

## URBAN

A LUSH FAMILY GARDEN  
BRIMS WITH ELEMENTS BOTH  
PRACTICAL AND PRETTY.

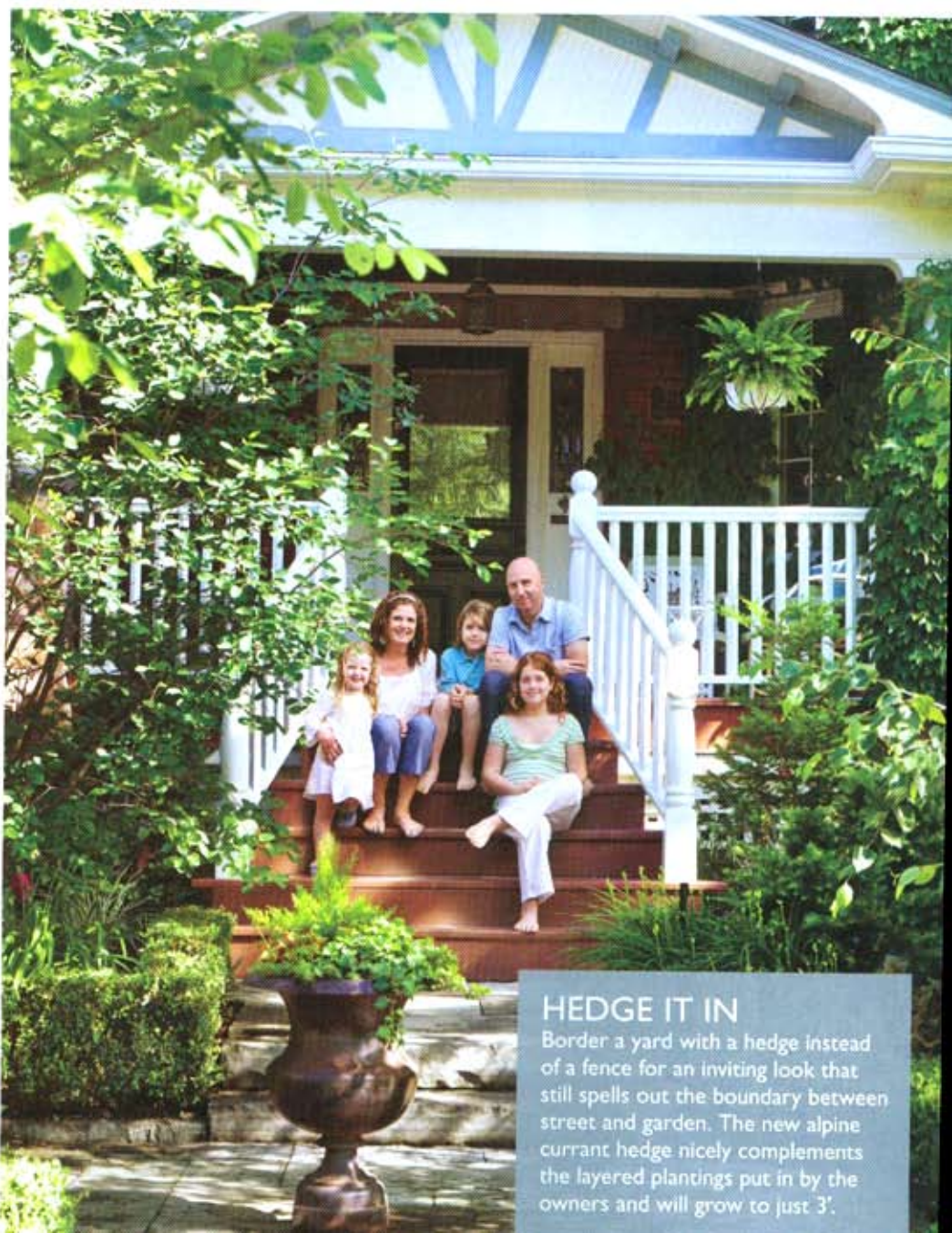
*Text by Laura Mair Photographs by Donna Griffith*

## As outdoor living

gets more and more kitted out, many homeowners find themselves grappling with a dilemma: should they forgo a cottage and create a retreat right outside the back door? For this busy Toronto couple — he's a marketing executive; she works in retail sales — the decision was a no-brainer. "We decided that with the time we'd spend fighting traffic to get up to a cottage, and then doing more work when we got there, we'd be better off just relaxing in our own backyard," says the owner, an enthusiastic gardener who did a lot of the work himself.

With a vision of creating a dream backyard, the couple enlisted landscape architect Adam Gracey to transform their 35-by-110-foot corner lot into a multifunctional summer retreat. "When we bought the house in 2000, the property was surfaced in dirt with literally 300 awful two-foot-square patio stones in the backyard," recalls the owner. The new family-friendly space, built in four stages between 2002 and 2007, boasts a pool, dining area and a play area for their three kids.

For tips on creating your own lush getaway right outside the back door, read on....



### HEDGE IT IN

Border a yard with a hedge instead of a fence for an inviting look that still spells out the boundary between street and garden. The new alpine currant hedge nicely complements the layered plantings put in by the owners and will grow to just 3'.



# OASIS



## FURNISH OUTDOOR ROOMS SMARTLY

Fully outfit covered porches to transform them into functional and inviting living spaces. Here, cozily arranged seating for four offers a real alternative to indoor sitting rooms. A coffee table and sisal rug add charm; Boston Ivy enhances privacy and softens the look. "At night, we sit out here with a glass of wine," says the owner. *Chairs, Restoration Hardware.* **GREAT VALUE:** Hunt for vintage metal furniture online and sand and repaint it yourself.





## «TRICK OUT A RETREAT

Turn a backyard garage into a comfortable spot to hang out. Here, Gracey gutted the rundown, two-car garage and converted it into a pool house with change area (complete with clothes dryer), a kids' loft and an entertainment area and a poolside bar. It was clad in new board-and-batten to give it a light, casual style that blends with the house's picturesque look.

**Stools, Pier 1 Imports; armchair, Restoration Hardware; sconce, Rizo Home, Garden & Bath; siding colour, Cloud White (CC-40), Benjamin Moore.**

## »MAKE A SPLASH

Add a pretty water feature to cut down on street noise and establish a soothing focal point. Here, a sheer-descent waterfall made of Owen Sound flagstone coordinates with the flagstone on the bar counter and in the rest of the yard. It's also a fun element for the kids. "They like to swim behind it and play under it," says the owner. "And it adds ambience when we're dining outside." A row of cedars beyond the pool offers extra privacy from the street.

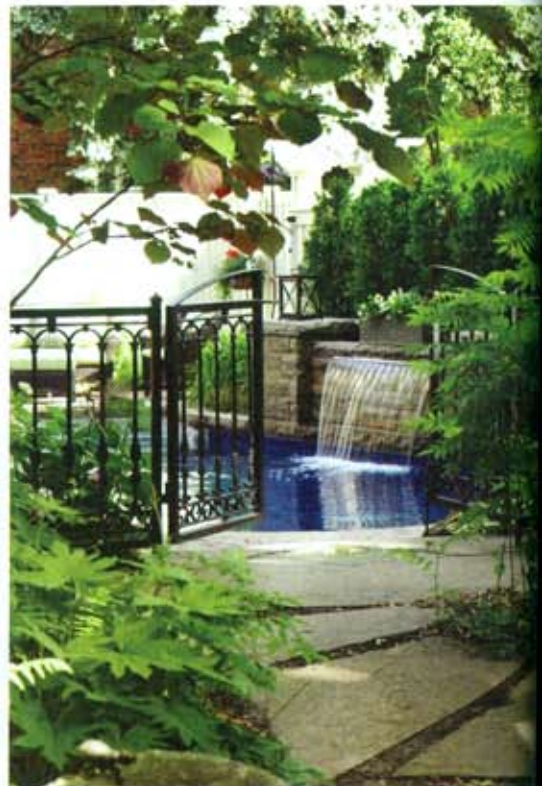
**Salt water pool, Custom Pools; lantern, HomeSense.**



## «DIVIDE AND CONQUER

For a multifunctional yard that accommodates everything from morning coffee to outdoor entertaining, divide the space into separate zones. Here, an arbour and a couple of low flagstone steps delineate the pool and dining areas. They're softened by wisteria and climbing roses. To evoke a French courtyard, brick-style concrete pavers are set in a herringbone pattern. **All flagstone and brick, Beaver Valley Stone; green seat cushions, Restoration Hardware.**

**GREAT VALUE:** Use small hits of costlier stone to edge more affordable materials.







## « ESTABLISH A KIDS' ZONE

Cordoned off by a French-style wrought-iron fence, a shady 25' x 30' children's garden includes a woodsy cedar playhouse and plantings to spark their imaginations: butterfly bush to attract butterflies, a serviceberry tree with edible berries, and a beautiful redbud.

**GREAT VALUE:** To get the custom playhouse look for less, shop for a DIY unit at a big hardware retailer, then paint and accessorize it to suit your little ones. *Playhouse, Flamborough,*

## » WELCOME WARMLY

Create an entry that sets an inviting tone. This property features two pergola-style gates; this one leads from the side yard into the back. Its classic, low-key look complements the house's traditional style and trim colour. A window-like wrought-iron grate adds interest and allows the family to see through to the other side. To ensure a leafy, cottage-like look, incorporate numerous trees into the design. Trees also help buffer sound and create shade, which can help keep air-conditioning costs down in summer.

**GREAT VALUE:** To get a lush look quickly and cheaply, put in lots of fast-growing vines. **H&H**



Corner lots are a blessing and a burden. They usually mean a larger lot, but that comes at a cost: less privacy. The easy solution is to erect a fence, but you don't want it to feel like a fortress. If you have the space, set it back from the street so you still "share" some of your garden

with the neighbours, and step it up and down in height so the areas closest to the house are most private, and the areas closer to the curb are more open and welcoming. Then, buffer it with layers of trees, shrubs and groundcover,

