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Hamptons Cottages and Gardens

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# Personal Best

DAVID KLEINBERG'S EAST HAMPTON GARDEN IS A MARVEL OF UNDERSTATED ELEGANCE.

BY CLINTON SMITH  
PHOTOGRAPHS BY TRIA GIOVAN

A 19th-century French settee sits below a crab apple tree centered between geometric beds of ornamental grasses.

Astilbe and ferns line the driveway. (OPPOSITE) Hostas and other lush foliage appear throughout the garden, including near bluestone paths. The pool was reconfigured to be on axis with the house. See Resources.



# A

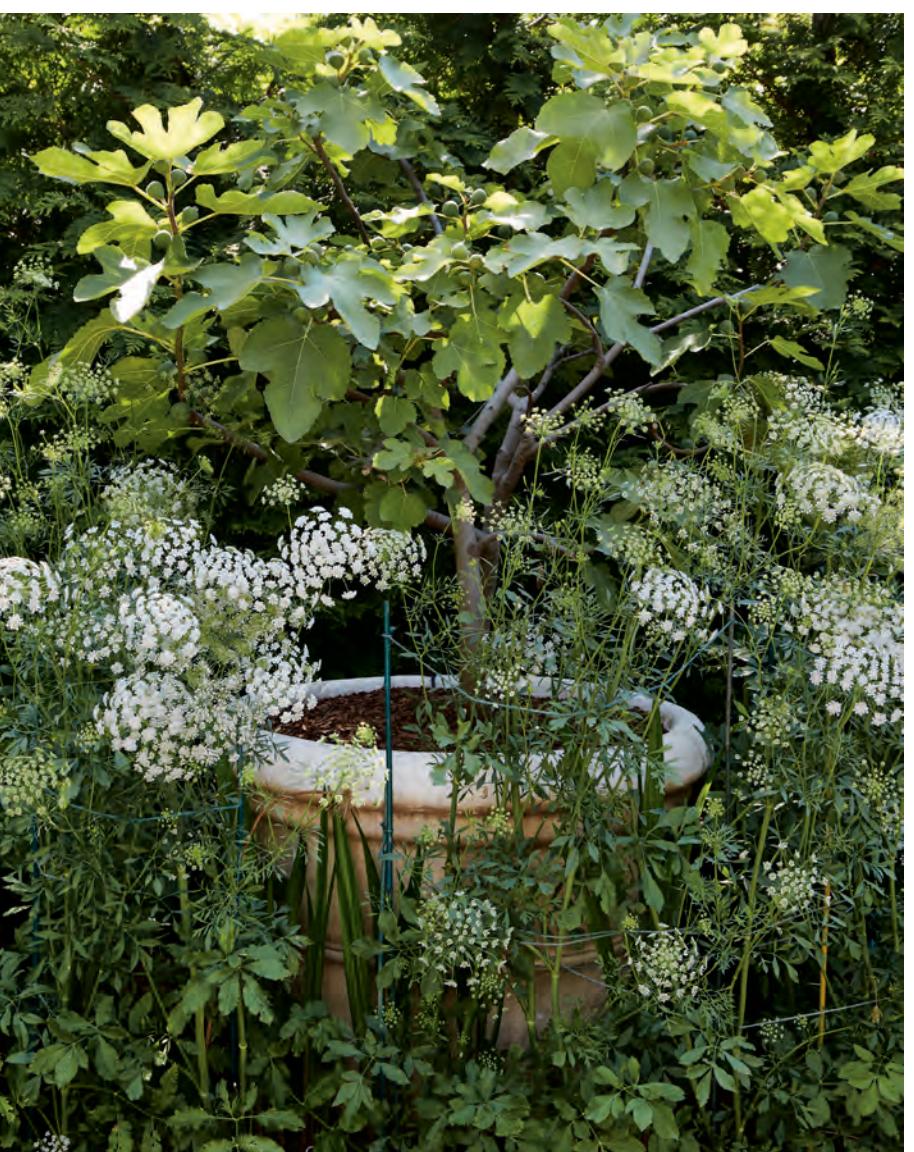
lthough David Kleinberg maintains a bucolic four-acre piece of property reminiscent of something you might find in the countryside, it's nestled right in the heart of East Hampton. "You can literally walk to the train station from the house," says Kleinberg.

Owning the property was sort of a full circle moment, as he was no stranger to it.

"I rented the house for two years, actually, and then it came on the market, and I bought it. It was one of those nice situations where I knew, having lived on the property, what I wanted to do with it."

He also knew what he didn't want. "I'm not an English border guy, although I think they're fantastic and beautiful," says Kleinberg, "and I didn't want a garden of hydrangeas, even though, when you see them out in the Hamptons, they're absolutely beautiful."





(THIS SPREAD) The lush cutting garden is a recent addition, added to the property during COVID. It offers a bounty of blooms all season long.

A mowed path leads through the meadow.  
(OPPOSITE) The garden features a mix of  
manicured and wild spaces. A row of tall pin  
oaks define the south border of the garden, with  
limelight hydrangeas in the background.



Having never designed a garden before presented a learning curve, albeit the tools he uses in his esteemed interior design practice came in handy.

“There’s so much that’s similar in terms of laying out a garden and laying out a house and plotting it,” says Kleinberg. “Whether your sight lines are through rooms, or your sight lines are through trees and grasses, they’re kind of similar. While I could lay things out in my brain geometrically, I didn’t know what plants should go where.” Kleinberg originally worked with the late landscape designer Hal Goldberg but now collaborates with designer Abby Lawless.

“Abby came to the property and very sweetly agreed to help me get it to the

next level,” says Kleinberg. “She improved the layouts of the paths and through the meadow, and also with the grass mix and what we were doing and how we were cutting it.”

While the garden is a mix of the tamed and the wild, the addition of a cutting garden presented a unique opportunity to interact with the garden in a different way.

“The first thing I do when I get home is walk straight through the house and out into the garden and walk through the meadow and down to the cutting garden. Every night before people come over for dinner, I cut some flowers.” \*

