

Landscape architect Julian Pattison added 400 square feet of usable space to the garden by extending the pool deck. The structure is supported beneath by a 15-foot retaining wall. The swimming pool was painted black to hide detritus that naturally settles on the bottom and to reflect the sky. The ipê deck was designed to remind homeowner Nelson Young of the dock at a family home in the Okanagan where he spent happy days in his youth.



PARING BACK

A landscape architect streamlines a West Vancouver garden

BY STEPHANIE WHITTAKER
PHOTOGRAPHY: ASHLEY TANASICHUK

LESS IS MORE. And less is particularly called for when a garden is cluttered or it's not framing a spectacular view.

Landscape architect Julian Pattison took his less-is-more philosophy to the design of a West Vancouver garden, and transformed it into a streamlined, contemporary landscape that marries perfectly with the architecture of the house it surrounds. "One of the starting

points of the project was to give our client more outdoor space that he could use," says Pattison, a partner with Alison Magill in Considered Design. "So we had to chisel away at the existing stuff. There was already a mature garden in place, a lot of shrubs and general clutter."

The homeowner, Nelson Young, had bought the property in 1991. It had a post-war-era bungalow on it, which he razed in 2005 to make

way for the Asian-style home he now inhabits. "I've been to Japan and I like the Japanese aesthetic," Nelson says. "The interior of my home is quite minimalist. When I finished the house, landscaping was not uppermost in my mind. We had a pool built, threw some grass down and put in some cedars. I didn't like it but it was only a temporary thing." The garden stayed that way until 2012 when Pattison came on board.

The landscape architect played off the house's spare aesthetic in designing the garden. One of the elements that was preserved is a Japanese maple, which was moved from the middle of the backyard to an off-centre location behind the house. A small ginkgo tree was also kept.

(Above) A row of seven aspens is under-planted with *Pennisetum alopecuroides* 'Moudry,' an ornamental grass with mauve-coloured flower heads.



“I wanted to use Brazilian hardwood for the pool deck to reproduce the experience of being a kid on that dock.”

“The house sits low on the lot,” says Pattison. “People think that a low profile is counter-intuitive to maximizing a view but we saw it as a good thing.” He adds that the home’s design permits long-range views of the Lions Gate Bridge and the city beyond while minimizing an otherwise uninteresting view of a shopping mall in the foreground.

One existing element that Nelson wanted to save was the swimming pool. It was in a

state of disrepair, but once it had been restored, Pattison urged that it be painted black. “When you have a turquoise pool, you can always see what’s sitting on the bottom,” he says. “We encourage people to go with a darker colour, which reflects the sky when it’s not being used and doesn’t show the stuff on the bottom.”

Nelson had fond childhood memories of his uncle’s dock on Lake Okanagan. “I wanted to use Brazilian hardwood for the pool deck

to reproduce the experience of being a kid on that dock,” he says.

So Pattison used ipê, which he describes as one of the hardest woods on the planet. “That deck will last 80 years,” he says. “Softer woods last between 10 and 15 years and have to be replaced.”

White LED lighting is embedded in the exterior decking. “That was my idea,” says Nelson. “I think it was a pretty good idea. It’s meant to draw you from the house when it’s lit up.”

Also on Nelson’s wish list was a green wall, a vertical structure that would support plants. Pattison suggested a metal mesh structure rather than an opaque material. It consists of two panels separated by three inches. *Clematis armandii* and jasmine climb between the panels. “Rather than creating a solid wall of greenery, we created something that is more like a veil to see the view beyond,” says Pattison. ☛



“We took the approach that nothing should shout in the garden.”

The poolside patio is made of flame-textured basalt “because the texture gives you a bit of grip underfoot,” he says. The pavers and crushed gravel on the paths that flank the staircase leading to the house are also basalt.

The horticultural elements are restrained but lush. “We’re not of the school of landscape architecture that throws 50 species into a garden,” Pattison says. Swaths of French lavender (*lavandula stoechas*) are repeated by the poolside

patio and in built-in containers on the stairs. “We use plants in a way that allows us to frame spaces,” he adds. “We don’t use them in a way that is particularly decorative. If a plant is suitable for a space, and it flowers and has a nice scent, it is repeated throughout the garden. The lavender likes the environment, needs little maintenance, but provides bloom and scent.”

On the garden’s east flank, seven aspens were planted to create privacy from the

neighbouring property. They’re underplanted with lavender and *pennisetum alopecuroides* ‘Moudry,’ an ornamental grass with mauve-coloured flower heads. “We took the approach that nothing should shout in the garden. Everything should be quiet and textured,” says Pattison.

It all meets with Nelson’s approval. “At the end of each day, I come home to my own private space,” he says. ➤

The house, built in 2005, replaces a post-war bungalow that was on the lot. The land comprises 10,560 square feet. Because Nelson loves Japanese architectural aesthetics, his home recalls Asian design. To create that spare look, Pattison edited out horticultural clutter at the front of the home. The larch, for instance, had been under-planted with rhododendrons, which were removed.