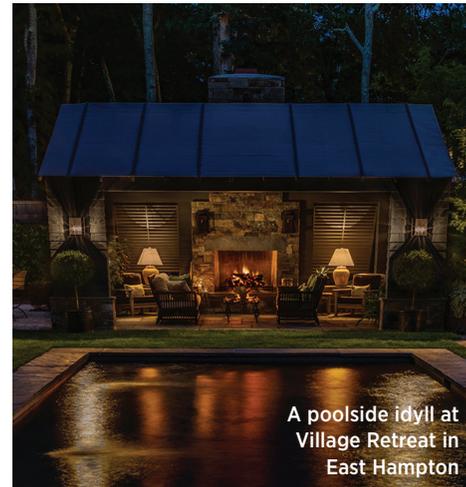


HOUSE AND GARDEN

Michael Derrig, premier Hamptons landscape architect, embraces a lifelong passion for home design with Building Details. BY JIM SERVIN



A modern country house with character by Building Details



A poolside idyll at Village Retreat in East Hampton

As the proprietor of Landscape Details, Michael Derrig has created and maintained spectacular exteriors of Hamptons homes for the past 25 years—white hydrangeas, ilex hedges and low ornamental grasses are some of his favorite motifs. In 2020, with the launch of Building Details, Derrig's expertise turned indoors to include domicile design and construction, a talent he has been nurturing over decades, first with his own homes—five 5,000-square-foot residences in and around East Hampton—along with a series of highly coveted spec houses. In 25 years, Derrig has done 300 landscape jobs and created 40 structures—airy, sophisticated, modern country homes with clean lines, wood floors and stone fireplaces, including his wood-beamed office and his own slice of Hamptons nirvana, the top-tier bucolic Village Retreat.

"When you arrive at the homes," says Derrig of his creations, "they look unassuming. As you go further into them, they keep unfolding. There's a lot of charm to them."

Bringing a cohesiveness between indoor and outdoor that only a seasoned landscape designer turned builder could offer, Derrig creates, inspires and trouble-shoots from both sides of the hedge: "Being a landscape architect and understanding how homes are sited, you sometimes see houses and think, 'That's too bad...you could have saved \$30,000 if you'd moved that retaining wall.' I will take terraces and move them closer to the gardens, so you walk out the door through the plants and onto the terrace, as opposed to jamming the stone against the house." When given the choice, Derrig will move a tree closer to home: "Trees in front of houses soften them up," Derrig says. "It's

the right thing to do. Architects want to put them further away. The tree always wins with me."

Growing up in Freehold, New Jersey, Bruce Springsteen's hometown (the two have never met), Derrig was drawn to the tools of the building trade: "My mother bought me a circular saw when I was 10. I worked in my basement cutting wood. I built my first patio that year, out of an Ortho book (*All About Patios*). I had my own house painting business at 12." It wasn't until college that Derrig, who had enrolled in Rutgers as a science major, discovered a course in landscape architecture: "I saw how the kids had decorated their cubicles. They had long hair, were listening to loud music and drawing. I thought, 'I'm doing this.'"

Current projects include a gut renovation for a young family, an office for Building Details and an ultramodern house in East Hampton. With Derrig as both builder and landscaper, an organic balance between interior and exterior prevails: "A guy I work with said, 'The first day the landscape is finished is the worst it will ever look. As plants grow, they become amazing. The best day of the house is the day you move in—there's not a scratch on the floor.'"

In a post-COVID-19 world, outdoor spaces continue to be cherished. More Hamptonsites than ever are growing vegetable gardens in their backyards. "There was that shift. I haven't felt it go backward," Derrig says. "The requirements of clients are the same. The Hamptons is an important place for people to take a deep breath and relax. People here put a tremendous amount of effort into planning their homes. It's my job to make sure I come through for them." buildingdetails.com 🌿

From left: Genevieve Garruppo, Anthony Crisafulli