

THE HAMPTONS DESIGN GUIDE

2025



FROM THE EDITORS OF

HC&G

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THE GREAT OUTDOORS

Landscape architects and garden designers on the East End are loving formal gardens as much as those that favor native grasses and fruits and vegetables that thrive in our climate. Either way, the results are good for the earth, and, of course, gorgeous.



PHOTOGRAPH: TREVOR PARKER; LANDSCAPE DESIGN: RON WENDT DESIGN.

Which native plants thrive on the East End?

- Myrica - Bayberry
 - Acer - Maple
 - Quercus - Oak
 - Ilex opaca - American Holly
 - Vaccinium - Blueberry
- Kim Hren



- Virginia Rose
 - Bayberry
 - Christmas Fern
 - River Birch
 - Tamarack
- Michael Derrig

OUR PANEL OF EXPERTS

Abby Clough Lawless
Farm Landscape Design

Linda Silich and Kim Hren
Groundworks Landscaping

Michael Derrig
Landscape Details

“Warm season grasses such as Switchgrass (*Panicum virgatum*) and Little Bluestem (*Schizachyrium scoparium*) do very well, while Mountain Mints (*Pycnanthemum*) and Milkweeds (*Asclepias*) provide floral interest and benefit pollinators. We love to sow Penstemon (*Penstemon digitalis*) and Spotted Beebalm (*Monarda punctata*) into our meadow mixes for added color. And we can’t forget the importance of native trees. Red Maple and White Oaks are keystone species that thrive on the East End.”

— Abby Clough Lawless

How much color should be added to the garden?

“It truly depends on the person. Once we decide on a color scheme for a garden, it can be a monochromatic look with shades of one color or a combination of different colors for a diverse and vibrant look. Then we consider foliage, texture, and seasonal interest and go from there!” — Linda Silich

“It’s important to embrace emotional connections when deciding which colors to add to the garden, as it is very personal and often attached to our formative memories. As a general rule of thumb, we add 60 percent flowers to 40 percent grasses in our meadow-style gardens. We also try to emphasize that it is not only the color of the plant, but how it reflects the passage of the seasons. When in bloom, Coneflower has distinctive pink to purple blooms. As the petals fall, the seedheads develop and not only add architectural interest to the winter garden, but also are beloved by American Goldfinches for their protein rich seeds.” — Abby Clough Lawless

What is your number one tip for maintaining a garden in the summer?

“Planning your garden in advance is key to a successful growing season. Allowing plants to have proper spacing and using the right textures can make all the difference in the garden. Additionally, irrigation is a very significant and underrated part of one’s garden; it provides your plants with the most consistent and effective way of watering. As a result, this allows your plants to grow in the best conditions possible.”

— Michael Derrig

“Beyond healthy soil and strategic watering, selective pruning keeps a garden performing all season. In mid-July, give your annuals a good haircut. They will respond with more blooms and will bloom through the heat of August.” — Abby Clough Lawless



(OPPOSITE) PHOTOGRAPH: TREVOR PARKER; LANDSCAPE DESIGN: RON WENDT DESIGN.

Which vegetable and herb plants perform best on the East End?



“For vegetables, zucchini, tomatoes, and a wide variety of cucumbers do well. Radishes, salad greens, and arugula are great vegetables, because they are quick to mature and can be sown successively throughout the summer. For herbs, parsley, rosemary, and sage are reliable. Basil can also be very productive, but it will sometimes need to be refreshed as the summer progresses.” — Abby Clough Lawless

“We can grow any veggies or herbs that you would like. We often tend to plant raised garden beds for veggies, and then some of the herb plantings go into planters that can be placed around outdoor barbecue or kitchen areas so they can quickly be used in cooking. Gardens should be fenced to prevent critters from getting in as well.” — Kim Hren

“Tomatoes are always a spectacular addition to any vegetable garden; Sun Gold tomatoes are our favorites—they’re high yield and have a fruity flavor. We also love cucumbers, especially the pickling varieties. Leafy greens like arugula, lettuce, and sorrel, all of which require little maintenance, thrive out east.” — Michael Derrig



Best fruits to grow in the summer?



“Watermelons perform very well and add great interest. We use the variety ‘Sugar Baby’; it’s a small watermelon with an excellent flavor. Blueberries, raspberries, and strawberries also do great! ‘Mignonette’ is a small salad strawberry that we use often.” — Michael Derrig

“Berries are your easiest fruit. Golden raspberries and blueberries are my family’s favorite.” — Abby Clough Lawless

- Blueberries
 - Peaches
 - Strawberries
 - Blackberries
 - Raspberries
- “These all require some maintenance like bird netting, harvesting, spraying.” — Kim Hren



Which landscape designs are trending in the Hamptons?

“More and more people are drawn to more relaxed native landscapes. Our firm focuses on wild pastoral gardens that have a bit of whimsy and delight.”
— Abby Clough Lawless

What do clients want right now?

“Clients seem to be wanting to have their garden be more eco-friendly and make a positive impact on the environment. And they want a more personalized approach to their design that suits their lifestyle and how they visualize being in their surroundings and entertaining.”
— Linda Silich

“Clients wish to have less lawn with meadow-style gardens. They ask for layered and complex landscapes that one can enjoy on many levels and throughout the seasons.”
— Abby Clough Lawless



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Shade gardens TOP TIPS:

“Right plant, right place! Do not try to plant sun-loving plants in the shade; they will not thrive. Look for plants that are adapted to shady situations. Native ferns and hydrangeas are great for this. We like Aruncus ‘Misty Lace’, Digitalis lutea, and Cimicifuga racemosa.”
— Abby Clough Lawless

“Lean into using foliage plants when working with shady areas. We use dense plantings of foliage plants like ferns or farfugium in shady areas to adapt to these spaces. Other interesting shade tolerant plants are anemones which have amazing flowers towards the end of the growing season. Using ground covers like a vinca can help cover a wide area of space in the shade.” — Michael Derrig



ASTILBE



HEUCHERA
“MARMALADE”

“We provide a variety of options for shade-loving plants that thrive in low-light conditions such as ferns, astilbe, hostas, heuchera. We also like to introduce plants that provide interest with texture or interesting foliage to add depth and dimension to the garden.” — Linda Silich

What advice do you have for fighting insects and pests?

“Ideally, don’t fight them; figure out ways to co-exist. The more we kill or remove, the less food there is for wildlife.” — Abby Clough Lawless

“Use plants like lavender, rosemary, basil, and citronella (found in geranium plants) in your garden to deter mosquitoes and other pests. It can be useful to have planters with these flowers near living spaces!” — Linda Silich



“The most important thing when fighting pests is to know your enemy! Then you can set up the most effective preventative measures. For example, Japanese Beetles can cause big problems within the landscape—from issues on lawns to damage to many different plants. To avoid these problems from the start, we use things such as Milky Spore when amending our soil within these problem areas, which helps to eliminate pest populations. Additionally, in our greenhouses, we have been implementing beneficial insects to help tackle any pest problems in our annual and tropicals. We also integrate planting companion plants into our annual gardens such as lavender to help combat potential issues.”

— Michael Derrig

Where do you look for garden inspiration?

“My inspiration comes from a variety of resources: taking walks, visiting botanical gardens, looking at how different plants are used in the natural environment, numerous websites and books by well-known seasoned architects!” — Linda Silich

“I have a vast collection of garden and landscape related books, which I continually revisit. Books I review repeatedly include *Planting in a Post-Wild World* by Claudia West and Thomas Rainer, and *Garden Revolution* by Larry Weaner. Beyond that, I follow mainly English designers on Instagram, who always impress.” — Abby Clough Lawless

“We pull inspiration from the most impressive gardens and estates around the world, but in order to create balance and harmony on a property, every design is informed by the client’s home, hardscape, and interior design.” — Michael Derrig



(OPPOSITE) PHOTOGRAPH: TREVOR PARKER; LANDSCAPE DESIGN: RON WENDT DESIGN.



HYDRANGEAS 101: Which ones do you like to use/what to know about them?

“I love using the Endless Summer series for their length in blooms—all summer. They have easy pruning practices and sturdy beautiful foliage, as well as showy flowers.”
— Linda Silich

“I like the native hydrangea cultivars: Hydrangea arborescens ‘Haas Halo’ loves the shade and the bees dance all over the blooms in July. Hydrangea quercifolia “Peewee’. The straight species Oak leaf hydrangeas can get too rangy; this dwarf keeps to 3 to 4 feet in size, is a repeat bloomer and has stunning fall foliage.”
— Abby Clough Lawless

“Limelight hydrangeas and Endless Summer hydrangeas are our staples. Both varieties provide impressive blooms that create a statement in our landscapes. We also like to integrate other hydrangeas into our landscapes including ‘Tardiva’, ‘Blushing Bride’, ‘Early Sensations’, and ‘Incrediball’. Climbing hydrangeas are another species of hydrangea that we integrate often into our landscapes that provide impressive flowers as a vine on fencing or walls.” — Michael Derrig

Which flowers look best for arrangements on an outdoor Hamptons tablescape?

“We love to incorporate a seasonal change of color. For the spring, ranunculus and tulips are stellar. Early summer lilacs and peonies are always impressive. Summer flowers that draw attention to any tablescape include hydrangeas, delphiniums, scabiosa, and dahlias. Dahlias are a statement all season long. Some of our favorites include the decorative varieties ‘Bride-to-be’ and ‘Diva.’” — Michael Derrig

“I prefer small bud vases filled with whatever is in bloom. It’s very playful, simple, and easy. I tend to walk the garden at the end of the day, snip a few favorite flowers and loosely arrange them on the table. Spring daffodils, early summer roses, and late summer dahlias, but all kinds of plants and foliage also come into play.” — Abby Clough Lawless



WHEN SHOULD YOU START PREPPING YOUR SUMMER GARDEN?

“The best time to start prepping your summer garden is in the fall. There are always things to do to keep your garden looking its best, from trimming back perennials and planting bulbs in the fall to winter pruning. Before you know it, the season is starting all over again. It is important to pay attention to what worked during the summer season and what you would like to change in the next season. Allow for plants and your design to evolve and grow together.” — Michael Derrig

“Late spring, after a week-long warm spell, 50 degrees Fahrenheit, which allows for insects that overwintered in the foliage and leaves to emerge. Selectively cut back just what is unsightly and compost it. Then tuck in spring ephemerals and annuals as needed.” — Abby Clough Lawless

“Once the weather starts to consistently be warm. We start our landscape projects at the end of March, beginning of April. May is normally when people start thinking gardens, and by Memorial Day they have them planted.” — Kim Hren

(OPPOSITE, BOTTOM) PHOTOGRAPH: TREVOR PARKER; DESIGN: CHARLOTTE MOSS.