



BY JACKIE GLASS

PHOTOGRAPHY BY PAUL CHMIELOWIEC

# *a woodland* GARDEN ESCAPE

This ravishing ravine garden retreat is made in the shade



**P**rotected from the hustle and bustle of urban life by a lush wooded ravine and shady canopy of mature trees, this serene backyard escape, designed and built by its owners, has embraced its natural surroundings to become the perfect oasis where they can wind down and enjoy all the delights summer has to offer with their friends and family.

*A rolling beverage cart, which has silvered in the sun, is a convenient way to deliver drinks, snacks and towels to sunbathers from the cabana.*

**PLAY TIME**

I always look forward to this time of year when I can get outside and decorate garden rooms and outdoor spaces for clients. It's a refreshing departure from decorating interiors where the focus is as much about practicality and function as it is about style. Personally, I find decorating outdoor spaces a much more organic, playful and relaxed process. After all, these are spaces where we want to make the most of our fleeting summer months and simply be footloose and fancy-free. But special attention does have to be paid to the materials and finishes we choose for our outdoor decor. Unlike those we use indoors, furnishings, accessories and construction materials have to be exceptionally durable to withstand the elements and the wear and tear of daily use. With this in mind, the homeowners of this idyllic garden retreat addressed all of these issues when designing and building their own little piece of urban heaven.



*Tall pillar candles will stay lit longer outdoors when slipped into glass hurricanes protecting them from the wind.*

**RESORT-INSPIRED RETREAT**

When the kids left home, my former Jackie Glass Inc. partner and her husband decided it was time to transform their family-style backyard into a "grown-up" retreat à la resort style. The retired couple pooled their design and DIY building skills to come up with a plan for building their dream garden retreat, which would include luxury amenities inspired by some of the most memorable seaside resorts they've visited over the years.

**EAT, DRINK, SWIM...REPEAT**

Their priority was to create a space for *al fresco* dining and entertaining where friends and family could come together and spend hot summer days soaking up the sun, take a dip in the brilliant blue waters of the pool and sip on chilled cocktails until the sun went down. For them it was all about having fun, relaxing and spending as much time outdoors as possible. Naturally, that meant the existing pool would remain the focal point in the garden but take on a more sophisticated look with the addition of elegant pool-side furnishings, accents and landscaping.

**NO TO LOW-MAINTENANCE**

Not wanting to have to cut grass or tend to large flowerbeds, the solution was to cover the ground with natural stone, concrete and solid wood decking designed to create zones. Natural flagstone is laid next to the house and leads guests to the cabana, a smooth concrete pad surrounds the pool to protect swimmers' bare feet when getting in and out of the pool, and a fancy DIY checkerboard cedar deck creates a unique floor pattern beneath the weathered pool-side loungers.

**CARIBBEAN COMFORT**

When you step out into the garden through the kitchen's French doors, it's the delightful Caribbean-style cabana,

stained in a palette of sandy-beach colours, situated beneath the shade of a tall, leafy elm tree that instantly sets the tone of this welcoming garden oasis. The comfy weathered bar stools with cushioned seats, arms and high backs say: Relax and stay a while. The no-fuss countertop is made of cedar-wood planks, which will weather beautifully to a soft-silver gray over time. The cabana is extended with lattice walls and a roof overhead at one end to house the barbecue protecting it and the cook from the elements.

Positioned conveniently between the access to the inside kitchen and the barbecue nook, the dining table with umbrella offers sunbathers and swimmers a shady spot to escape the sun when dining. The lightweight aluminum and mesh chairs can be moved about easily and stacked to store when not in use.

**SERENE & SOOTHING**

Surrounded by greenery everywhere you look, gardening was kept to a minimum with small beds and containers planted with low-to-no maintenance plants to add a touch of colour and interest around the pool. The soothing sounds emanating from the rock waterfall in the fish pond, tucked secretly beneath the trees next to a quiet sitting area in the back garden, completes the story of this welcoming and serene garden retreat. ♦



*Designer Jackie Glass is principal/owner of Jackie Glass Inc., a full-service interior design firm specializing in residential design, decor and renovation, servicing the GTA and surrounding areas. Glass, who's work is nationally recognized, is a regular design expert on Cityline. For more information, visit jackieglass.ca Twitter @jackieglasscity Instagram @jackieglassinc*