

ANATOMY LESSON

Formal Hybrid

ARCHITECT RICHARD BERGMANN DESIGNED HIS in-town garden in New Canaan, Connecticut, as a modernist masterpiece in miniature, inspired by his 1835 Greek Revival house, travels around the world and the site itself.

Calling on geometry, stone, color and terracing, Bergmann has slowly (over 30 years) transformed a sloping, third-acre lot into a private paradise of foliage, ever-changing annuals, sculpture and outdoor living areas. Instead of resisting the site's problems, he let its existing groves of hemlocks and Eastern white pines inspire him, enhancing the natural lines with a straight row of plants in cylindrical containers. A circular garden formalizes a patch of native

Eastern white pines. Large, abstract sculptures rest prominently near a seating area.

Bergmann has the confidence to exert strong statements. His mentor, Michael Ruggiero, former senior curator in the horticulture department at The New York Botanical Garden, has encouraged him to "try anything. If it doesn't work, rip it out and try something else."

"Michael's visits to my garden have persuaded me to experiment and make constant changes," says Bergmann. "For example, I don't see trees as a permanent solution to any site plan. Some grow too fast and could overtake this small area. Instead of fighting with the trees, I take them out and replace them when they aren't working for me anymore."

Casual moments in the garden serve as a reminder that this is truly a place for relaxing. "When we had the power outage last summer, we decided to tend the garden—there was nothing else to do," Bergmann remembers. "I saw my neighbor out doing the same thing, and I shouted out to him to come on over. We lit candles and drank beer until the power came back on."

Continued exposure to plants and foreign gardens are leading to further changes: After studying Moorish gardens in Granada, Bergmann has just installed a pair of granite water basins, sparkling with droplets that the Moors liked to compare to liquid diamonds. —SARAH KINBAR

DEFINING A GARDEN

Bergmann designed sculptures, walls, terraces and planters, in the process discovering a hybrid of modern and Greek Revival style. Still, the most important style statement is in the pruning—many plants were chosen for their willingness to be shaped.



KAREN BUSSOLINI (5)



GRAND STAND

Left: The garden presents a public side visible from the street, which is only 25 feet from the house. Six narrow, columnar, 20-foot-high European beech trees (*Fagus sylvatica* 'Dawyck Purple') give a stately, parklike feel and mimic the house's columns, drawing in passersby.

ALL ABLAZE

Rounded 'Adams' crabapple trees (*Malus floribunda* 'Adams') in their golden fall glory provide a welcome contrast to the dark green of Eastern white pine (*Pinus strobus*) and yew (*Taxus media*) in the background.

CIRCLE OF LIFE

The circular garden is constantly changing. Annuals like artemisia, dusty miller and snow-in-summer proved unreliable in achieving a uniform blanket of color, so the Bergmanns now plant white impatiens in spring, which thrive under any condition and give off a phosphorescent glow at dusk.

WALK THIS WAY

The hilly 1/3-acre lot has been transformed by steps and terracing. Bergmann used rows of Belgian blocks to define the edges, filled in with native gravel. These walkable spaces also visually expand the lines of perspective and link the garden to the house.