

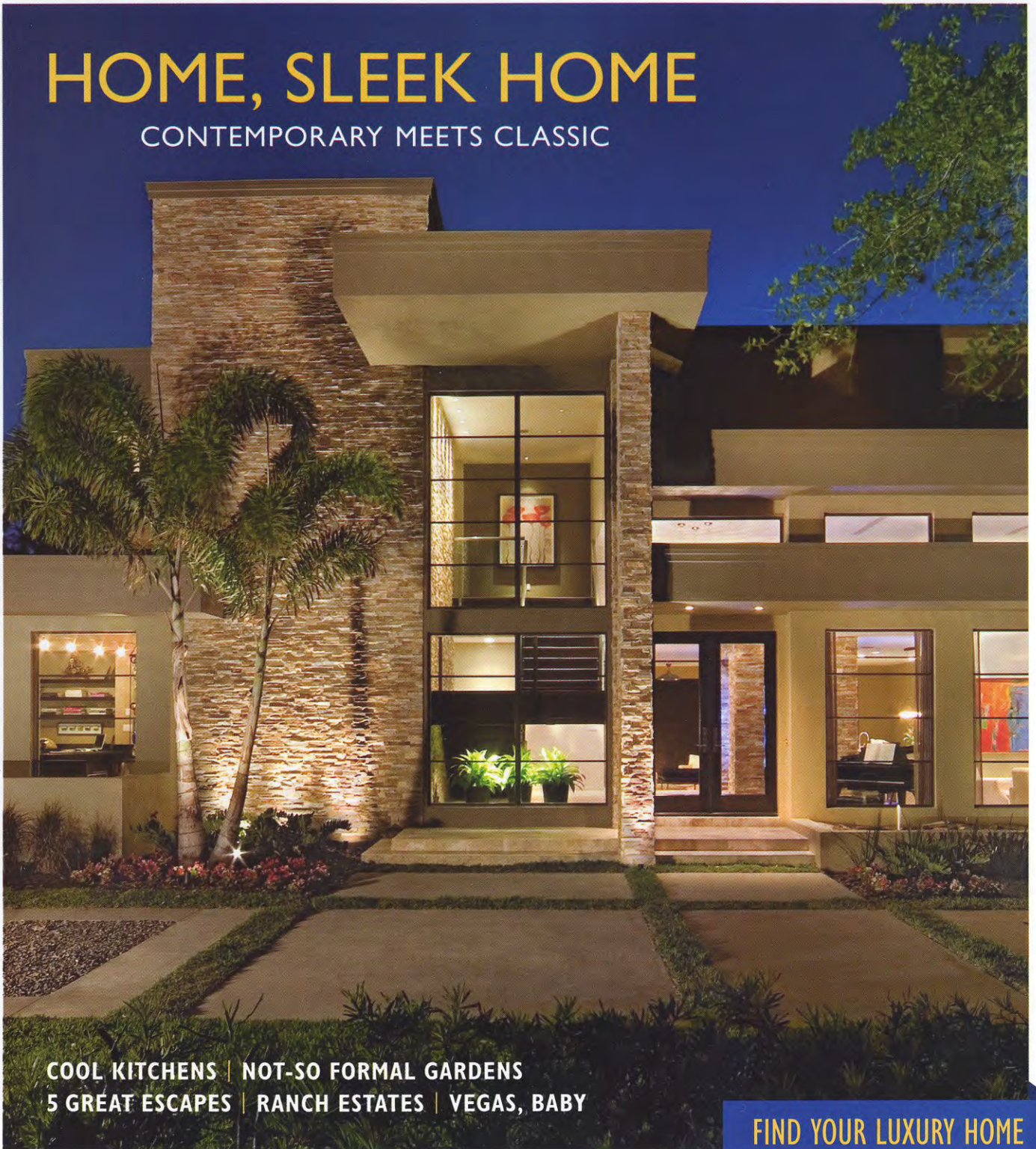
# EXCEPTIONAL PROPERTIES

Published by Robb Report

SEPTEMBER/OCTOBER 2012

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# Localism Meets the Landscape

CREATING FORMAL GARDENS THAT LOOK LIKE THEY'VE ALWAYS BEEN THERE.

**A**MERICANS ARE FINALLY embracing their place in the world. No longer a reinvention of the proverbial English rose garden or the grandeur of Versailles, formal gardens in America are finally becoming, well, more American. And they even pack some surprises like secret seating areas and vegetable gardens—yes, even outside luxury homes and especially on rooftops.

Of course, Garden Design 101 dictates that a home in Chicago isn't going to have the subtropical flora of Florida. And a Seattle garden will look considerably different than one in Phoenix. But across the country, there is a stream of consciousness to use plant materials indigenous to a specific region and a concerted effort to create more sustainable gardens.

Say good-bye to the velvety green water-guzzling lawn and hello to native landscaping strategically planted to screen out the neighbors and create a space-expanding illusion. Seedlings and flowers need not apply. Mature plants and trees are in, colorful blooms, with some exceptions, are out, according to Douglas Hoerr, a principal of Hoerr Schaudt Landscape Architects in Chicago, who has designed more than 500 residential gardens and worked with Robert A.M. Stern, Hugh Newell Jacobsen, and other noted architects.

Landscaping, he says, isn't an afterthought, and many clients, among them a cadre of privacy-seeking CEOs, are



LINDA OYAMA, BRYAN FOR HOERR SCHAUDT LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTS

Garden at a Chicago residence by Hoerr Schaudt Landscape Architects.

enlisting his services during the architectural design process to create a cohesive, established look. “Houses are so big, we’re knitting together mature pieces that are more to scale,” Hoerr says. “We use specimen trees to give the garden more character. My clients want their gardens and landscaping to look like they’ve always been there.”

Sweeping lawns, once the status symbol of how much property one really owned, have been replaced by a more natural look, with native trees and plantings that add depth and erase the property’s boundaries. Formal gardens haven’t been entirely eliminated; they’ve just been rethought to require less maintenance and exhibit more permanency.

Regionalism accomplishes that, and it’s a movement Hoerr attributes to cooking shows and the nationwide “buy local” campaign. Both have also contributed to a growing demand for organic vegetable gardens in urban and suburban settings and spawned the new American garden.

“For a while English gardens were popular, then it switched to Italianate, then the sun-baked rusticated look of Provence,” says Hoerr. “I sense there’s now more of an appreciation for the Americanism of garden design as opposed to imitating European gardens. The bones and influences of the past will always be there because it’s good garden design. Plus, people have tried the English perennial garden—until it’s eaten by deer.”

Gardens are designed to create a sense of place, one often dictated by a home’s architecture and its place in the world. Homes within Seattle’s city limits pack a lot into every square foot of garden space out of necessity; homesites are small,



says **Brooks Kolb**, a landscape architect there. Urban residents, he says, want more hardscape elements—paths, decks, hot tubs, outdoor fireplaces, and water features—to maximize use of these smaller alfresco areas.

“People think of a garden as a place to sit outside,” Kolb says. “They want outdoor areas for seating, dining, and entertaining. Some of my clients are avid gardeners; others just want to enjoy the feeling of being in a garden, to enjoy the fragrance and sensory qualities.”

Although most of Kolb’s design falls into traditional but site-appropriate design, he has noticed increased interest for more modern or eclectic gardens.

“In the past, people thought of modern as a house with too many windows and gardens with no ornamentation,” he says. “But there have been enough high-end modern gardens that have sprouted up and people have sat up and taken note. They say, ‘Hey, I want that too.’ There’s more interest in modern design today than there was 10 years ago.”

Poured-in-place unembellished concrete, Corten steel that oxidizes to a rich rust-red patina, and repetition of plant materials are common elements of today’s more modern gardens, he explains. In a nod to fashion, designs are also using dramatic color contrasts like light yellow-green with purplish-black.

For a project on Mercer Island, Kolb’s clients embraced an eclectic look—using a freestanding futuristic fountain, sculpture by acclaimed



This page: Gardens designed by Brooks Kolb reflect a distinct sense of place.



Portland, Ore., artist Lee Kelly, and a modern-meets-traditional stone-and-greenery grid terrace—while mindful of it blending in with the native forest matrix, a predominant feature of the city’s exurban homes. The design incorporates little color, relying on the subtle greens and varying textures of plants and trees, including two Japanese maples.

“The pretty movement has waned in a way,” says Hoerr, referring to the square footage once devoted to annual-filled flower beds. “When we do use flowers, it’s more strategic; we use them for color in the foreground, at the entrance to define the property, and in strategically placed window boxes and containers. Color junkies are accepting there are other ways to get color.”

Secluded sitting areas, hidden heating and music systems, and a fireplace embrace the garden room concept and allow clients to enjoy their outdoor oases longer into the evening and the season.

“People have an outdoor area they’ve invested in and they want it to work hard for them,” says Hoerr. “They want pretty but they also want functional.”

The garden and what it represents is even more important in urban settings. “Rooftop gardens are pretty huge in



Chicago, New York, and dense urbanism environments,” says Hoerr. “People want to entertain or enjoy cocktail hour or time as a couple outside. They want us to build in creature comforts so it truly is an outdoor room. They want the appearance they can go outside and use their garden, even if they don’t.” —NANCI THEORET



Smart formal gardens require less maintenance and exhibit more permanency. By Hoerr Schaudt Landscape Architects.

SCOTT SHIGLEY