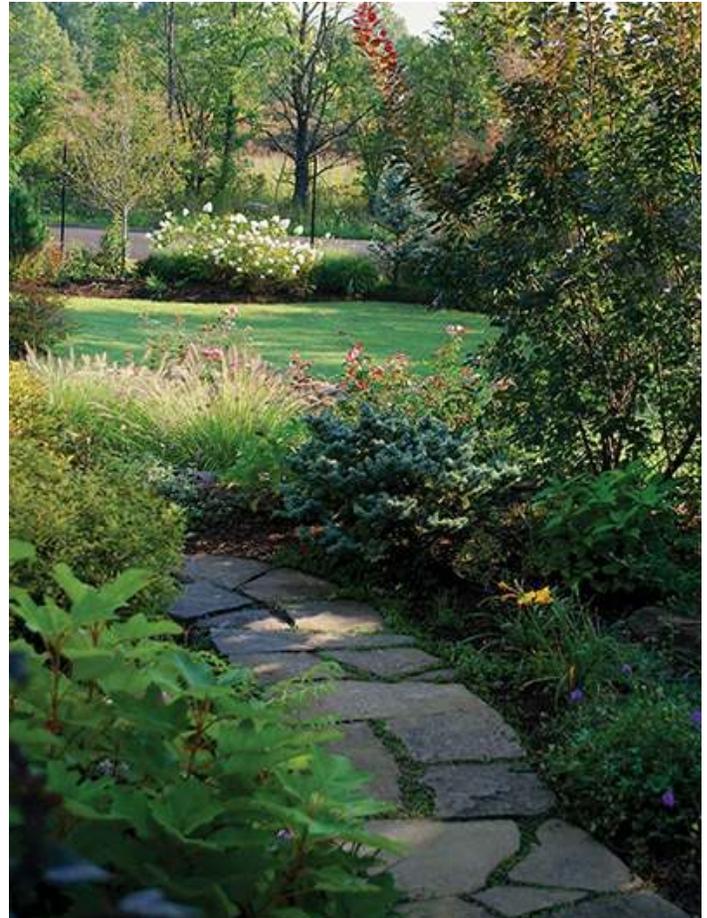


# Local Landscape Designer Works (And Lives) In An Evolving Garden

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**New Paltz designer Elizabeth Elkin is living proof that homeowners can be flexible with their gardens**

By Barbara Ballinger

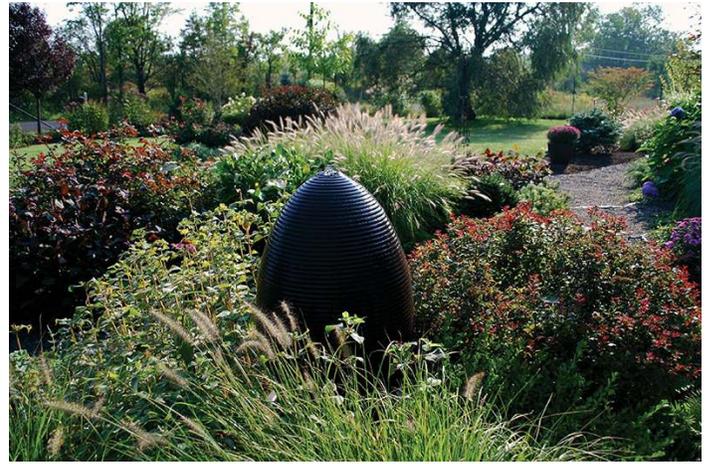


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Designer and homeowner Elizabeth Elkin created an outdoor oasis as an extension to her home

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Landscape designer Elizabeth Elkin, founder of Bloom Landscape Design & Fine Gardening, is continually upgrading her professional skills by transforming her three acre New Paltz property into a series of charming outdoor spaces or “rooms.” Elkin, and her husband Matthew, a teacher, purchased the site, complete with a 1960s ranch-style home, in 2004 and it has lovingly become Elkin’s experimental lab. There she tests plant materials — trees, bushes, flowers, vegetables, and fruits — for her residential and commercial clients, a necessary task as the Hudson Valley’s soil and climate can prove to be a tough incubator. “After I moved here and worked at a nonprofit CSA and as lead gardener for a private estate, I learned about all the different soil types and exposure to variations in sun and shade,” she says. “My husband sometimes jokes that our plants have legs. He goes off in the morning and when he comes back, some may have been moved to a better spot.”



When she approached the site a dozen years ago, she did what she advises all her clients to do: develop a wish list that becomes part of a master plan so work can be phased in as a budget and ideas unfold. “You don’t want to build a terrace and then find, “Oh, I wish I had saved that spot for a vegetable garden,” she says. “I wanted to be drawn outdoors to the land just as I want my clients to be, to enjoy the spaces they want, as well as fresh air, sunshine, and breezes.”

Her own garden — still evolving — reflects her desire to simply sit lazily on a terrace that extends their indoors, grill, listen to pleasant water sounds, and see their children, now 3 and 6, enjoy an old-fashioned-style playhouse they found on Craigslist. She also planted a fenced-in vegetable garden that includes more than 20 raised beds where she mingles everything from blueberries to strawberries, asparagus, tomatoes, kale, cabbage, broccoli, and more with a colorful assortment of native annuals and perennials in soil she composts to make it healthier. One of her greatest joys has been to also watch her children learn about gardening. Her 3-year-old, whom she describes as a picky eater, now loves to tear off a kale leaf and munch on it raw. She surrounded the beds with pea gravel, and installed a handsome shed that she uses to store tools and pots and Matthew uses to filter vegetable oil into fuel.

Landscape designer Elizabeth Elkin has given her husband and children a choice of lush gardens on their property

Her property also includes a dining terrace with a “floor” of broken Pennsylvania flagstones for a loose casual look, rough-cut paths that connect spaces, a new driveway loop where the children bicycle and with a center oval with more flowers, recirculating water bubbler for relaxing noise, and plenty of rock borders for drainage. Trees have been a favorite addition. “Planting trees is one of the best investments you can make,” she says, and hers have included maples, oaks, river birch, magnolia, and a favorite dawn redwood that thrives in her site’s heavy wet clay soil and provides a lush canopy of yellow and orange leaves come fall.



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And like many of the gardens she works on, it may never be done. “We’d like to put a deck and garden off the kitchen and add a koi pond, which will probably be when the kids are in college,” she says laughing. But for now she’s delighted with everyday changes. “I get so much excitement from waiting for a flower to open or catching a glimpse of something in the yard when I’m indoors. It supercharges my soul,” she says.

For more photos, visit Elkin’s website at [www.bloomfinegardening.com](http://www.bloomfinegardening.com).