



Site Specific

A POLISHED NEW GARDEN DESIGN GRACEFULLY
BRINGS OUT THE BEST OF A GRAND PROPERTY



WRITTEN BY MARTY ROSS
PHOTOGRAPHY BY BOB STEFKO



Front of house Existing foundation plantings did not do justice to the style of the house or enhance the views from inside, landscape architect Douglas Hoerr says. In the new design, the architecture of the home extends into the landscape. **the** Trailing annual fan flower (*Scaevola*) cascades from an urn near the front drive.



Roses Pink "Knock Out" roses bloom all summer long. Pool patio Bluestone pavers with limestone accents connect the porch to the pool area. Crabapple trees, boxwoods, and yews echo the elegant design of the front-yard garden. Short, emphatic curves are repeated throughout the back garden area—in the brick walls between the dining area and pool, around flower beds near the gate, and in the patio's limestone accents.

Homeowners Mary Ann and Denne Knell Outdoor seating area The seating and dining areas are on the same level but feel like separate rooms. The outdoor sitting room is warmed by a fireplace, with a television concealed behind panels above the mantel.

Poolside jets Water jets can be turned on when no one is swimming, turning the pool into a relaxing water feature.



Homes along a particular historic road in Peoria Heights, Illinois, command breathtaking views of the Illinois River valley, but from the windows of Mary Ann and Denne Knell's handsome Georgian, the view across the garden to the vista beyond needed some improvement.

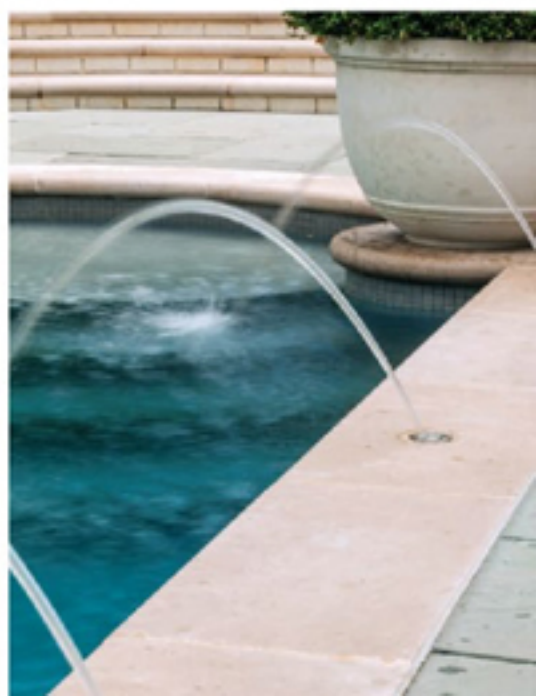
The Knells had lived in their home for 20 years when they asked Douglas Hoerr, a landscape architect in Chicago, to take a look at their property. The couple knew they wanted a more distinctive landscape, plus a pool in the back. "They were open to change," Hoerr says, "so I said, 'Let's just brainstorm.'"

The house had beautiful lines, but the existing landscaping didn't take advantage of them. Hoerr's goals were to create a gar-

den with strong bones that would look beautiful even in Peoria's snowy winters, and to extend the stately architecture of the house out into the landscape.

Hoerr fashioned a grand new entrance in keeping with the style of the house and the splendor of the view. By eliminating a driveway that ran all the way through the property to the next street, he made room for a formal entrance court, a comfortable new open-air living space, a 30-foot lap pool, and a gracious and useful circle drive by the garage in back.

Out front, "it was a sacred view," Hoerr says. "I had to treat it like artwork." He suggested an elegant planting of boxwoods, yews, and dwarf crabapples on either side of a wide approach laid with reclaimed granite street pavers and handsome granite curbs. The





Pool and back of house The pool was enclosed for privacy and to meet building codes. To accomplish this, Hoerr set the pool in a walled garden.

Ura Violet 'Supertunia' petunias front; **Green Velvet** boxwood.

River view From the front door, the view across the formal parterre out into the sweeping vista of the Illinois River valley takes one's breath away.



texture and gravity of the materials complement the home and give the scene depth; a smooth driveway would have made the house seem closer to the street. "It's a painterly convention," Hoerr says.

Space at the back and partly along one side of the house, which lacked shade and was seldom used, became a world unto itself. Hoerr created a sheltered outdoor sitting room with a fireplace, a dining area open to the stars, and a lap pool punctuated at the corners with boxwoods, as neat as the buttons on a double-breasted coat. The geometry is strong and polished, but light and inviting.

"Everything is a little more fanciful in the back," Hoerr says. "More like a jewel box."

Three wide, gracefully carved steps and low walls separate the sitting and dining areas from the pool. The change in elevation

"makes a big difference in how you experience the space," Hoerr says. Sinking the pool and the elegant patio around it makes the space appear larger than it really is.

Hoerr often starts with snapshots when he works with clients on projects, sketching right on top of the images to show how landscaping can transform the way a property is seen and used. Then his crew spray-paints the outline of a working design on the ground. Plantings can always be adjusted, he says, but the hard-scaping has to be just right. When it all comes together, as it did for the Knells, "it changed their perception of their own house, and brought them a lot of joy," Hoerr says. "I always love it when it works out that way." ➤

Landscape architect: Douglas Hoerr



Garden gate with finish
A wrought-iron gate at the side of the house separates the back and front gardens.

Hydrangeas A blue lacecap hydrangea blooms in shade in the new back garden.

Poolside lounge chairs
Chairs are arrayed on one side of the lap pool. Low walls and wide steps separate the pool and patio from the porch and dining area.



GARDEN DOOR



POOLSIDE URN

Details

WHERE A Georgian home in Peoria Heights, Illinois

CONDITIONS The home is on a 2.3-mile scenic drive overlooking the Illinois River valley. Theodore Roosevelt visited Peoria in 1910 and described Grandview Drive as the "world's most beautiful drive."

HIGHLIGHTS Evergreen boxwoods and yews look elegant all year round, even in snow. White-flowering 'Tina' crabapple trees, pink azaleas and roses, and a few bright annual flowers provide seasonal color. ■

ILLUSTRATION: KATHY KUNZ PERRY