

NATURAL SANCTUARY

Shelter in a beautiful place: Landscape Details enhances and refines outdoor living.

BY JIM SERVIN



Calming gardenia and pots of tomatoes are popular this season.

At 7:30 on a summer evening, approaching a crossroads on the north side of Montauk Highway in his Jeep, Michael Derrig, founder of Landscape Details, the East End's go-to for property beautification, had an epiphany: "Never in my life—and I've been here 21 years—have I ever come to this intersection, in the middle of the summer, and seen nobody. I realized that everyone was where they were going to be for the night."

Thanks to Landscape Details, homes this summer on the East End are bedecked with enchanting flowers such as dahlias, phlox and astilbe; they glow under soothing LED lights. Sheltering in place can be Shangri-la. This year, Derrig says, more than ever, residents want vegetable plots lined with tomatoes, kale, cucumbers and lettuce—salad essentials that maximize garden square footage.

"We are up 100 percent from last year, in terms of requests for vegetable gardens," says Derrig. "We've planted about 40 this summer. The gardens are of varying sizes, from small plots of 12 square feet to 250 square feet." All are organic. "Composting is everything," adds Derrig, who swears by Coast of Maine's Raised Bed Mix soil, a briny blend with worm castings, lobster and kelp.

The early migration of seasonal residents to the East

End this spring resulted in newfound awareness, for some, of what actually grows on their land. "One man said, 'This is the first time I've seen the rhododendrons. They're amazing. I've never been here in March!' The guy owned the property for 15 years."

Other residents are adding zen features to soothe during challenging times: "For one, we're carving out a space in a wooded area, which will be an oasis for contemplation," Derrig says. "At another home, we've created a relaxation space with hammocks and a stone water feature." Clients request pots of gardenia and jasmine, with their calming scents, to be placed by doorways and on patio areas. The Landscape Details teams observe social distancing protocols; everything from tools to trucks is disinfected.

"I'm hoping that life will get back to handshakes and hugs," Derrig says. "The thing is, if you go outside, and into a garden, it doesn't look as though there's anything wrong with the world. Then you turn on the news, and things aren't OK. When you're in the garden, it all seems pretty normal." Derrig's theme for the summer, he says, "is a Lukas Nelson song that he's sung with his father, Willie Nelson, that goes: 'Turn off the news and build a garden.'" landscapedetails.com 🌸