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GARDEN MANOR

An English country home blends in

By Gerri Lewis

Photographs by Jonathan Wallen

SPRAWLED AMIDST THE ROLLING hills of North Salem with expansive views, golden sunsets, and multiple gardens is a rambling country estate that looks as if it were plucked from an English countryside. The stucco and stone house with its slate roof has the appearance of an antique manor, one that has been tastefully added to over time. Giving it that timeless appeal was only one of the many challenges architects faced when they accepted the opportunity to build this house. "The owners wanted a house that was suitable for entertaining, suitable for their grown family to visit, and yet comfortable for just the two of them," says Dinyar Wadia, whose New Canaan based architectural firm, Wadia Associates, was commissioned to design the home a decade ago.

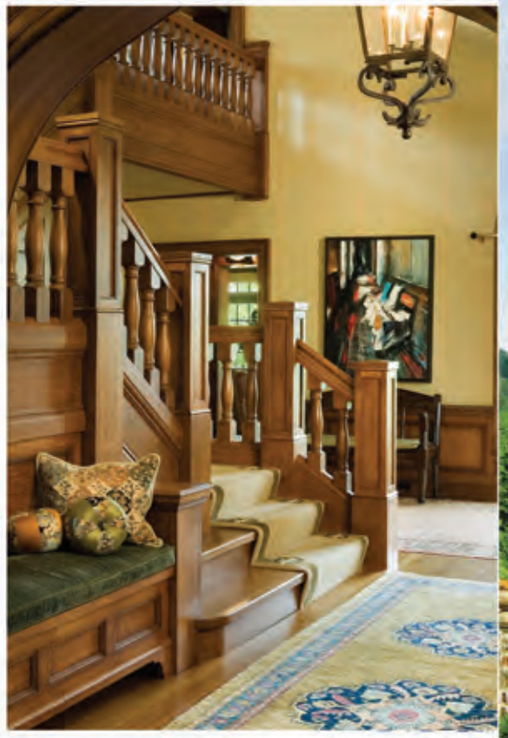
The owners added to their wish list, a rambling house with unique design that had contemporary amenities, but looked as if it had been there forever. In addition, they wanted their home to mirror one that might be found in the English Cotswold's, but one that would still encompass the sweeping views of the 16-acre lot and adjacent nature conservancy. According to Wadia, this was not an easy feat. "Oversized windows are not always appropriate for this type of country house vernacular," he explains. "We had to be very creative."

In addition, the owners asked for extensive gardens. The challenge was to make sure both the indoor and outdoor rooms fit logically into the desired floor plan while still taking advantage of optimum light. It would not do to put the kitchen on a side of the house that didn't have a sunny spot to sip a morning coffee or enough light for the herb and vegetable gardens to thrive. "The owners very much enjoy gardening. They wanted to throw open their bedroom doors in the morning and step out into a garden with their coffee," says Wadia. This meant that a first-floor master bedroom was a must.

The Wadia team chose an asymmetrical design that would allow for unique room placement and also give the house a rambling feel without being ostentatious or formal. The design took about nine months to complete. Leaving nothing to the imagination, Wadia and

INSIDE AND OUT Guests are welcomed by a courtyard lush with plantings. Light floods into the home from a bright conservatory. With double height ceilings, it has the feel of an inside garden.

THE OLD COUNTRY
Arched casings and gothic detail frame the doorways off a central corridor where hand-carved balusters flank the staircase. Expansive views, golden sunsets, and multiple gardens make this home look as if it was plucked from the English countryside.



his team built a small model so the clients could visualize the home. During the building process he used the side of the garage to create a prototype of stone design for the masons to follow. In order to get the weathered look in the brick chimneys, sand was mixed into the mortar. From the imported English mantel to the tray ceilings, hand carvings and extensive moldings and paneling, not a detail was overlooked inside or out. Everything was drawn and prototyped so there would be no mistakes and no surprises. Even the swimming pool was carefully placed and stepped down so that an unattractive pool cover wouldn't be visible during winter months. "We didn't leave anything to the mason or carpenter to decide," says Wadia, whose offices offer a sampling of the type of detail he demands. "It took five times before we were satisfied with the prototype for the stone."

The results are stunning. Guests are lured to the front of the house by a center courtyard lined with a beachwood hedge and boxwood accents. This garden, lush with plantings such as climbing hydrangea, English Ivy, and perennial flowers, offers the first hint that this home is filled with visual unconventionality.

At the courtyard entry, visitors veer right to the front door where a stone floor entry segues into a wide hallway. To the right is a private library. To the left is a long central corridor where arched casings and gothic detail frame the doorways.

Light floods the hallway from a bright conservatory on the left. It has a double-height ceiling with ex-

DETAILS, DETAILS An oak-paneled living room with a fireplace adjoins the master suite. Bedroom doors can be thrown open to allow morning coffee in the garden.

posed timber and trusses and double-height windows overlooking the entry courtyard garden. There are doors to the dining room, which is also accessed from the center hallway. Flanked by a cozy window seat and lined with hand carved balusters, a second-floor staircase leads to four guest suites.

On the opposite side of the wide center corridor there is an oak-paneled living room with a fireplace. Again, inventive window placement creates a landscape mural for the room. A master bedroom opening to a garden is tucked privately behind the living room. This deliberate room placement creates a cozy suite for the owners when they are alone. "There is so much light—it streams from all sides and all the rooms were oriented toward the light," says Wadia. "Most of the rooms have multiple views."

Continuing down the corridor, there is a kitchen that runs across the back of the house offering sweeping views of the countryside and wildflower meadow. A vegetable garden is accessed from the kitchen area. Next is a family room with large windows on both sides to encompass both the back landscape and the front courtyard garden.

The other side of the home is dedicated towards the utility areas that include a multi-car garage, mudroom, and a potting shed accessed by a breezeway. Because old English country manors don't tend to have garages, they are cleverly camouflaged to look like a part of the house. "The house is new, but looks old. It is fragmented so it looks like it was built over time," says Wadia. "It is casually elegant with a timeless appeal. And the best part is, you can throw open the doors and breathe in the gardens." ■