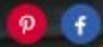


GARDENS + LANDSCAPES

See How a 50-Acre Christmas Tree Farm Is Transformed into a Lush Garden

Interior designer Darren Henault teams up with Janice Parker for the sprawling grounds of his Hudson Valley home

TEXT BY [STEFANIE WALDEK](#) · PHOTOGRAPHY BY [COURTESY OF JANICE PARKER](#) · Posted September 11, 2018



The pool at Darren Henault's new Hudson Valley home.



As a landscape architect, it's not every day you're presented with the challenge of moving some 3,000 trees—Christmas trees, at that. But that's exactly what Janice Parker faced when interior designer Darren Henault tapped her to work on the 53-acre grounds of his *new home* with his husband, Michael Bassett, in Millbrook, New York. The land was formerly a Christmas tree farm, and it wasn't in great shape when he bought it. "The farm and the land had been abandoned and neglected for several years before Darren and Michael took a leap of faith and purchased it," says Parker. Before diving into a redesign, she and Henault surveyed the entire property, not only plotting the evergreens but also discovering groves of other trees, such as maple and apple. "We were surprised by the small, ornamental tree plantings we found on another field, separate from the Christmas trees," Parker notes. "This 'nursery' had been uncared for but held some wonderful specimens of trees that were salvaged, and have since become beautiful features and key moments in the gardens."

Repurposing the Christmas trees, too, was essential to Parker's plan. "Preserving existing mature trees near the residence created a naturalized framework to hold the new gardens; hundreds became the backbone of the design when they were transplanted and pruned into hedges," she explains. "We worked with a small crew and two small tree spades and were able to transplant up to 15 trees a day. That was certainly a challenge!" And countless trees that couldn't be replanted were donated to the town of Millbrook and to family and friends of the designers for Christmas. Ultimately, through the careful reworking of the farmland, Parker was able to design several distinct zones: a pool, a dining and entertainment area with patios and pergolas, an apple orchard, vegetable gardens, space for chicken coops and beehives, and open fields (Henault hopes to add a tennis court one day). "Throughout the design process, the focus was on how farmers use the land in a way that often results in disciplined beauty and focused simplicity," says Parker. "Approaching site challenges with innovation and respect allowed problems to become opportunities and was the key gesture of the design."

Here, take a tour through Henault's new gardens.



The pool is surrounded by pruned Christmas tree hedges.



A patio for dining and entertainment.



An urn stands in a field.



A birdloft in the garden.



A stone wall lines a lawn.



Evergreens can be seen throughout the design.



The grounds still retain their heritage as farmland.

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