

# Connecticut COTTAGES & GARDENS

WWW.CANDGPUBLICATIONS.COM | MAY 2010



**Living  
in Style**

INSPIRING  
ARCHITECTURE  
ENTERTAINING IDEAS  
FRESH INTERIORS



## JANICE PARKER

**L**ANDSCAPE DESIGNER Janice Parker founded her firm in 1984 in NYC; since 1996 her firm has been based in Sherman and has garnered accolades for its work on residential and commercial properties. Parker teaches courses on pool design, site construction detailing and garden design at The New York Botanical Garden in the Bronx, The New York Horticultural Society and the Garden Education Center of Greenwich. CTC&G talks to Parker about her masterful pool designs. "Water is life, and dynamic in itself—the magical element that connects all creation. We are drawn to water as a magnet, and it is the mirror and the heart of our landscapes," she says.



**Breathing Easy** | The overhead tree canopies and poolside plantings of rounded boxwood and Hinoki cypress are reflected in the rippling surface of a pool and spa (OPPOSITE). **Take A Dip** | A pool flanked by a pergola is entered through iron fixtures that were once used as street lamps (ABOVE LEFT). **Green Building** | Large arborvitae and specimen evergreens create green architecture that frames a pool and pool house (ABOVE RIGHT). The pool house was designed by Alex Kaali-Nagy. **Nice Curves** | Curved steel and cable railings outline an infinity-edge pool and spa on the water in Greenwich (BELOW LEFT). **Smooth Operator** | An infinity pool creates a seamless transition to the Sound (BELOW RIGHT). See Resources.

Tell us, Janice, what's your secret to evoking the right kind of atmosphere for outdoor pool areas? The secret is to discover the essence of the garden the client wants to create, as well as the true character of the site. This understanding should then physically, intellectually, spiritually and emotionally infuse every aspect of the garden design. It will be the style of the garden. When you see gardens that are compelling, you know that someone is feeling deeply for them and it makes you feel deeply, as well.

How do you make a stagnant, man-made body of water come to life? In other words, how do you capture the dynamism of nature? Swimming pools are not recent—the Romans were soaking in baths in the 2nd century B.C. In India and the Middle East, there have been bath and pool structures found that are 10,000 years older than that. So this is not new stuff. The notion that paradise could be created on earth and mirrored on earth took root early and is with us still. Water has always shaped and transformed every environment. We

do not try to fake nature, but we do try to design with water in a natural way. That's the goal.

Let's say you are in a pool that you've designed, floating on your back and taking in the sunshine. What can you see around you that enhances your enjoyment of this beautiful day? Great question! From that perspective, you are at eye level with the ground plane, as well as the overhead view. The textures and colors at the ground plane are enhanced, so interesting paving patterns, textured stone and materials with dimensionality are ideal. Groundcovers, lush grass, low-flowering perennials and annuals are good choices poolside.

While looking through some of your design work, we came across a sculpture consisting of giant Chinese takeout containers. Was this your idea? How'd you come up with it? We try to incorporate a sense of grace and timelessness in our projects, but a sense of humor and lightness adds great value. Features that surprise, make you do a double take or create



focal points are an essential part of every garden. Have fun!

Water is all about reflection. Is your design strategy derived from this principle, or do you find contrasting colors and textures more effective?

The first thing I look for when siting a pool is a key tree or feature that will be reflected in the water during the day and one that we can light, either with up or down (moonlighting) at night. If this is not possible, we will create one, with either plantings or features such as pergolas, arbors or sculpture.

What are your favorite materials to work with? What effects do they have on your design? Different pool tile bands—pebbles, glass and mosaics all add interest to a pool. The standard plaster pool finish will always streak, fade and mottle, so we have been working with aggregate pool finishes (such as Pebble Tec and RiverRok) that can be color customized and offer the chance to create a unique and consistent water color. Phoenician and Hispania granites are good choices. And I'm in love with Japanese maples for their color and good behavior, as well as low-growing perennial geraniums.