

DESIGN

new england

Gothic Retreat

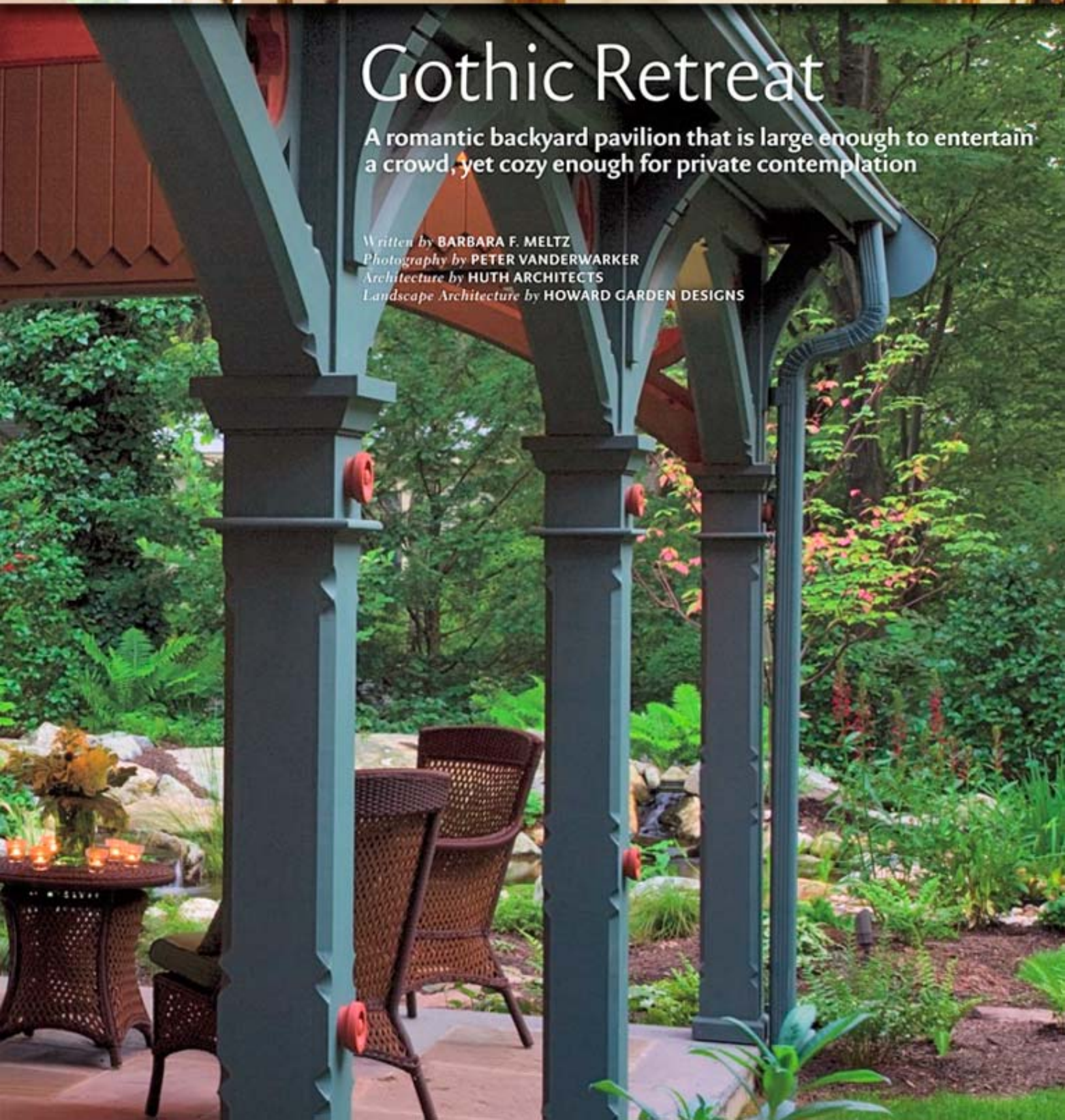
A romantic backyard pavilion that is large enough to entertain a crowd, yet cozy enough for private contemplation

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Architecture by **HUTH ARCHITECTS**

Landscape Architecture by **HOWARD GARDEN DESIGNS**



TAKING CUES FROM the Gothic elements that had been added to the 1876 Stick Style house, architect Thomas Huth created a dramatic pavilion that is almost ecclesiastical in its sensibilities. The 14-by-34-foot shelter, which can easily accommodate 20 guests for outdoor dining, overlooks a man-made pond.





ALMOST AS SOON AS SHE AND HER HUSBAND moved into their 1876 Newton, Massachusetts, Victorian in 1991, Laurel Farnsworth had an indoor/outdoor lap pool in mind for the backyard. Tom Downey's response was a droll "I'd rather hire a limo to take you to the Y."

The backyard became one of those projects they would do "someday." As someday stretched into more than a decade, the best they could say about the nearly quarter acre of open and somewhat dusty, land out the back door was that it was low-maintenance. But every winter, they fantasized about a garage. In summer, they imagined gardens and, for Laurel, if not a pool, perhaps a pond with trickling water.

But it was only in 2004, when a new neighbor terraced the steep land behind them, that they finally took action. "We felt exposed," says Laurel. "We had lost our sense of privacy."

They turned to architect Thomas Huth of Thomas R. Huth Architects in Newton. Huth specializes in residential restoration and had worked with the couple on their house, including restoring a screened-in porch. Built by the Rev. Francis Tiffany of the First Unitarian Church in Newton, the house is one of only a handful of local Stick-style buildings — named for their flat, stick-like bands and ornamentation surviving from that era. "This particular house also had a strong Gothic influence that was added a bit later," says Huth. "Lots of arches and quatrefoils." Whatever he created in back needed to reflect and honor that.

There was one other challenge. Although the house is located on an out-of-the-way cul-de-sac, it's within earshot of the Massachusetts Turnpike. No problem, said Laurel: Wouldn't a pond with running water provide ambient white noise?

Just steps from the house, the three-bay garage Huth designed has a heated walkway and apron and plenty of storage. The overhead garage doors are mahogany and crafted to look as if they swing open. Attached but feeling totally separate is the 12-by-34-foot pavilion, a protected outdoor living area that can comfortably seat 20 for dinner.

"Inserting this building onto this piece of land and making it look as if they grew together and belong with the house was a piece of trickery," Huth says, adding that the structure reminds him of an old train station, "the kind that once dotted suburban lines around here."

That it's a pavilion and not a patio is what makes it a success. The roofline not only provides definition and the privacy the couple craved, it also creates a cocoonlike sense of calm and comfort. Not too tight a cocoon, though — not with a 14-foot 10-inch cathedral cedar ceiling that glows golden at night in soft light from Arts and Crafts-style sconces and discreet uprights, not with the breeze that manages to waft through even on the hottest day, and certainly not with the verdant plantings that surround it.

Designed by landscape architect Karen Howard of Howard Garden Designs in West Newton, the naturalistic setting uses existing spruce trees to provide borders. Howard filled in with plantings such as wood aster rhododendron, and variegated dogwood. Between the house and the pavilion, there's a lush swath of lawn, large enough for croquet or badminton. Then there's the pond. Bounded on one side by boulders that were on the property, at 16 feet by 8 feet, it accommodates two small waterfalls. As Laurel relaxes in the pavilion, she takes in the view with a sweep of her hand. "I could sit here all day long she says. "This morning, there was a frog in the pond. The other day, I saw a hummingbird"

No, she can't go for a swim, but it's her oasis just the same.



INTERIOR STONEMWORK REINFORCES that this is an outdoor space, while the cedar beams and ceiling add a sense of richness and warmth. From the street, the new garage (FACING PAGE, TOP) sits comfortably at the top of the driveway, offering no hint of the pavilion beside it. Stepping-stones (FACING PAGE, BOTTOM) invite visitors to explore the pond and garden designed by Karen Howard.