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LIFE & STYLE



Robert Welsch of Westover Landscape Design in his backyard garden in Tarrytown with a distant view of the Tappan Zee Bridge.

CARUCHA L. MEUSE / THE JOURNAL NEWS

Small Wonder

Designer Robert Welsch's Tarrytown garden is a don't-miss jewel on weekend's Open Days tour

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When garden designer Robert Welsch and his now husband, David Davenport, bought their charming little 1932 Craftsman in the heart of Tarrytown in 1995, there really was not much yard to speak of. You opened

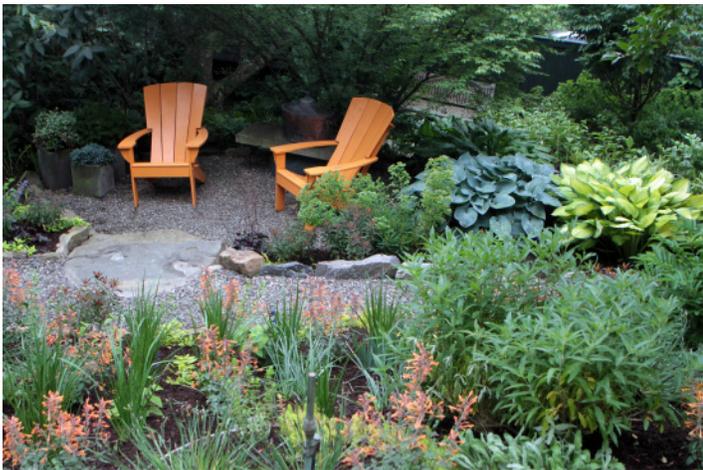
the back door to a small patio of pavers and that was pretty much it — just a steep dropoff into a cliff of untamed brush and briars. Luckily, the views of the Hudson were utterly fantastic.

That first spring, they began to imagine how to create a habitable garden out of the unmanageable weedy mess. “Robert laid it all out,” Davenport remembers.

“He had the vision of how to make it all work.”

Instead of trying to fight the impossibly steep slope that tumbled down from Neperan Avenue, Welsch added terraces and retaining walls to create a series of stone and gravel paths that wind up and down the hillside. He then planted them with rolling waves of color and texture that change with the seasons. Landing pads and modest seating areas — we love the Margarita Sunset Bench and the Tunnel of Love — allow you to stop and relax and take in those dreamy river views. Clearly this is a garden that gets lots of party time, too.

On Sunday, Welsch and Davenport's sweet little jewel of a garden will be open as part of the Garden Conservancy's Open Days Program, joining six other Lower Hudson Valley properties that day. If you have a small yard with not much going on, you can pick up loads of design ideas here.



A view of the Robert Welsch's backyard garden in Tarrytown, June 12, 2012 (top and above). PHOTOS BY CARUCHA L. MEUSE / THE JOURNAL NEWS



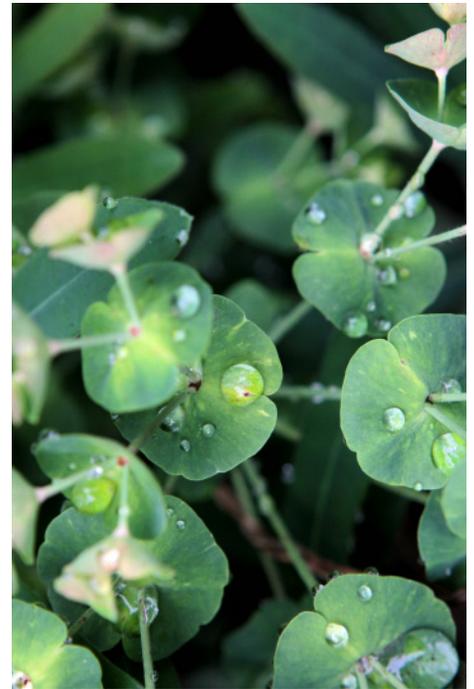
Agastache totally tangerine is one of many flowers in the backyard garden.



Purple hydrangea in the backyard garden.



Another view of the backyard garden. PHOTOS BY CARUCHA L. MEUSE / THE JOURNAL NEWS



Dutchman pipe vine plant (left and center), euphorbia plants (right) and Oak leaf hydrangea (below) are some of the many plants in the backyard garden.



Davenport and Welsch's garden, which sits on just one-eighth of an acre, is called Westover on Hudson. It was recently featured in *Better Homes and Gardens' Deck, Patio & Pool* magazine with a six-page spread. Westover Landscape Design (www.westoverld.com) is the name of Welsch's booming gardening business.

Welsch is a thoroughly knowledgeable plantsman, and he loves to experiment with new plants, ones he wants to get to know before trying them out in clients' gardens. You'll see things here you won't see elsewhere. "This is a collector's garden and also a garden to test things out, to try different color combinations," he says. "It's like walking through a container."

Speaking of containers, Welsch is quite talented at putting them together — he teaches container gardening at the New York Botani-

cal Garden — and you'll find lots to admire here, including oversized windowboxes and his own Westover line of pots. He uses galvanized steel window wells as containers, too, sinking them into the hillside to hold the soil in place and then filling them with annuals and perennials, including red hot poker, a wonderful tangerine-colored annual agastache and deep blue caryopteris, which blooms in September when not much else is in color.

In such a small garden everything earns its keep here, especially the larger shrubs and trees. One of their old favorites is a narrow 25-foot-tall viburnum that's just finished blooming. It began life in their garden as a tiny cutting they found in a Maxwell House coffee can (for \$1) at the annual plant sale organized by the Garden Club of Irvington-on-Hudson.



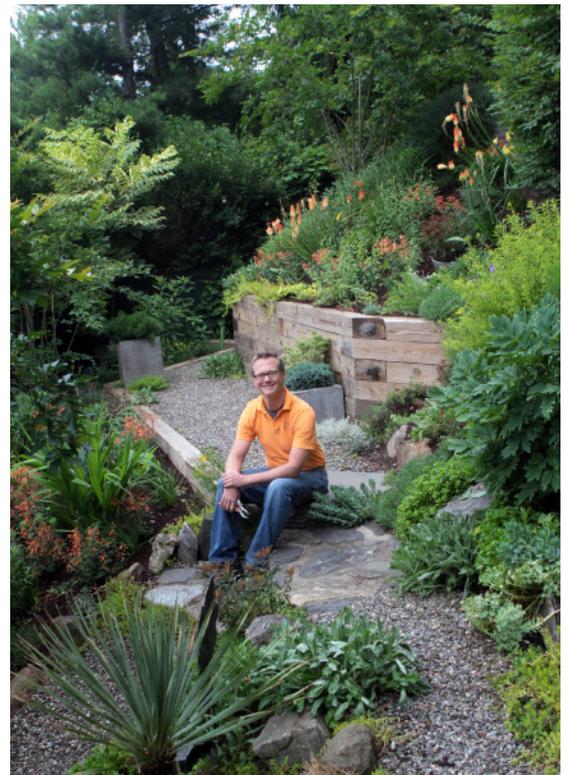
Anthropek Line containers (top and above) hold small plants.



From left, euphorbia and fire witch euphorbia are two types of plants in the backyard garden. PHOTOS BY CARUCHA L. MEUSE / THE JOURNAL NEWS



Red hot poker plant is one of many plants in garden designer, Robert Welsch's backyard garden.



Robert Welsch of Westover Landscape Design is photographed in his backyard garden.



Robert Welsch of Westover Landscape Design is photographed in his backyard garden (top). A view of the Tappan Zee Bridge (above). PHOTOS BY CARUCHA L. MEUSE / THE JOURNAL NEWS

“The stems turn red and the berries go to black — the birds love them,” Welsch says.

This garden is always in motion. Ornamental grasses were recently ripped out (and given to a next-door neighbor) and replaced with tricolor willows. A former stand of day lilies is now a tropical garden.

“I change it up every year,” says Welsch, who had an earlier career in publishing before switching to garden design. “This is the second year I’m using lots of hot colors on the hillside.”

Welsch and Davenport’s garden looks a bit like a nursery, too, with flats of annuals and pots of perennials and grasses covering much of the gravel terrace near the back door, all stacked up and waiting to go into clients’ gardens. “This time of year, the plants come in, and they go out,” Davenport says. “And for really special events, they all go out.”

Luckily, there are hundreds more for all to enjoy, just below that terrace as you step down into this enchanting garden.

FAVORITE NURSERIES:

We asked garden designer Robert Welsch to tell us his five favorite nurseries.

Rosedale Nursery, 51 Saw Mill River Road, Hawthorne, 914-769-1300, www.rosedalenurseries.com. “Best overall selection and variety for every garden condition in Westchester,” he says.

Mariani Gardens, 45 Bedford Road, Armonk, 914-273-3083, www.marianigardens.com. “Beautiful retail space and the go-to nursery for large specimen trees and shrubs.”

Oliver Nurseries, 1159 Bronson Road, Fairfield Connecticut, 203-259-5609, www.olivernurseries.com. Welsch calls this “one of the finest retail nurseries in the country — the best selection for alpine and rock garden plants anywhere.”

Carlson H. Florist, 625 Dobbs Ferry Road, White Plains, 914-684-6084. “A wonderful family-run nursery,” he says. “It’s my first stop for a creative living hostess gift — wonderful plants and inspiring arrangements.”

Terrain, 561 Post Road East, Westport Connecticut, 203-226-2750, www.shopterrain.com/westport. “The new kid on the block,” Welsch says. “Gorgeous space and knowledgeable staff — worth the drive.”

IF YOU GO

Here’s a look at the Open Days lineup for June 24.

On June 24 in Rockland, visitors may begin at any of the following locations:

Pretty Penny, Helen Hays’ former estate, 235 N. Broadway, Nyack

Cain Garden, 1 Rockland Road, Piermont

Twig Garden — Home of Linda and Jonathan Twig, 260 S. Tweed Blvd., Upper Grandview

South Cottage — The Moorings – Florence and Walter Katzenstein, 507 N. Broadway, Upper Nyack

Hours are each 10 a.m. to 4 p.m.

On June 24 in Westchester, visitors may begin at any of the following locations:

Brae Willows, 49 Long Ridge Road, Bedford

Westover on Hudson, 149 Neperan Road, Tarrytown

Directions to a third garden, in Bronxville, will be available at these locations.

Hours at each are 10 a.m. to 4 p.m.

For more information, visit www.gardenconservancy.org/openendays, where you’ll find driving directions and owner-written garden descriptions, or call 888-842-2442.