

GARDEN DESIGN

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bluest, sweetest
sweet peas

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33 Winners!

Annual Golden Trowel Awards From courtyard nooks to sprawling acres of tended green, this year's Golden Trowel competition drew the gamut of garden entries for a chance at the coveted *Garden Design* accolade. Stroll through the top eight, designed by amateurs and professionals alike.

60 Fresh from Chicago

Hip, elegant, eclectic or classic, each year Chicago's casual furniture mart unveils the newest in outdoor furnishings. See the latest pieces. BY DONNA DORIAN

66 The Sweetest Thing

America's darling—the fragrant and frilly sweet pea—enjoys yet another revival, thanks to old favorites and newcomers. Is there any business more charming than a sweet-pea nursery? BY GRAHAM RICE

Cover
A sky-blue old-timer
well worth seeking
out, this sweet pea is
Lathyrus sativus var.
azureus. Photograph
by Lynn Karlin



Man was made for better things than pruning his rose trees — COLIN WILSON

GARDEN DESIGN

2003 GOLDEN TROWEL AWARDS

URBAN AND COUNTRY, EXPANSIVE AND SHOEHORNED-IN, OUTRAGEOUSLY COLORFUL AND SUBTLE SHADES OF GREEN —the eight winners of our annual garden design competition reflect the wonderful diversity of our readers' interests, styles, climates and sites. And every single one proudly displays the heart and soul that went into it, along with wheelbarrows of compost, nights of sore knees and hours of mental deliberation. Thanks to Phil Maddux, landscape architect of Palm Beach, Florida, who agonized with us as we chose winners from so many worthy contenders. Want to win a Golden Trowel? Our next issue will provide details on how to enter, for professionals and amateurs alike.





BOB SWAIN | PROFESSIONAL | SEATTLE | WASHINGTON

swain's world

Bob Swain calls his garden a "personal sanctuary." We call it a seamless fusion of the soul, style and plants that make the Pacific Northwest such a hotbed of gardening



Left: Follow the walkway to the Buddha stone at the rear of the house. Right: Nearby is a quiet seating area that seems part of the house. The pavers are hand-carved granite planks; the table is made from a Chinese mortar. Tall bamboo lends shelter and elegance.



BY BILL MARKEN
PHOTOGRAPHY BY CLIVE NICHOLS



Left: A plank path leads to the walkway and entry. Stop to admire the sight and sounds of the Japanese-style fountain and the rustling of slender aspen. Above right: The view from the front door to the street. Lower right: White water lilies float serenely.

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BOB SWAIN IS AN ARCHITECT AND PASSIONATE MOUNTAIN hiker who wanted to bring to his hillside city lot the rugged beauty of Washington's forested peaks and sparkling mountain meadows. He also wanted to draw on the imagery of a Zen temple, and on Chinese artifacts and stones, to add a "soul-healing calm and suspension of time."

The original garden consisted mainly of a few large trees and shrubs and a concrete driveway running nearly the length of the property. First step: Remove 10 trucks of decades-old poured concrete, then the top layer of poor compacted soil. In came 14 trucks of fertile new soil: a mix of 30 percent Woodland Park Zoo Doo (from the manure and bedding materials of nonprimate herbivores), combined with 60 percent Cedar Grove compost and 10 percent cocoa fiber. Planting began just three years ago, and included full-sized specimen trees as well as tiny seedlings.

Now the illusion of escaping into wilderness begins at the parking strip along the street. Mountain hemlocks, underplanted with Northwest natives such as kinnikinnick, white mountain heather and bunch grasses, provide a screen from traffic and offer a hint of the serene garden beyond. The faint sound of trickling water reinforces the mountain feeling.

Like a mountain trail, a cedar-plank pathway beginning near the sidewalk takes you to the house and deep into the garden and its various outdoor living areas. You first brush past a tall hemlock and a Douglas fir into the front garden, which suggests a sunny clearing in the forest. Springtime in the "meadow" brings blooms of Western trillium (*T. ovatum*), Pacific bleeding heart (*Dicentra formosa*), false lily-of-the-valley (*Maianthemum dilatatum*) and other Northwest wildflowers.

The pathway seems to float over the meadow's moss as it leads to the front entry past a Japanese-style water basin (main photo). This



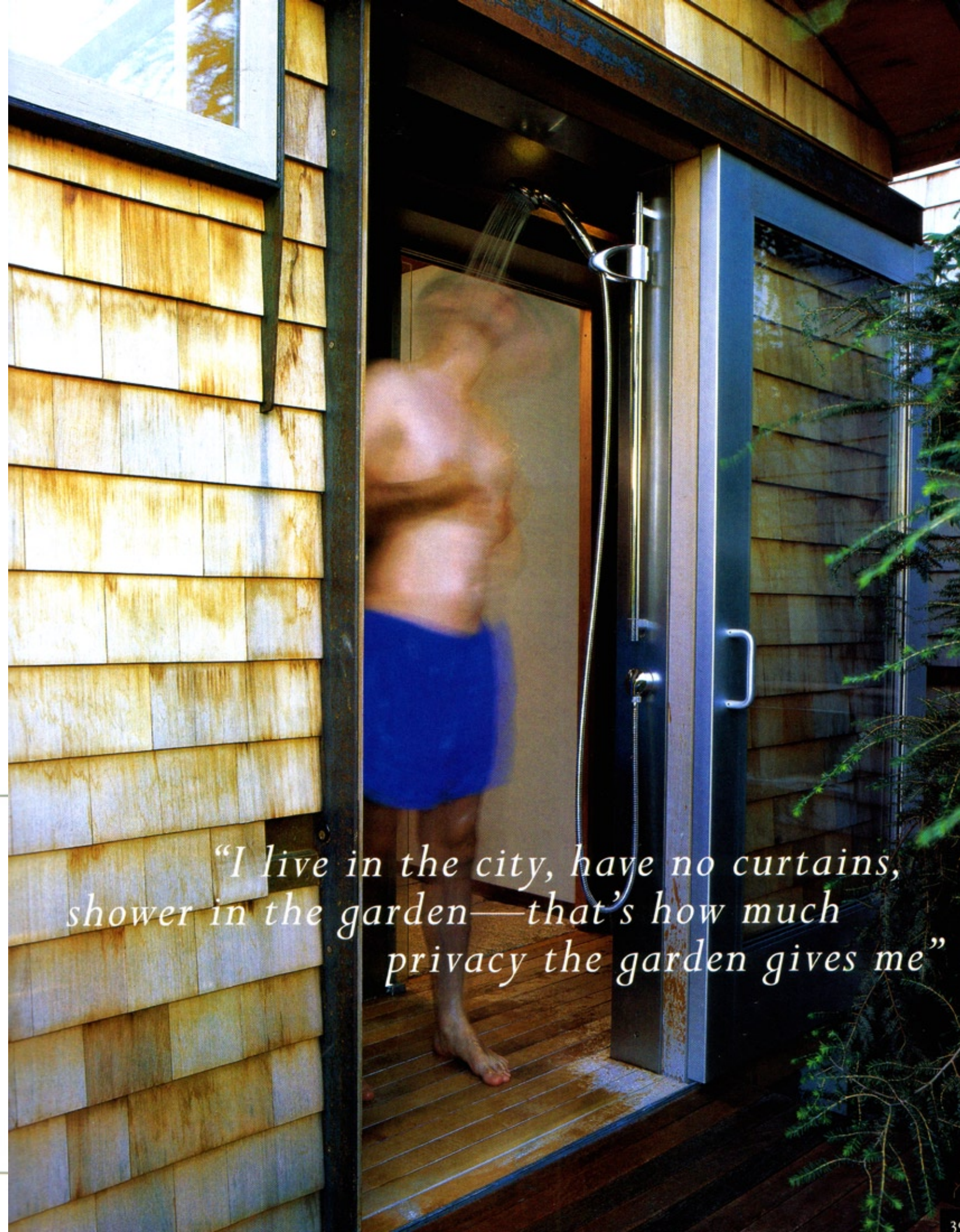


The details look straight out of nature. Top row: The path combines planks, stone, decking. Middle: A stone water bowl; stepping stones and salal resemble a stream. Lower: lounge chairs on the sheltered deck.



winning style

- [1] Sensitive combine hand-crafted Asian objects with a wilderness setting for an overall feeling of calming serenity and sophistication.
- [2] For successful plant combinations, take a clue from how mountain plants group together in the wild and emulate it—random yet not busy.
- [3] Let nature inspire you everywhere—like using granite stepping stones to resemble boulders in a mountain stream of salal.
- [4] Vigilantly remove weeds and invasive nonnatives, no matter how attractive (like California poppy). In a naturalistic garden, less is more.
- [5] Aim for sustainability by reusing rescued objects and garden waste.
- [6] Never scrimp on soil: This mix is wonderfully rich and also amended semiannually. Plants that are growing well need less attention.



“I live in the city, have no curtains, shower in the garden—that’s how much privacy the garden gives me”



Parking strip

Left: A deck with open overhang designed to support climbing vines. The various spaces Bob designed for outdoor living seem to have grown naturally out of both the house and the garden—nestled as they are among ferns, rhododendrons and forest wildflowers (above right also).

plant palette

Bob's vision for his garden is a look that is drawn from his experience of the beauty of Washington's forested mountains and rolling meadows full of wildflowers. Key plants:

BIG TREES Western hemlock (*Tsuga heterophylla*); Douglas fir (*Pseudotsuga menziesii*).

SHRUBS, SMALL TREES Quaking aspen (*Populus tremuloides*); Pacific rhododendron (*R. macrophyllum*);

Oregon grape (*Mahonia aquifolium*); vine maple (*Acer circinatum*); snowberry (*Symphoricarpos albus*); giant timber bamboo (*Bambusa arundinacea*)

GROUND COVERS Kinnikinnick (*Arctostaphylos uva-ursi*); beach strawberry (*Fragaria chiloensis*); salal (*Gaultheria shallon*)

WILDFLOWERS Western trillium (*T. ovatum*); Western bleeding heart (*Dicentra formosa*); redwood sorrel (*Oxalis oregana*); red paintbrush (*Castilleja miniata*); goat's beard (*Aruncus dioicus*); stream violet (*Viola glabella*)



feature is made from several pieces—a monumental natural basalt column found in eastern Washington makes the basin, while water falls in a steady trickle from a copper pipe suspended from a Chinese granite well marker.

Continue on the pathway, screened by slender-trunked quaking aspen, to the outdoor dining area, sheltered by towering Japanese timber bamboo. A Chinese granite mortar has been transformed into a dining table. Pavers are seven 6-foot, hand-carved granite planks from villages to be submerged by the Three Gorges Dam in China. (Rhodes Architectural Stone, a Seattle-based company specializing in importing handcrafted building materials, supplied the numerous artifacts in the garden.)

The pathway's final destination is a Buddha stone (a standing stone marker) and peaceful seating on a secluded deck, made of recycled and reclaimed cedar timbers. A convertible indoor-outdoor shower has a sliding glass door that allows the luxury of showering in the garden on nice days. Nearby is a meditation wing converted from the old garage.

The garden includes a number of delicate and hard-to-find Northwest plants cultivated from seeds and bulbs: white and pink fawn lilies (*Erythronium* spp.), camass (*Camassia quamash*), Sitka mist- maiden (*Romanzoffia sitchensis*) and others. These and many others came from small local nurseries specializing in Northwest natives. As Bob says, "These nurseries are run by people with a profound passion and knowledge of the fragile environment of this part of North America." Look closely at the plants and you'll see the true spirit of fusion: tiny but determined Oregon stonecrop spreading from the hole of a Chinese well marker to other parts of the garden. ■