

LAWN ORDER

A TIRED POOL SPURS
A COMPLETE REFURB
IN H&H EDITOR
COBI LADNER'S BACKYARD.

*Text by Jennifer Hughes
Photography by Virginia Macdonald*



The 20' x 40' pool was restored and repainted a light grey colour that gives the water an appealing blue cast. Salvaged flagstone was purchased to match the original patio stones. Garden design, Artistic Gardens; landscaping, Environment Friendly Landscaping; pool restoration, Todd Pools; pool house, Summerwood.



As ardent cottagers,

H&H editor Cobi Ladner and her husband, writer Bob Brehl, never intended to also be pool owners — until they bought their house eight years ago. “We didn’t go looking for a house with a pool,” Cobi explains. Nonetheless, the 40-year-old “cement pond” was part and parcel of the leafy, spacious backyard they acquired with their home. With two kids, Aidan, now 11, and Charlotte, 8, the pool has turned out to be a fabulous addition to summer days and evenings, but it was showing its age. The concrete was cracking, the equipment was ancient and inefficient, and cracks in the walls meant that some nights the pool was losing up to two inches of water, at great cost and waste.

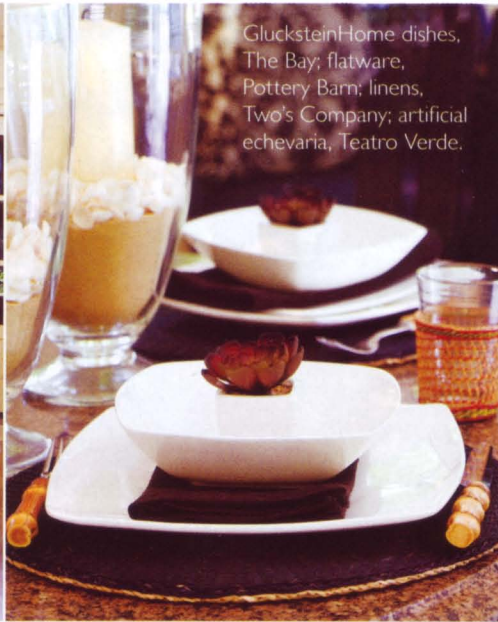
ABOVE: Boxwood hedges soften the base of the enlarged screened porch. New french doors invite family and guests into the yard. Contractor, Precision Renovations; doors, Tradewood Windows and Doors; plants, Sheridan Nurseries; lanterns, Teatro Verde.

OPPOSITE, TOP LEFT: Limestone-look marble flooring is a hardy choice that weathers the elements, even in winter. An electric fireplace provides cosy ambience in cooler weather. The granite-topped table withstands everything from kids’ birthday

parties to adult entertaining. Fireplace, The Fireplace Shop; flooring, Saltillo Imports; table, Hauser; Behr stain on chairs, Paint Colours Unlimited; fan, Wilcorp; sconces, Union Electric; orchid pots, Teatro Verde.

TOP RIGHT: All-weather wicker gives the porch an elegant look. Oversized damask cushions are sewn from weather-resistant Sunbrella fabric. The table lamps are wired for indoor/outdoor use. Furniture, Hauser; pillow sewing, Blinds, Drapes & Bedding; lamps, Shady Ladies.

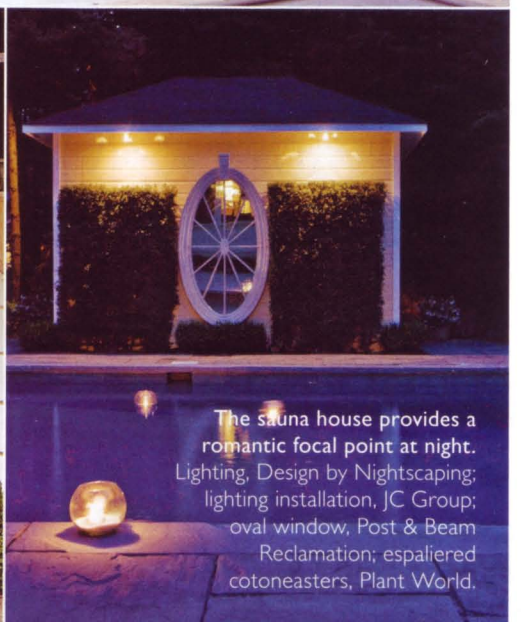




GlucksteinHome dishes, The Bay; flatware, Pottery Barn; linens, Two's Company; artificial echevaria, Teatro Verde.



Black chairs tie in with the black porch furniture. Loungers, Hauser; ceramic stools, Angus & Company; House & Home towels, The Bay. **BELOW, LEFT:** The gas barbecue was built into a ledgerrock surround with a slate countertop. Barbecue, Weber; bar cart, Hauser.



The sauna house provides a romantic focal point at night. Lighting, Design by Nightscaping; lighting installation, JC Group; oval window, Post & Beam Reclamation; espaliered cotoneasters, Plant World.

A new flagstone path meanders through the grass to the 12' x 12' prefab studio (used as an office) at the back of the property. Its yellow colour, a longtime favourite of Cobi's, complements the cream siding on the main house. Black shingles and shutters tie in with the house's roof and the black furnishings in the yard. Studio, Summerwood Products; shutters, West Windows and Doors; lantern, Union Electric.





Faced with the prospect of extensive repair work, Cobi and Bob decided the pool was worth saving.

As with all major renovations, the pool restoration took on a snowball effect that spilled over into the rest of the yard, where Cobi envisioned a cleaned-up version of what was already in place. After all, "I love this property," she attests. "I love the squareness, the flat openness in the middle and the wild, green perimeter. I had no desire to change that, just improve the surfaces and clean up the buildings." At about 130 feet wide and 70 feet deep, the yard was generously sized and well used by the family. But there was room for improvement in the landscaping, the hardscaping needed attention, and the screened porch off the back of the house was too narrow to comfortably dine in. Cobi sought the advice of garden designer and contractor Meredyth Hilton of Artistic Gardens to help plan the burgeoning project.

The 20-by-40-foot pool was patched, *CONTINUED ON PAGE 210*

TOP LEFT: Durable cork flooring in the studio is warm and soft underfoot. The old white wicker furniture, previously in the screened porch, was moved in to make a casual sitting area. A twig coffee table is appropriately rustic. Burl Sandstone cork flooring, Torlys; pillow fabrics, Sunbrella.

TOP RIGHT: The existing patio table and chairs were painted black to blend with new pieces. **RIGHT:** The walls of the studio were clad in pine and whitewashed. To winterize the space without covering the ceiling beams, the roof was insulated from the outside. Chair, map, Ikea.



GARDENS

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were the random flagstone pavers in this lower sitting area. The untamed mature trees that fill the ravine also act as a leafy backdrop for the yard and its inviting living spaces.

Plantings in the backyard were also kept simple, with masses of some species installed in certain beds and stately rows of others in other areas. Tall pear trees march in neat lines along either side of the pool, and the owner's antique tiered fountain is nestled into a tidy boxwood hedge. Variegated hosta and ground covers fill in beds along walkways, and as the stone steps descend into the ravine, a variety of shade plants create a verdant backdrop.

"We really wanted the house to appear to sit in the garden," Lloyd says. "And I think it reflects the owner's personality — a little bit traditional, with a bit of a modern edge." **H&H**

LOCAL COLOUR

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landscape. "The people who lived in this area were farmers and fishermen, and they built wonderful, warm, cosy homes," he says. "I didn't want to build anything that would violate that spirit." Indeed, an architect's initial drawings were scaled back to reduce the three-bedroom house's footprint by a third, to 2,000 square feet, and drop the structure's height by more than five feet. A palette of muted greys and greens was pulled from the surrounding landscape. "We wanted the house to be relatively quiet and to capture the views but not compete with them," says design consultant Mimi Findlay, who worked on both the exterior and interior. "From most of the house, you have a 270-degree view of the water, whether the open ocean, beach or pond."

Findlay, who has won awards for her renovations and restorations, had

worked with the owner on his primary residence, just outside Mahone Bay, and shared his vision of honouring the area's past. The house's frame is reminiscent of the barns on local farms, and the post-and-beam construction reinforced the rough-hewn quality. "We wanted to reference the landscape around the house, which meant bringing rougher textures inside," says Findlay. Inside, she cut down the legs of a wooden butcher's table to serve as a coffee table, and added a carpenter's bench — with its ample vise still intact — as a sideboard in the living room. Both pieces bear the scars of use and bring a sense of the area's history into the home.

The obvious choice for decorating a house by the sea is to swim headlong into nautical themes. Instead, Findlay took much of her inspiration from nature, describing her vision as "marine." "In this house you can hear the water as well as see it," she says. "I brought inside elements of the natural coast, such as rocks, stones, logs and blown glass."

Since maintaining the views was essential, Findlay incorporated interior windows into the design. In the second-storey bathroom, a bather can sit in the tub and open a hinged window that overlooks the dining area and have a direct view of the water. "You're framing the view of another part of the house, but it's also a touch that's a little bit humorous and whimsical," says Findlay.

Findlay selected pieces that complemented the design of the house but did not block views or natural light. Against neutral walls and furniture, she made bold use of colour in textiles, art and accents. However, for a lamp placed near a window, she chose a base in transparent glass. Similarly, the Japanese rice-paper lanterns that float over the living and dining areas — initially put up as temporary lighting while Findlay looked for a chandelier — don't block natural light and fit seamlessly with the airy space. "They move with the slightest breeze," says Findlay.

The homeowner's vision of a place to

entertain family and friends has come true in unexpected ways: the house was inaugurated with the wedding of the draftsman who drew the plans. However, the owner's favourite memory in the two-year-old house is from a quiet evening last October. "As I sat on the deck, I was watching fishermen chase tuna when I suddenly noticed that there were two whales in the water," he says. "In a moment like that you realize there's nothing like being by the sea." **H&H**

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retiled and painted a darker, more natural pale grey. The grey creates a more subdued watery colour than the turquoise of typical white pool walls. (Cobi opted for a light colour — overly dark pool interiors can be a safety hazard, as they create a murky effect and make it difficult to see the bottom.) The beautiful existing square-cut flagstone patio was lifted, then the ground was leveled and regraded, and additional stone was installed that matched as closely as possible so the hardscaping could be extended right to the pool's coping, as well as along garden paths.

The screened porch was doubled in size, from 7-by-24 feet to 14-by-24 feet. Its side door was augmented by a second door at the other end, as well as a set of double french doors that lead straight out into the yard towards the pool. New limestone-look marble flooring that can withstand winter's freeze-thaw cycles, a faux-stone electric fireplace and black all-weather furnishings now give the porch a more elegant finished look.

Two new outbuildings in the yard address functional and lifestyle concerns. A pool house stores equipment and hides the pump, and also contains a sauna. "The sauna was something Bob wanted, and he really does use it every night," says Cobi. The small building, a prefabricated structure, needed some style since it was so prominent

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within the yard. The addition of a large, oval window — now mirrored — salvaged from an estate and lush espaliered cotoneasters growing up the same side give the small building importance and provide a focal point from the screened porch.

Since Bob works from home, a 12-by-12-foot studio building was erected at the back of the yard to act as an office when things are too hectic for him to work in the house. The studio is winterized, and with a cordless phone and wireless internet access, it's an easy commute to work. Warm cork flooring, whitewashed walls and wicker furniture give the studio a cottage charm.

New plantings were kept simple and large scale, in keeping with the size and style of the yard. "We tried to mass plant as much as possible," says Hilton. "The yard is so large that bitsy things stuck here and there wouldn't have looked right." She recommended filling in some of the treed perimeter with small hemlock trees that would eventually take over where some of the tall trees were starting to thin out. Hostas, ferns, lily of the valley and dogwood make for a natural-looking landscape below the treed areas.

Now Cobi, Bob and the children are an even more devoted pool family. Grassy areas are pressed into use for croquet and badminton matches, and for Hito the Portuguese water dog to roam. The potential for casual family dining and more elegant alfresco entertaining are added bonuses. "On weekends when we can't go to the cottage, it's no problem," says Cobi. "Our new backyard is an oasis that we seldom leave." **H&H**

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