

"We cut a level plateau into the shoulder of the hill," says architect John Tittmann

of Albert, Righter & Tittmann Architects, Inc., of Boston, with whom the homeowners worked closely on both the main house and the office/garage.

"This is a house that sits on a calm plateau. There's a sense of respite. It feels more comfortable," Tittmann says. "But then the roofline of the house follows the slopes of the hill, so the house seems to grow out of the hill in that way."

For architectural design, the house has elements of a traditional nineteenth-century New Hampshire summer house—red-cedar-shake-shingled siding and a natural color palette—with a touch of Japanese styling in its broad, pyramid roof and broad eaves. This design keeps the rain out, even with the windows opened, and the snow away from the foundation, Tittmann says. The three-thousand-square-foot, two-story home features three bedrooms and

two baths on the second floor as well as first-level spaces that include the kitchen, living room, two stone fireplaces and a nicely designed mudroom that also functions as a potting room. "It's a relaxed plan for relaxed living," Tittmann says.

The homeowners noted Tittmann's artistic talents.

"The thing I remember about John, who is the nicest and most talented person who ever walked the earth, is that he's an artist, too," the homeowner says.

The initial brainstorming sessions included lots of charcoal sketches and ideas. "It was a four-hour, wonderful collaboration," the homeowner says.

A major design objective was to bring the outside in so the homeowners could experience the landscape and nature. The design included lots of windows, and interior color choices—like greens for vegeta-



The three-bay garage with an office upstairs provides working space for the homeowners and ample parking for their vehicles.

tion and the red similar to the barn color—inspired by the outdoors.

"The trick was to experience the outside without feeling too exposed," said the homeowner.

Of course, the couple had dreamed about the house for many years and had a few things on the wish list when launching the design phase. The couple had chosen cedar-shake siding for its natural look and low maintenance, wide pine flooring, and lots and lots of windows. Hearthstone from



Left: An open and airy living room offers lots of space for family gatherings or quiet time to enjoy the views. The homeowners used flowers from the garden for all the floral arrangements.

Above: Builder Dean Anderson of Webster (left) and architect John Tittmann of Albert, Righter & Tittmann Architects, Inc. in Boston worked closely with the homeowners during all phases of the construction.

a fireplace in their former home was incorporated in the new space. A soapstone sink from an old barn was installed in the mud-room/potting room, which was fashioned after an old Scottish home the homeowners had seen.

The floor plan was also important. It had to be open and comfortable—not boxy. “It’s a bit of an odd concept. We don’t have a dining room, but we have three rooms that we dine in,” the homeowner says. “One

amazing thing about John and his partners is that they understand ‘home.’ They understand real people live in it.”

After living in the home for almost ten years, the couple couldn’t be happier.

“It’s a very simple and comfortable house,” they say. “We wanted it to look as if it had formed out of the land, and it does. For these wonderful results, we’re thankful to everyone who worked on our home.” **NHH**

RESOURCES

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