

Emerald Oasis

Bremerton cleared up the slide, adding a drainage system and shoring up the 45-degree slope. Steel-and-timber retaining walls installed by Integral Construction of Seattle helped reinforce the remainder of the property. Finally, the Bloomes hired Issaquah landscape designer Hendrikus Schraven, who installed a new storm drain and began replanting the hillside.

Schraven stripped away the briars with an excavator, then blanketed the slope with 350 cubic yards of topsoil (skidded down chutes in five-gallon buckets) and as many tons of rock. The stones help hold back the hillside while providing a visual anchor to the scheme. Like most of the design work, the rock placement was improvised on site, according to the contours of the property and the dictates of sun and shadow.

"The climate actually changes from the top to the bottom as you walk down the steps," observes Schraven. The upper part of the garden is shady and cool, and covered with a thick blanket of English ivy sprinkled with ajuga, sweet woodruff, pachysandra and cotoneaster—attractive plants that also help hold back the soil.

A row of trees screens the view from the top of the steps, so you can't quite see what lies ahead. "A garden has to be intriguing; it has to be full of mystery," Schraven says. Rounding the corner of the office, the vista suddenly materializes through the shaggy red limbs of a rare Tibetan cherry tree. In springtime, the branches are covered with a veil of tiny white blossoms, which dust the mounds of heather below.

At the next bend in the trail, the intoxicating aroma of witch hazel fills the air. "We worked toward having plants that also have fragrance to them," says Mark. Thyme, rosemary, lavender and daphne sweeten the journey through the garden, as do the strawberries and occasional blueberry bushes poised along the pathway.

Natural sculptures—a driftwood snag, a wizened Japanese maple—are treated as focal points in the garden. A rusted metal totem by sculptor David Govedare dominates the northern edge of the property. Combining Native American imagery with elements of Eastern mysticism, the artwork features a hollow base that Mark



OPPOSITE PAGE/TOP

Autumn light illuminates a Japanese maple isolated like a sculpture on a stone base.

OPPOSITE PAGE/BOTTOM

Hand-placed boulders border the pathway leading up to the streetside office.

LEFT

Crocosmia provides a splash of color.

BELOW

Moss-covered stones frame a water feature fed by springs.

and Sharon filled with a time capsule containing photos of themselves and personal statements about the garden.

THE LANDSCAPE BECOMES more formal as you approach the house. Terraced planting beds frame the foundation, anchoring the home to the site. Perennials are paired with variegated ajugas and grasses, lending color and pattern to the surroundings. A rock protruding from the lawn provides a perch for meditation, although the whole garden was designed with contemplation in mind.

"What I want to do is create healing gardens, where people can go and rejuvenate themselves," Schraven says. To realize that goal, the Dutch-born designer chose plants that engage the senses all year long. The blossoms of spring and summer give way to the autumnal golds of aspens and maples. After the birches have shed their leaves, their snowy trunks stand out against the blue-tinged fescue and the rangy browns of leather-leaf sedge. Ferns, rhododendrons, azaleas, laurels and conifers keep the garden green even in January. "In the middle of winter, when there's absolutely nothing growing, it's a very colorful place to be," Schraven observes.

Since water tends to drain quickly off such a steep, clay-based hillside, the designer tried to use drought-tolerant and semi-drought-tolerant plants such as ivy, thyme, kinnikinnick, cotoneaster and ornamental grasses. In case of a dry spell, the grounds can be irrigated using spring-water collected in a pair of 1,000-gallon cisterns. The rest of the time, the runoff



from the cisterns feeds a waterfall skirting the dining deck near the front door.

Schraven and his crew had to barge in all the rocks, plant materials and heavy machinery used to create the garden. Because of changes in the tides, they had only three months to complete the job. After that, the tides would be too low to haul their equipment away. "We worked 12- to 14-hour days, six days a week," says Schraven. He pulled the last load out four hours before the waters receded.

Although the bulk of the work was completed two years ago, the garden feels much older. The grounds were densely planted and specimen trees up to 25 feet high were added to instill a sense of age. Tendrils of blue star creeper hug the cracks between boulders blanketed in

thyme. Schraven returns periodically to fine-tune the garden and to embellish the northern edge of the property, which the Bloomes landscaped on their own with advice from others and the assistance of their full-time groundskeeper.

While the owners admit they're not avid gardeners, Mark finds satisfaction in pulling weeds or pruning shrubs. It makes a nice respite from the abstractions of work, he says. And the results are more immediate.

"I like to walk through the garden and see something that I helped create," the homeowner says. "It inspires my soul." ■

Contributing editor Fred Albert reports regularly on home design for Seattle magazine and other publications.



SURF AND TURF

NATIVE VEGETATION LENDS A NATURAL AURA TO MARK AND SHARON BLOOME'S MAGNOLIA GARDEN.

ABOVE

The steep hillside is bisected by a series of pathways leading down to the water's edge.

RIGHT

The Bloome house is nestled at the bottom of the hill, beside a lawn ringed with flower beds.

FAR RIGHT

Homeowner Mark Bloome stands before a rusted metal totem sculpted by David Govedare. The base conceals a time capsule.

