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Landscape Design: Randy Allworth

Garden construction: Dale Nussbaum
Nussbaum Group, (503) 545-0111, nussbaumgroup.com.


Page 57: Chairs, Christopher arm chairs, Herman Miller, hermanmiller.com; stools, Antique gold garden stools, sourced through Jane Piper Rix, 835 S. Fidalgo St., (206) 621-9290, prico.com; Orbit chair, Janus et Cie, janusetcie.com.

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...available to the trade through architects and designers.

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NEIGHBORLY LOVE

A QUEEN ANNE COUPLE HONOR THE HISTORY OF THEIR NEIGHBORHOOD AS THEY ENLARGE THEIR PROPERTY

WRITTEN BY ANGELA CABOTAJE  PHOTOGRAPHS BY MICHAEL HANSON
ARCHITECT BOB SWAIN AND HIS TEAM DESIGNED THE GUESTHOUSE (RIGHT) TO COMPLEMENT THE HOMEOWNERS’ 1924 ARTHUR LOVELESS HOME (AT LEFT) AND TO EMBRACE THE ARCHITECTURE OF THE HISTORIC QUEEN ANNE NEIGHBORHOOD. THE GARDEN BLOOMS YEAR-ROUND, PROVIDING PRIVACY AND PLENTY OF EYE CANDY.
This is a story about neighborhood love.

In 1997, Linda and David purchased a 1924 Tudor revival–style house designed by prominent Seattle architect Arthur Loveless. Perched at the end of an elevated Queen Anne cul-de-sac, the home offers both privacy and sweeping views of Elliott Bay and the Olympic Mountains. The couple felt it was perfect, except for one big issue: the house next door.

The neighbors’ home was just 10 feet from the front door, which made Linda and David feel crowded. “The house was so close, it was almost leaning onto our front door,” David quips.

In 2003, Linda and David were working with architect Bob Swain to create a media room in an underused lower level and to landscape their property when the house next door went up for sale. They immediately contacted Swain. He proposed tearing down the original structure, replacing it with a multipurpose guesthouse—a place that could serve as office, gym and storage space, as well as a home away from home for visitors—and adding a grassy courtyard to unify the two properties. The homeowners loved the idea. They purchased the house, and by the next year, construction was under way.

The clients’ desire was to retain the style of their historic Queen Anne neighborhood, project architect Kevin Richards explains: “We didn’t want a house that wouldn’t be complementary.” Architect Swain concurs. “Our goal was to provide them with a truly contemporary home of our time—but a home that has textures and materials from 80 to 100 years ago,” he adds.

LINDA AND DAVID’S PROPERTY is now a place where it seems that the intent is only to amaze and delight. As visitors approach from the southeast, they first see the guesthouse—its exterior wrapped in brick and acid-etched concrete—but also glimpse Linda and David’s original home behind leafy maple trees, edible plantings and witch hazel that blooms a brilliant yellow in January. However, the bigger visual treat is beyond the garden, where the gracious courtyard between the houses and a rusted-steel trellis are in full view.

The patio of the original house extends out into the yard, giving way to a stretch of immaculately groomed grass. Stepping-stones lead the way across the lawn to the new guesthouse. Limestone rain barrels and antique granite from China allude to an ancient time. The guesthouse’s steeply pitched roof and tall windows reference Linda and David’s primary home and the architecture of the neighborhood, while elements of masonry construction—curved details, 10-inch-thick concrete walls and set beams—indicate a respect for timeless design and construction.

The guesthouse is just 14 feet wide, the complete opposite of the overweight house that previously stood on the site. Within the guesthouse’s 3,000 square feet, Swain and interior designer Tami Bozorgnia Cline found innovative ways to create open, airy rooms while still providing plenty of storage, three bedrooms, an office and three baths.
On the entry level, an exposed fir-beam ceiling in the kitchen creates a cozy atmosphere but makes the room feel expansive at the same time. A smooth stove top extends the counter space. Upstairs, a bedroom below the gabled roof has privacy windows facing east that allow light in without resorting to the fuss of curtains or shades. The steeply sloped ceiling flares out and adds a sense of spaciousness. Built-ins dominate the upstairs bath, where a pocket door preserves precious floor space. The lower level contains David’s office (“Now I have a 12-yard commute,” he says) and a 330-square-foot home gym. Linda often slides open the NanaWall doors along the west side of the room so she can exercise cooled by a fresh breeze.

The interiors also were designed with practicality in mind. Linda isn’t a big fan of white walls, so Bozorgnia Cline chose warm earth tones to complement the fir floors, steel beams and millwork. At the homeowners’ behest for a low-maintenance home, Bozorgnia Cline opted for utilitarian finishes and fixtures. The sofa bed in the living room is used for large groups of overnight guests, while the upholstered side chairs can swivel in the direction of any conversation.

Hidden spaces make it clear that this is no run-of-the-mill place. The guesthouse is full of purposeful whimsy that suits the homeowners, who made sure to insert plenty of their personalities into the design.

David requested a space for his antique bottle collection, which now resides in a built-in display cabinet above the stairs. Family mementos and souvenirs from their travels turn up everywhere—baskets from Botswana, an antique rocking chair, a 1930s pinball machine. In the basement bathroom, an old boiler door is used as the front of a storage cabinet. (Toy soldiers currently make it their base camp.) A salvaged doorway reinforcement serves as a chin-up bar in the gym.

ALTHOUGH THE GUESTHOUSE pulls in details from another era, everyone agrees that it is rooted in this century. “It’s not an old house,” Linda says. “It’s a new house that’s respectful and compatible.”

“Rarely do I get to do something so holistic considering community, history, neighborhood and landscape,” Swain says. “I really like that we ended up with something that so respects the neighborhood but also reflects these two people so much.”

Angela Cabotaje is Assistant Editor of Seattle Homes & Lifestyles.

For resource information, see Sources, page 86.
THE UPPER-LEVEL BATHROOM IS A LESSON IN SPACE-SAVING DESIGN (OPPOSITE); A BEDROOM OVERLOOKING THE LIVING ROOM HAS A LOFTLIKE FEEL.