

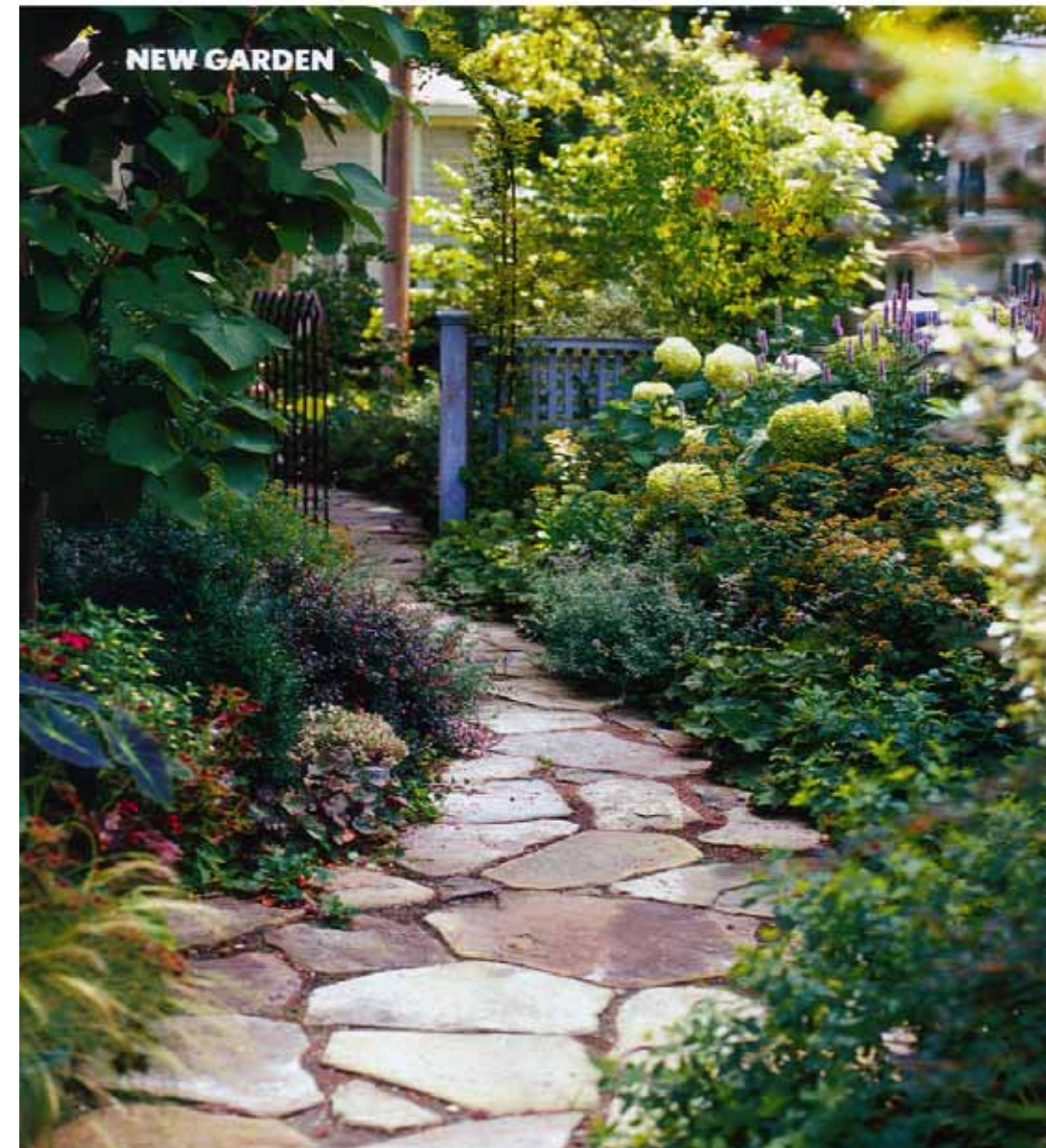


yard and the back. The sunny backyard border, a mix of trees, shrubs, perennials, annuals, and grasses, runs along the back of the lawn and is 12 feet deep. Designed for all seasons, it is easily accessed from the French doors of the family room and viewed from the master bedroom above. A rusted arbor and an inviting pathway lead into the border. Stepping stones placed within the border allow access without the risk of compacting wet soil or muddying the gardener's shoes.

The back garden, with its open lawn area and classic Lutyens bench, is where the kids, Michaela, 6, and Dante, 8, play while Kelly weeds. Steve does both—playing with the kids and gardening with Kelly. “We began in front with the struggling lawn,” she says, “but now the whole yard is a garden for us to enjoy.”

The Wingos' only lawn (above) is in the backyard, where two banana trees grow in pots on the terrace.

Kelly Wingo Garden Design & Consultation
 47 Mayo Avenue
 Needham, MA 02492
 781-433-8630 / www.kellywingo.com



The garden path on the narrow side of the house connects the front garden with the backyard. Lady's mantle and coral bells edge the flagstone. Taller perennials, shrubs such as 'Annabelle' hydrangea, and small trees—for example, fragrant snow-bell—step up the height at the back of the border.

SHADE CAN BE A BLESSING

Homeowner Kelly Wingo found it impossible to grow a lawn under the maple trees in her suburban Boston front yard, so out went the grass and in came a garden of many different greens

BY SUZY BALES PHOTOGRAPHS BY KELLER + KELLER PRODUCED BY HILLARY MAHARAM



Giving up the front lawn to plant a garden seemed daring, but Kelly Wingo felt she had no choice. “The mature maples there turn stunningly beautiful in the fall, all yellow, orange, and red,” she says. “I couldn’t cut them down just because they shaded and starved out the lawn. The grass had to go.”

Five years ago, Kelly and her husband, Steve Capone, fell in love with the suburban Boston neighborhood and bought the house, recognizing its potential. The 1908 bungalow, covered in asbestos shingles, needed major repairs. The channing front porch, hidden behind screens that were rusted, wasn’t large enough for their family, a fact that led them to expand the footprint of the house to include a family room on the ground floor and a new master bedroom above.

Normally, houses are renovated before gardens are designed, but Kelly wanted to integrate the

garden with the house. So while the architect designed the addition, Kelly planned the landscape, ensuring that the view from each window—front, side, or back-faced a garden. With so much to see, the small, narrow lot (50 x 120 feet) gives the impression of being bigger than it actually is. Orienting each part of the garden to a particular window defines the various spaces.

The garden’s property-line fencing was installed as part of the renovation, to set the boundaries linking front, side, and back gardens. The paths and terraces are all laid in stone, yet each one has a distinct look. The front walkway is fieldstone flagging puzzled together. Around the side, fieldstone steps lead to a back terrace where bluestone diamonds are set on point. The back path is separated

The front yard is a tapestry of shade plants, with planting pockets designed into the path. Pots of perennials invitingly stand on the front steps, and fern baskets hanging from the porch add a Victorian touch.



from another small dining terrace by a fieldstone wall. A lattice fence was chosen to support vines without hindering air circulation.

Kelly prefers the low upkeep of foliage over tending flowering plants. “Flowers are fleeting but foliage holds the border together,” she says. “Designing for foliage also creates a garden for one person to care for, requiring no regular deadheading, staking, or spraying.”

Each of the lush, easy-care gardens is a tapestry. Kelly chose plants in assorted textures, leaf sizes and shapes, and tones of green, some with gold or silver variegation. Hosta, nepeta, Solomon’s seal, lady’s mantle, and sedum are a few staples. Plants from the tropics with bold foliage, such as New Zealand flax, banana trees, and ‘Black Magic’ elephant’s ears, are massed along with colorful coleus.

Yearly, Kelly moves in new plants and rearranges others as she sees new possibilities, in both the front

Kelly tends her front shade garden (above), a medley of green and textures in a neighborhood of traditional green lawns. “It has an oasis quality that appeals to me,” she says. “When you have a front garden, you meet your neighbors.” A fieldstone retaining wall (left) separates a dining area from the path that connects the front and back yards.