

Q FARM'S SIMPLE ELEGANCE
MARSHA MASON'S NEW JOURNEY

SPIRITS RISE: SMALL-BATCH BOOZE
MUSINGS OF AN ORGANIC FARMER

Litchfield

MAGAZINE

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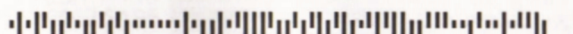
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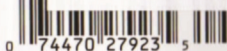
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REDEFINING THE FARMHOUSE IMAGE TO BE SWANK, SUSTAINABLE, AND SOUL-SEARCHING

Q Farms

BY TOVAH MARTIN // PHOTOGRAPHS BY JEFF McNAMARA

ERASE ALL YOUR PRECONCEPTIONS OF A FARMHOUSE. Scratch all your images of the hardscrabble plantings that generally reside along bumpy drives where farmers dwell—because Q Farms is the polar opposite of all those clichés. Five years ago, when Linda and James Quella bought the hundred acres destined to become Q Farms in Sharon, they had a very different aesthetically driven vision for their farmhouse and its surroundings. Not only did they want to survey their rolling pastureland, but they wanted to see swathes of pollinator-friendly plantings swarming right up to their door. They hoped to host beehives within buzzing distance of those flowers. And they strove to craft an unassuming landscape that flows into and partners with the unspoiled vernacular. What they planned was something “simple, honest, and authentic” according to Cory Jorgensen of Wesley Stout Associates and senior project manager for the Quella’s site and landscape architecture. Working

together with the New Canaan-based firm, they achieved the entire agenda-with-a-conscience. But they also created something so majestic that the scene arrests all your sensibilities. Not everyone links sustainable with sensuous, but Q Farms forged that rare union.

Although we often think of flower gardens when a landscape architect is connected with new construction, a designer’s role starts long before the first root ball is tucked into the soil. As Wesley Stout pointed out, a landscape architect’s work ideally begins at ground zero, collaborating with the client and architect to find the optimal location, siting, elevation, and exposure for a house prior to construction. And in this case, the house designed by Reese Owens Architects of Washington Depot is a meaningful mix of farmhouse style and conscience. A 365-degree view of the land plus a giant window-concealing sliding barn door in addition to a bank of several-story tall arched glass panels overlooks the views. The resulting solar-powered structure is a headturner from the road. But it’s not just another good-looking façade. Most importantly, the Quellas wanted connections. Everything has significance, and the exterior was approached with similar earnestness.



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A house with a view isn't only about distant vistas. Ideally, it calls for framing immediately around the house. In this case, all components were deftly planned from the swank metal wood storage bins that bring fireplace fuel up a notch to the Zen sand garden and lowbush blueberries that substitute for the typical foundation shrubs. "Link-ages" is what the team at Wesley Stout Associates calls the series of plantings with a purpose, crafted to provide a lifestyle that elevates farming to an art as well as a science.

The experience begins before you arrive at the parking court. To immediately dissipate work-day burdens, the Zen garden stands beside the parking area with huge boulders laying in the dry sand with rake at the ready to turn thoughts contemplative. Similarly, there's a shallow pool with squared stepping stones seemingly floating on the surface to help transcend daily cares before entering the abode. A row of granite fence posts define the parameters of the parking area, but also mark rows of espaliered apples, pears, and grapes. Further up the hill is a freeform orchard housing peaches, apples, pears, Japanese plums, currants, and gooseberries as well as an herb garden. And a large 30-hive bee yard serves as a teaching classroom for farm interns. Rounding the house to the view side, curvaceous beds are filled with large swaths of Joe Pye Weed, perovskia, liatris, goldenrods, salvias, agastache, and daisies to make bee forage streamlined—when blocks of pollen/nectar plants are offered, pollinators can efficiently bob from flower to similar flower.

PHOTO TOP MIDDLE: BILLY GOSSETT; TOP RIGHT: KEVNEY MOSES

Stone-walls segment the spaces, link with the house, and reinterpret the agrarian roots of the land. The topography rolls down to a pool meant to resemble a watering hole (like an old relic from a farm) with deep-rooted ornamental grasses and flowering plants holding the slope from erosion. Above the pool, a round firepit composed of 24 symbolic stones reflects the Dharma wheel of truth, the dharmachakra in Buddhism (James Quella formerly lived in India and translated Sanskrit), just footsteps from a grilling area for outdoor relaxation at the end of a long farm day.

Throughout the property, the land flows majestically from space to space. The plantings spill down the hillside giving a sense of bounty in a brilliantly understated but voluptuous cornucopia. It feels perfectly natural, but in truth, three years of close collaboration between very invested homeowners and the Wesley Stout team brought together the finest pool contractors, masons, earthmovers, and many other players to bestow this majesty that feels fitting. The result reverberates with the essence of what it means to be a farm. Q Farms celebrates the soul of agriculture, in all its glistening glory. ■

IN PERFECT HARMONY

Clockwise from upper left: Custom deer fencing encloses the property. Radiating steps lead from the firepit down to the pool. Mass-plantings in bloom. Stepping stones seemingly float in the entry court pond. Granite posts mark the end of espaliered fruit tree rows. Pool area slope is softened by mass plantings.