

The Harmony of House and Garden



by **Betty Hanselman**
Partner
Hanselman Landscape & Gardens



Long-term relationships and successful gardens fit naturally; everything we do is rooted in that awareness. Earning your lasting confidence is our first priority. You are cordially invited to explore how we might begin to cultivate such a relationship. At Hanselman Landscape & Gardens, we are dedicated to bringing the joy of natural beauty into our clients' daily experience. Since 1985, it has been our privilege to design, build and nurture a wide variety of gardens in both private and corporate settings in central and southeastern Pennsylvania. Our staff includes craftsmen skilled in maintenance, installation, nursery care, design and management. Several of us have lived overseas, broadening our approaches to garden living. We all share a profound appreciation for the beauty of nature and are committed to crafting high-quality garden spaces. Our mission... to build value for clients, employees and company. Our vision... to improve our world through bringing natural beauty into the daily lives of our clients by devoting ourselves to excellence in garden stewardship.

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he idea of integrating a home with its surroundings is common in Japan. Exterior walls are often full-length windows or panels that fold or slide back to connect the inside of the home directly to the outside. Overhangs cover porches that end, not in railings, but in a step down onto moss or rock paths that wander into the garden. Earth, rocks, trees, and shrubs are shaped and positioned to suggest that the structure is nestling into the landscape,

rather than perched on top of it. This union between inside and outside is best represented in the sukiya style of architecture common throughout Japan. Sukiya-style homes incorporate the use of natural materials, the integration of interior and exterior spaces, a general sense of quiet elegance with rustic overtones, and a harmony with the human scale and human sense perception (see Sukiya Living Magazine for more information about this style of architecture and way of life).

Architect Frank Lloyd Wright employed some of the elements of Japan's sukiya architecture in his "organic style", a classification he coined for buildings that harmonize with the inhabitants and their environment.

In the Great Valley south of Pennsylvania's Blue Mountains is such a house. Built in 1964 by a local artist-turned-engineer who was inspired by Wright while a student at MIT, this home utilizes Wright's "organic" architectural

trademarks—natural materials, an open floor plan, and "window walls" that open to the outside. However, unlike sukiya-style or Wright homes, the house stood ON the land, instead of integrating INTO the landscape. The current owners recognized the discord and contacted James Hanselman of Hanselman Landscape.

They asked James to integrate the house with the landscape, increase privacy (exterior walls are virtually all glass!), provide sustainable, year-'round interest (plant for multi-seasonal color and birdlife), and invite interaction between home and garden. What a privilege it has been to partner with these insightful clients to create harmony with this architectural treasure and its environment!



A GARDEN DELIGHTS THE SENSES & Refreshes the Soul.



refreshing a city row home with a

Japanese-Inspired Courtyard

When Jean traveled to Japan to participate in an extended Suzuki violin course, she assumed she was simply enhancing her career as a violinist and college music professor. She had no idea how much her six months in Japan would enrich her entire life. In addition to learning the Suzuki method of playing the violin, she gained an appreciation for the Japanese integration of natural beauty into everyday life displayed in the small, carefully maintained courtyard gardens next to virtually every Japanese home.

Following her trip to Japan, Jean returned to Lancaster with the dream of bringing the beauty of nature into her daily experience and began to look at Japanese garden books for ideas that could be implemented in the small back yard of her city row home. Jean remembers, "I was very impressed with the courtyard gardens I had seen in Japan and wanted to have something similar next to my home. Thank goodness I found



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those garden pictures in a magazine and somehow, I knew who to call.” (She remembers being impressed with the Japanese influence showcased in a Hanselman Landscape ad.)

Following Jean’s initial phone call, James Hanselman went to Jean’s home to discuss her garden ideas and goals. According to Jean, “James looked at the ‘idea pictures’ I had found and assured me they could be implemented in my backyard. It was a meeting of the minds, and we began to plan the



garden we would build. In fact, I still have the original hand-drawn plans James gave me!”

One of the major challenges Jean wanted to address with the garden installation was water run-off from the next-door property uphill from her home. In addition to addressing the run-off issue, James was asked to incorporate a measure of privacy and separation for Jean in her rapidly developing community.

Over the course of that summer, James and his team designed and crafted an outdoor living space that achieved all of Jean’s requirements and realized her Japanese garden dreams. Jean reports that the rainwater now runs onto the street behind her property. In addition, the wall James designed and built is exactly like those she remembers seeing in Japan. Since the community has changed a good bit since she moved in 40 years ago, Jean is grateful for the privacy and peace the wall allows her to enjoy in her garden. The stepping stone path provides ready access to the garden, and the plantings provide interest in each season of the year: a Stewartia tree displays dramatic blooms in the spring, lush plant growth brings cool refreshment to hot summer days, Japanese Maples blaze in the fall, and Nandina berries provide a splash of red against the nearby evergreens in winter. More than 20 years later, Jean still finds daily joy as she views and interacts with her garden. According to Jean, “My garden is even lovely in the snow!”

Other than occasional weeding and watering, Jean entrusts the shaping and clean-up of the plants to the Hanselman Landscape maintenance crew. She thoroughly enjoys their visits: “They come two or three times a year. They are wonderful—so polite and considerate—and we have nice chats!” For other city dwellers who have limited space but would enjoy the serenity, beauty, and interest of a garden next to their homes, Jean’s advice is straightforward: “Do it!”

If you choose to take Jean’s advice to enrich your life with a garden, we would love to partner with you to make your outdoor oasis a reality! Please visit our website and give us a call when you’re ready!

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ask the editor

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