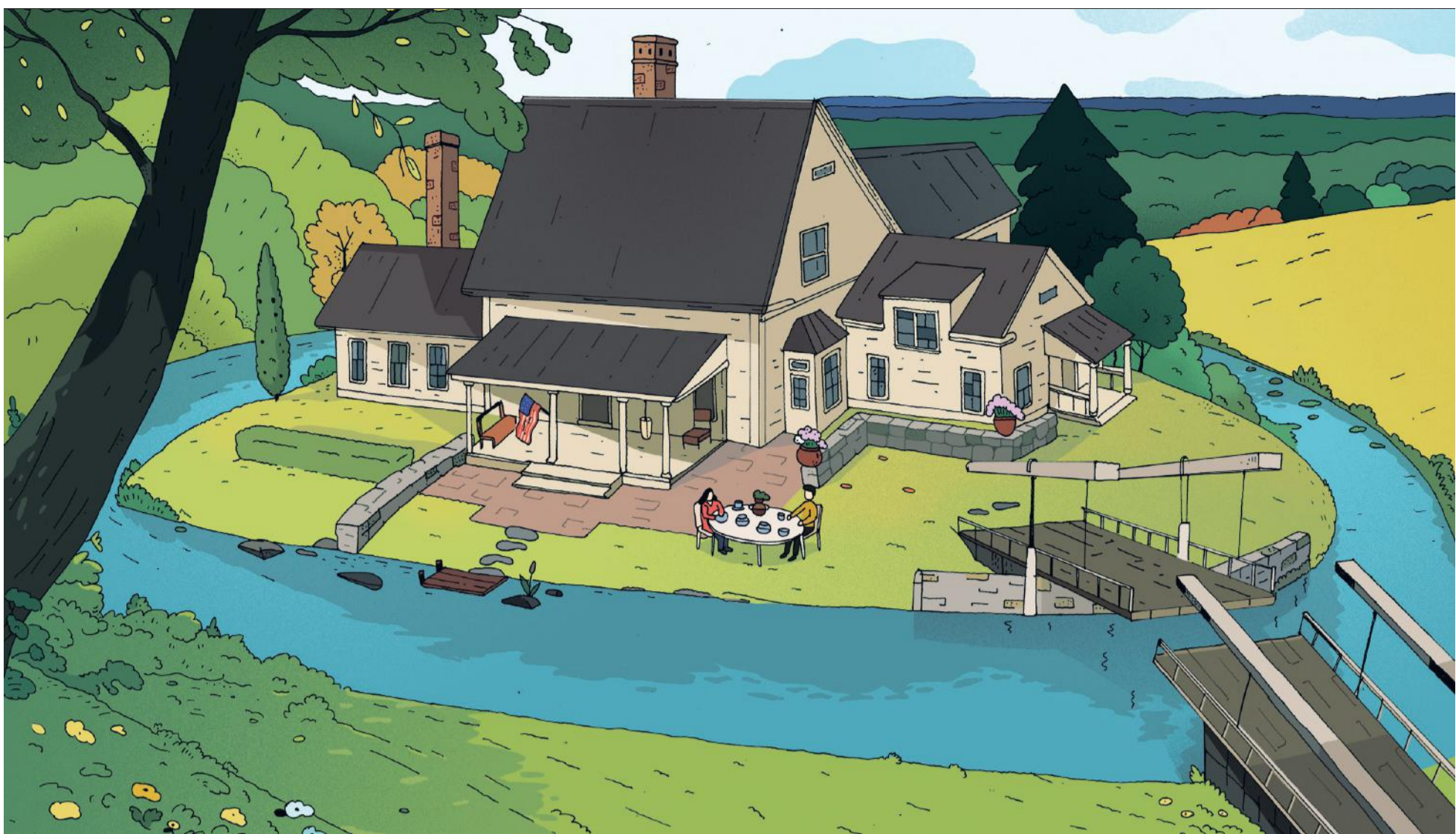


DESIGN & DECORATING



Maybe Nix the Moat Idea?

Nine interior and landscape pros share the most over-the-top outdoor design requests they've fielded, from unprecedented pools to castle-like water features—some of which they actually pulled off

BY ERICA GERALD MASON

"A young family in Texas requested a moat and draw-bridge around their country estate. It sounded like a lot of fun, but unfortunately logistically we just couldn't make it work [within their time frame]."

—Michelle Nussbaumer, interior designer, Dallas

"For a wraparound terrace on Fifth Avenue, a well-known fashion designer requested a trampoline for her boyfriend, who insisted it was safe, with no netting or railings on the edge. It was 16 stories up. The boyfriend never had an accident, but he wore out his welcome. We removed the trampoline and added planters with peach and apple trees."

—Janice Parker, landscape architect, New York

"Our client requested that we accommodate his refurbished World War II Sherman tank that was to be stored in a

show garage neatly tucked into the hillside of their 62-acre site. The request was revoked when it was determined that their Belgian-block driveway would be destroyed and have to be repaved every time they took the tank out for a spin."

—Margie Lavender, architect, Ike Kligerman Barkley, N.Y.

"We were asked to create a miniature golf course and ice skating rink for a Connecticut client. During the warmer months, the kidney-shaped course featured buildings and monuments—the Eiffel Tower, the Statue of Liberty—to serve as golf holes, and in the cooler months [it was cleared and] chilled to be a skating rink."

—Chris Pollack, builder/developer, Greenwich, Conn.

"[A client] told me she had begun taking trapeze lessons and would like to install a trapeze above her pool inside a garden pavilion...She thought



it would provide a unique way to exercise. A local stage-rigging company helped us attach a trapeze to the ceiling beams and equip it with a motorized lift. When finished, she would just drop into the swimming pool."

—Mark Lavender, interior designer, Chicago

"We designed an elaborate terrace with wall panels of rusted steel, a water feature, outdoor kitchen—you name it. The biggest challenge? Meticulously detailing and designing comfortable areas for the dog to go to the bathroom."

—Brianna Bishop, interior designer, Chicago

"It was an exhaustive wish list—a white garden ("like the one at Sissinghurst Castle," the client said), a theater garden ("like Lotusland"), a parterre garden ("like Versailles"), a Zen garden, children's garden, vineyard, herb garden, veggie garden, outdoor chess... And could we complete it in five months

and have it look fully grown? Endless midnight design sessions and five months later, the gardens were complete."

—Margie Grace, landscape designer, Santa Barbara, Calif.

"A young family was looking for ways to incorporate a pool in their backyard, ideally without losing square footage for their children to play and space for them to entertain. They asked if there was technology like a hydraulic retractable floor that would cover the pool. With the right team, their goal was achieved, the first such pool in north-east America."

—Marguerite Rodgers, interior designer, Philadelphia

"A movie director's property for his new Los Angeles home featured incredible, ancient pine trees, and his directive to us was 'Do whatever it takes to preserve these trees.' Problem was, the geologists wanted them removed to stabilize the cliff-side property. We had to create some really intense engineering, like tremendous caissons, to stabilize the home while protecting the trees. In the end, the window in one of the rooms basically frames these beautiful, old sacred trees."

—Chad Oppenheim, architect, Miami

Hail the Pale Dahlia

A quieter but no less glorious style has captured gardeners' fancy

DAHLIAS HAVE ALWAYS conferred magnificence to the late-summer garden. The blooms are enormous—"dinner plate" dahlias span 10 inches. Traditionally, their colors are equally unmousey: bottomless purples, regal fuchsias and velvety reds. But lately, dahlia worshipers are giving priority to softer shades of splendor. Creamy, understated pastels are in. "I think it has something to do with wedding trends," said Erin Benzakein, founder of Floret farm, in Mount Vernon, Wash., and author of the new book "Discovering Dahlias" (Chronicle Books). "Blush, champagne, buttercream—those colors have become really popular in the last couple of years, and there's extra frenzy to find varieties in that palette."

Ceramist Frances Palmer plants hundreds of dahlia tubers each spring outside her 1860s home in Weston, Conn., including Café au Lait, a ruffled pale-pink and ivory variety whose popularity many experts attribute to a 2010s endorsement in Martha Stewart Weddings magazine. In her garden, Ms. Palmer mixes the cultivar with similarly pallid species such as milky Sally Holmes roses and white Japanese anemones. Grow an assortment of dahlia shapes, she urges, from ball to waterlily, so your bouquets vary in "form and shape as well as a nuance of color."

Here, a few delicately toned beauties new to market, with their price per tuber.

BAREFOOT



Swan Island Dahlias, an Oregon business nearly a century old, hybridized this pearly, peachy specimen with a 4-inch wingspan of quilled "semi-cactus" petals. In development for five years before coming to market in 2021, the dark-stemmed plant reportedly blooms prolifically. Preorder August 1 for 2022, \$30, dahlias.com

MARIONBERRY MILKSHAKE



This 5-foot-tall choice produces dahlias in what's known as the formal decorative style: tightly wound, in a good way. Named for the lavender hue of a milkshake made

with the Oregon-bred marionberry—a type of blackberry born in 1956—it offers all the creamy satisfaction of a diner malt with none of the calories. \$30, dahlias.com

OKAPIS SUNSET



This semi-cactus petaled dahlia produces blends of apricot, yellow, white and pink that vary slightly—even on the same plant. Though purists dismiss this lovely inconsistency as unreliability, it explains much of the celebrity of the similarly variable Café au Lait. \$12, whiteflowerfarm.com

GINGER SNAP



MILD BUNCH Café au Lait dahlias from ceramist Frances Palmer's garden. Similar vases can be found at francespalmerpottery.com

This waterlily-style dahlia, a Creamsicle color whose outer petals fade to caramel, stands on sturdy stems, making it easy to arrange and liable to last long in a vase. Ms. Benzakein further wards off wilting by changing the vessel's water daily and keeping posies away from bright light. \$12, whiteflowerfarm.com

KA'S MOCHA MAYA

Kristine Albrecht, a Santa Cruz, Calif., hybridizer, has developed a line of dahlias with Café au Lait lineage. She recently released a 4-inch bloom, whose slightly more



saturated version of Café's colors has proven equally popular. It's sold out. Preorder in October for 2022. \$35, stonehousedahlias.com

—Kathryn O'Shea-Evans

THE GRAND OUTDOORS ISSUE | DESIGN & DECORATING



Find a Planter's Soil Mate

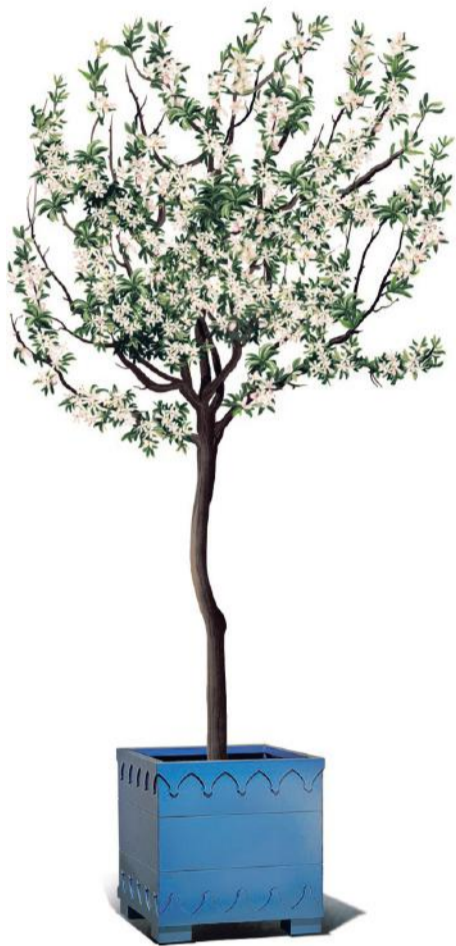
Make your terrace, porch or patio more posh with a potted tree, in a vessel that shows it best

By MICHELLE SLATALLA

THINK BIGGER THAN a crock of nasturtiums this year. "Potted trees can be magical," said Andrew Pascoe, a floral designer in Oyster Bay, N.Y. "You can create privacy on a roof terrace. You can use two to flank a front door. A row of them is an instant hedge."

Choose a tree that typically attains a height of no more than 10 feet, and pamper it in every season, said Mr. Pascoe, who grew up

in England's mild climate, where potted plants commonly become permanent landscape features. "In spring and summer, trees will exhaust the food supply in the soil of a pot quite quickly, so feed them well with fertilizer, and water them daily," he said. In winter, move pots out of danger of harsh winds and wrap them in burlap to protect roots from freeze-thaw fluctuations. Paired with the proper planter, a tree can become a living sculpture to artfully transform your garden year-round. Mr. Pascoe matches petite trees with new-to-market planters to make the most of both.



MODERN FAIRY TALE

"There's something very Gothic about the design of this planter" with its repeating pattern of pointed arches, said Mr. Pascoe. Pairing it with the frothy, very pale flowers of a miniature Cinderella crabapple tree would create "a classic blue-and-white palette—my favorite," he said, adding that the planter's sleek, aluminum surface updates the look. With long, slender branches that reach up and out like thin, curving fingers, Malus x 'Cinzam' "still looks enchanting in the winter when it has no foliage," he said. Oomph Ocean Drive Outdoor Planter in blue, from \$1,575, chairish.com



CLASSIC SPIN

"This is a very traditional metal planter, with its little feet and the rings on its sides, and would look lovely if you paired it with the formal shape of a holly trained as a topiary," Mr. Pascoe said. Ilex 'Castle Spire' can be clipped to encourage it to spiral upward as it grows, like an evergreen church steeple. "For symmetry, I'd like to see two flanking an entryway." In summer, its glossy leaves provide a deep green, and in winter, brilliant red berries. Aged Grey Square Planter by the Vintage Gardener, from about \$190, societyhouse.co.uk



BEAUTY AND THE BRUTE

For this plump, fluted container cast from a mix of crushed marble, rock and resin, Mr. Pascoe chose Prunus 'The Bride,' a flowering cherry tree with bouquet-worthy blossoms. "The shape of the pot reminds me of the shape of its delicate petals. Plus, the rough texture will play nicely against the pretty flowers when [the tree] blooms in spring." He recommends fertilizing the tiny tree in spring and judiciously pruning its crown to maintain a rounded, nose-gay silhouette even when branches are bare in winter. Petal Garden Planter, from \$650, pennynewman.com



URBANE SPRAWL

Of his decision to pair the gentle curves of a Japanese maple tree with the sharp angles of a modern planter made from high-density polyethylene (translation: recycled milk jugs), Mr. Pascoe said, "You need a contrast to soften its edges." An Acer palmatum var. dissectum 'Red Dragon' will grow low and wide, with a shaggy shape that brings to mind a shawl thrown across the back of a chair. "The red leaves will look dramatic against the bright green pot, and the shape of the tree will look sculptural even in winter when the branches are bare." Tessellate Slope Planter, from \$595, lolldesigns.com

Paired with the proper planter, a tree can be a living sculpture to artfully transform your garden year-round.



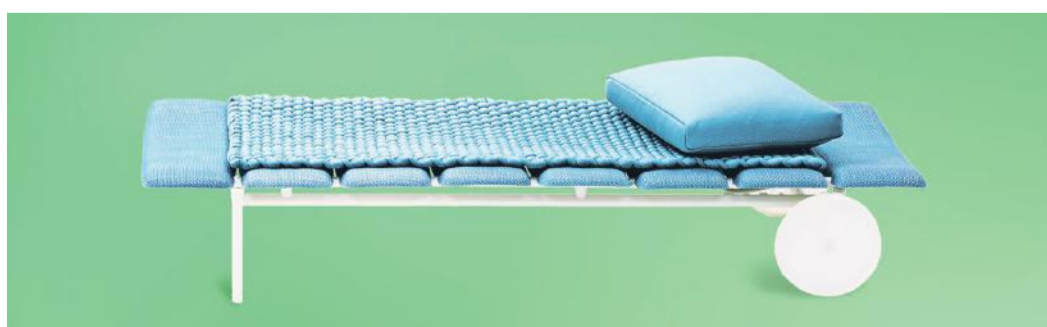
Double Your Picnic Options

We see a multitude of picnics in your near future, and without scope to vary them, they risk becoming as monotonous as these past months trapped at home. Instead of one blah blanket, try this padded cotton bontha mat, handmade in India using natural dyes. Each side features a different complementary pattern. Toss a foil-covered chocolate coin to decide which textile gets top billing first. Bontha Mat, \$425, lesindiennes.com



Ensnore Your Dog

Who needs more relief from sun than creatures compelled to wear a full-length fur all year? Shade your cat or canine outdoors with a wicker bed hand-woven in the shape of a pagoda—architecturally dramatic but not overly kitschy. The bed's designer, Tina Yaraghi, said she's drawn to styles that "blend the best of a current look with classical design." The 32-inch-wide perch includes a choice of two washable patterned cushions, so you can cuddle your backyard buddy selectively. Pagoda Pet Bed, \$495, enchantedhome.com



Thrill With the Chaise

When we ponder this luxe lounger, our thoughts drift variously to the Italian Riviera in the 1960s and the rooftop pool of a 21st-century hotel and then back to a reckless impulse to splurge on one of these chaises for ourselves. "It's a minimal,

timeless sun bed pared down to its essence," said Paola Lenti, who founded her Italian furniture and design studio nearly three decades ago. The chair's rounded pads evoke undulating ocean waves, and the woven-look fabric (a super-tough performance textile) adds a rich depth of sun-splashed color. Miramar Chaise, from \$6,240, paolalenti.it

Snip Like Royalty



Sculpting boxwoods into bunnies, trimming your David Austin roses or nipping daisies for a pickle-jar vase? These topiary shears—endorsed by the Royal Horticultural Society—help you do it all with ease and a slightly regal air. "They're beautiful hanging on a peg, and they function just as you would use your hand naturally," said Gary McNorton, who imports them from English manufacturer Burgon & Ball, which began producing steel sheep shears in 1730. The mechanism-free action won't rust or lose its spring like hardware-store snips. Topiary Trimming Shear, \$75, hudsongraces.com

Tote Starlight

The evening is warm and fair; the sky, literally stellar. Don't crash this bliss with the glare of a camping lamp or mundane phone flashlight. Instead, illuminate the night with a crystal lantern from the oldest cristallerie in Europe, French glass-maker Saint-Louis. "It brings this poetic glow anywhere," said interior architect Noé Duchaufour-Lawrance of the rechargeable lamp he designed. "It's like bringing part of a chandelier outside." Folia Portable Lamp, \$2,100, saint-louis.com

