

great ideas for **outdoor** **living**

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GREAT IDEAS FOR OUTDOOR LIVING

SUMMER 2005

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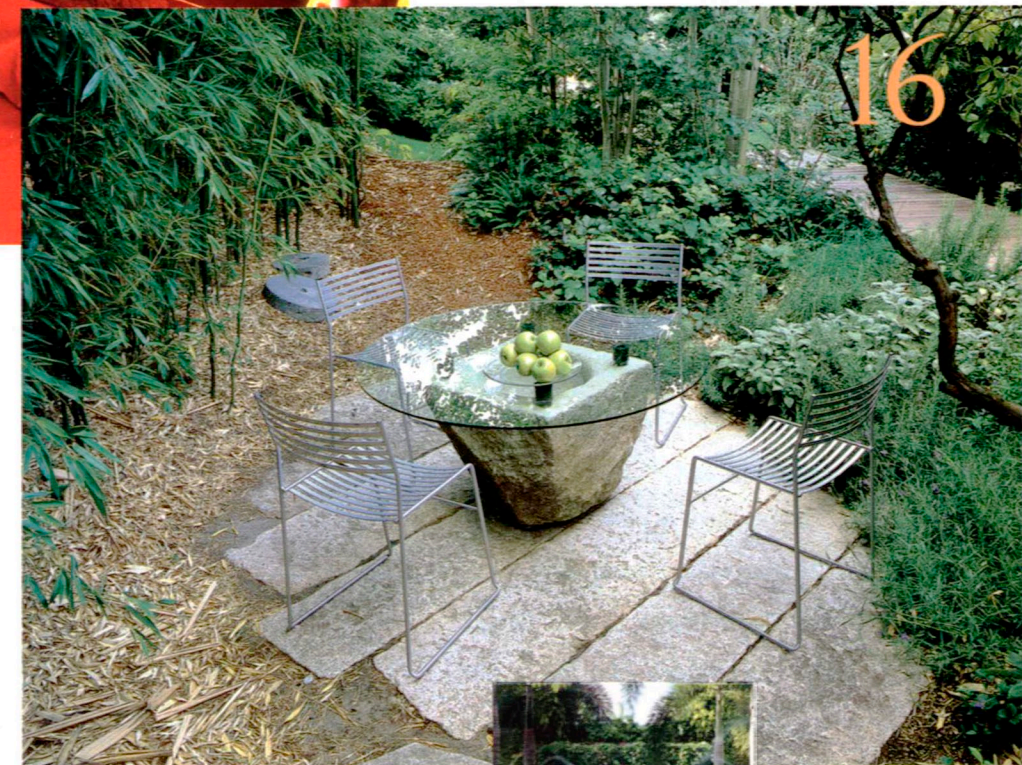
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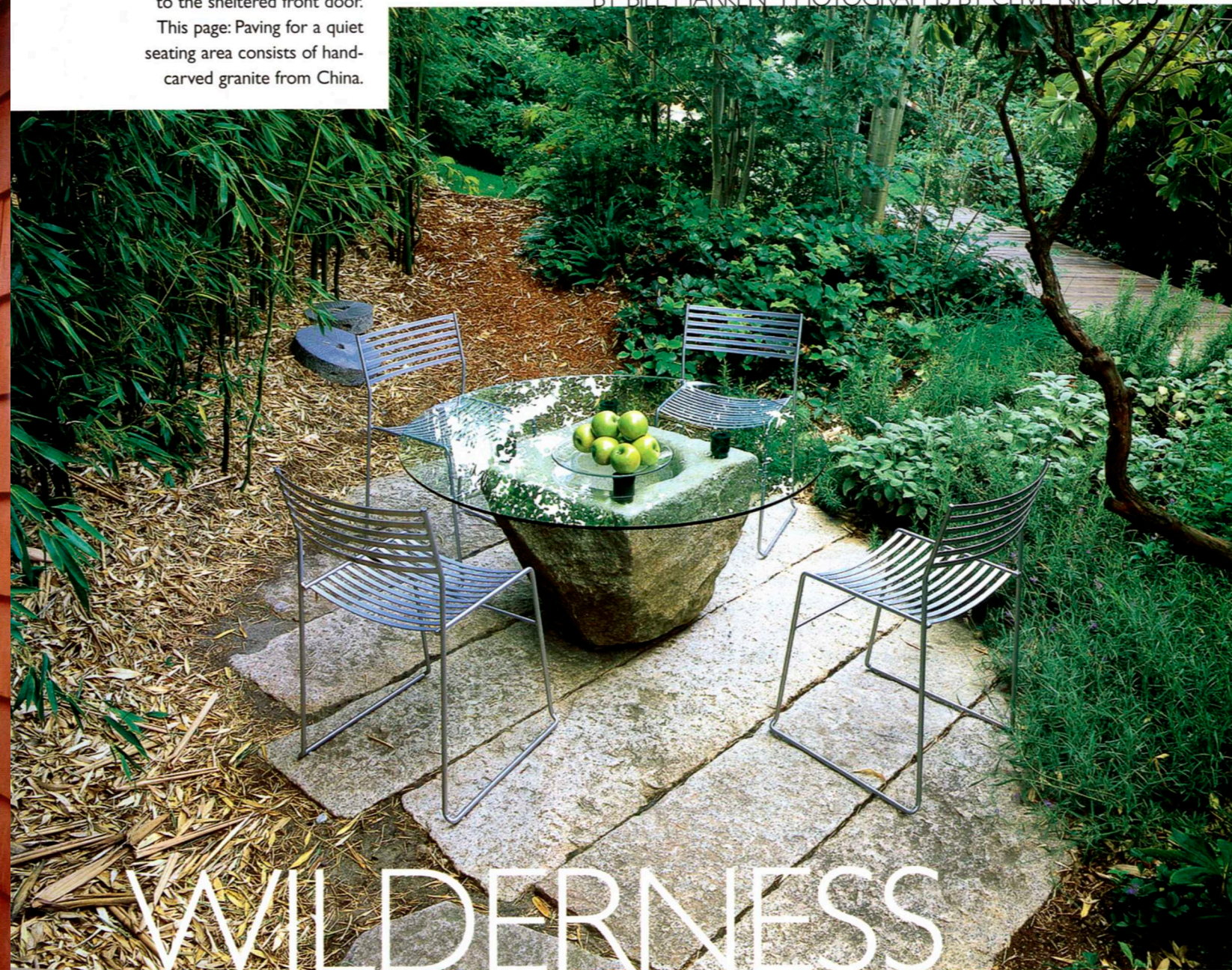
ON THE COVER

Lap pool disguised as Moorish-style reflecting pool by Sanchez & Maddux. For more ideas, see page 6. Photo by Richard Felber.



Left: Follow a narrow deck from entry plantings of hemlock and Douglas fir to the sheltered front door. This page: Paving for a quiet seating area consists of hand-carved granite from China.

BY BILL MARKEN PHOTOGRAPHS BY CLIVE NICHOLS



WILDERNESS ESCAPE

Mountain spirit, Asian serenity in a remarkably small space



BOB SWAIN IS AN ARCHITECT AND A PASSIONATE MOUNTAIN hiker, who wanted to transplant the rugged beauty of Washington's forested peaks and sparkling mountain meadows to his Seattle garden. He also wished 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.” He calls the result his personal sanctuary.

Another remarkable thing about the garden: All this outdoor living space was created in a narrow, urban space that's just $\frac{1}{10}$ acre.

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 truckloads of decades-old poured concrete, then the top layer of poor, packed soil. In came 14 truckloads of fertile new soil: a mix of 30 percent Woodland Park Zoo Doo (from the manure and bedding materials of non-primate herbivores), combined with 60 percent Cedar Grove compost and 10 percent coco fiber. Planting included full-sized specimen trees, as well as tiny seedlings.

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 brush past a tall hemlock and Douglas fir into the front garden, which suggests a sunny clearing in the forest. Springtime in the “meadow” brings blooms of Western trillium (*Trillium ovatum*), Pacific bleeding heart (*Dicentra formosa*), false lily-of-the-valley (*Maianthemum dilatatum*) and other Northwest wildflowers.

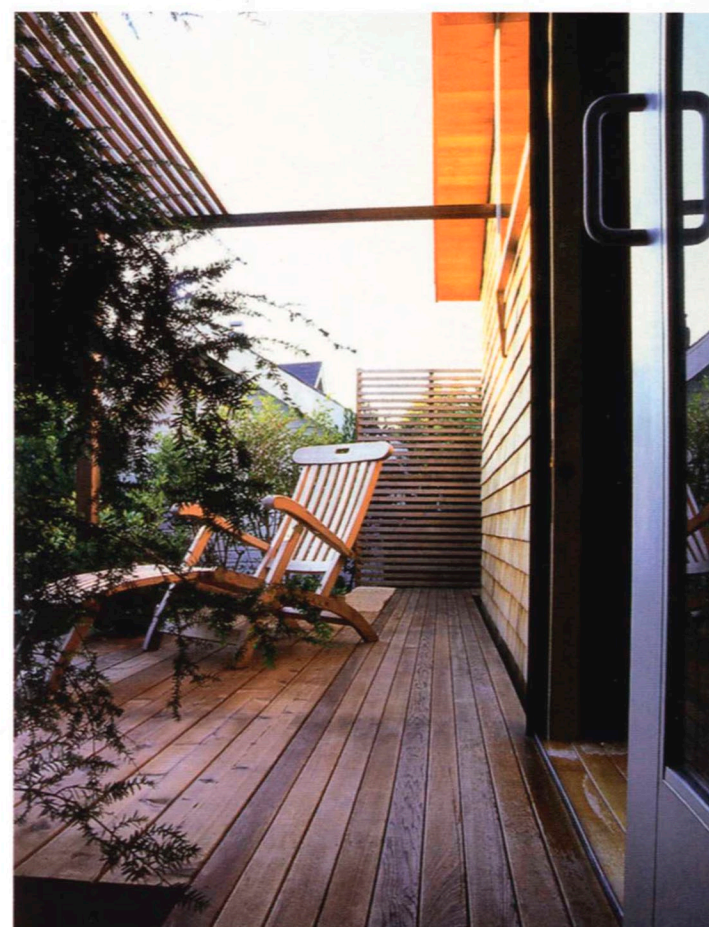
The pathway seems to float over the meadow's moss as it leads you to the front entry of the house and a Japanese-style water basin. The basin is made from a natural basalt column from eastern Washing-

ton; water falls from a copper pipe suspended from a Chinese granite well marker.

Continuing on the pathway, screened by slender-trunked quaking aspen, brings you to the outdoor dining area. Here in the shelter of towering Japanese timber bamboo, a Chinese granite mortar has been transformed into a dining table. Seven 6-foot, hand-carved Chinese granite planks serve as pavers. Numerous artifacts in the garden come from Rhodes Architectural Stone, a Seattle-based company that specializes in importing handcrafted building materials.

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*), camass (*Camassia quamash*), Sitka mist-maiden (*Romanzoffia sitchensis*) and others. Look closely at the plants and you'll see the true spirit of fusion: tiny but determined Oregon stoncrop spreading from the hole of a Chinese well marker to other parts of the garden.



From left, above: A Japanese-style fountain and slender aspen, native to the Washington mountains, flank the entry path. A sheltered deck offers a spot for lounging. Open the shower door and you're in the garden.

Outdoor and indoor
seating areas merge as one.
The glass table top rests on
an old Chinese mortar.
Timber bamboo (*Bambusa
arundinacea*) lends shade and
dignity. Aero chairs from
Design Within Reach.



"I DREW ON THE NORTHWEST'S MOUNTAINS
AND CHINESE ARTIFACTS TO CREATE SOUL-
HEALING CALM AND SUSPENSION OF TIME"



The deck off the back of the house nestles among dogwoods, maples and rhododendrons. Opposite, clockwise from top left: Stone water bowl. Stepping stones and salal create a stream. Driftwood stands like sculpture. A path uses cedar planks and stone.



WHAT WORKS

Asia—Northwest Style

- ▶ Sensitive combine handcrafted Asian objects with a wilderness setting for an overall feeling of serenity and sophistication.
- ▶ For plant combinations, take a clue from the way mountain plants group together in the wild and use a limited palette in bold masses.
- ▶ Let nature inspire you everywhere. For example, use stepping stones to resemble boulders in a mountain stream of salal.
- ▶ Vigilantly remove weeds and invasive nonnatives, no matter how attractive (like California poppy), or the garden will be taken over.
- ▶ Aim for sustainability by reusing rescued ancient objects as sculptural features, and use garden waste as enrichment for the soil.
- ▶ Never scrimp on soil: The mix used here is wonderfully rich and also recycled. Plants will repay you with good health and in the long term require less intervention in the form of herbicides and pesticides.
- ▶ Capture a sense of the classic Asian garden with a strong evergreen backbone of bamboo, azalea, clipped boxwood—it creates privacy, too.