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### ON THIS PAGE

Landscape designer Jennifer Bakshi in her Montclair garden

### ON THE COVER

Steve Aduabato Jr. and his wife, Jennifer, pictured in their Montclair home

PHOTOS BY ANNE-MARIE CARUSO



A Worldly  
**Garden**

The magnificent grounds of this Montclair home were inspired by three continents



## SEE FOR YOURSELF

Since 1995, The Garden Conservancy, a national non-profit based in New York state, has been helping to preserve historic settings such as Montclair's Van Vleck House and Gardens through its fundraising program, Open Days. Committee members select private gardens for showcasing throughout the year and list them in the Open Days Directory. (For more information, see [www.gardenconservancy.org](http://www.gardenconservancy.org).) Locally, the gardens at 63 Stonebridge Road, featured on these pages, will be available for self-guided tours on Saturday, June 19, from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. Admission is \$5; children under 12 free. No reservations required.

**BY CINDY SCHWEICH HANDLER**

Photos by Anne-Marie Caruso

If the grounds surrounding Jennifer Bakshi's home bring to mind The Secret Garden at its lushest, it's no coincidence. Bakshi, a Master Gardener, certified landscape designer and horticulturalist, spent her formative years in England and Sri Lanka where she was enchanted by the gardens. "Their formal geometry, overflowing urns, fountains and profusion of flowers took my breath away," she says. The former French teacher and marketing exec cultivated her passion while living in India and Switzerland with her young family. On their return stateside, she became accredited through the New York Botanical Garden, where she currently teaches. Her French countryside-style home showcases her handiwork.

## LUSH SURROUNDINGS

Opposite page: Bakshi relaxes amid Pee Gee hydrangeas, pink carpet roses and a Japanese maple. Above: A view from the garden shed toward the terrace, where violets grow and eastern redbud trees provide ample shade, along with the vine-covered pergola. "This area is my mini-botanical garden, where I experiment with plants to use for my gardening clients," she says.





## SCENIC POINTS

Above: At the base of the main back lawn, this bench provides a tranquil spot where visitors can take in the koi pond. The pond may be stocked with fish year-round, because even if the surface freezes, the koi and goldfish can hibernate at the bottom and wake up in the spring. Visible also are a river birch, a double file of *viburnum* and blue lobelia, a spiky native wildflower. The rose and breeze-rustled *miscanthus sinensis* grass forms a screen that promotes privacy, creates excellent cover for birds and small mammals and yields beautiful, feathery flowers that turn wheat-colored in winter.

Left: Bakshi carved out a little stream for draining purposes and installed a painted bridge over it. "I wanted an area where I could show an oriental influence," she says with a laugh.

Opposite bottom: A shed built to mirror the style of the house is surrounded on the right with cornelian cherry roses and on the left with a flowering dogwood.

Opposite top: The selection of tropical plants beneath the rhododendron-flanked pergola make it a pleasant spot for entertaining.





## FLAIR AND WHIMSY

Clockwise from top left: A planter shaped like a lady's head is stocked with super petunias. Bakshi purchased the heavy, decorative touch at a Philadelphia flower show and brought it home in a backpack on wheels. "She gets new hair every year," she says; The rose fountain is surrounded by rose bushes underplanted with myrtle and Pee Gee hydrangeas, all circled by a path made of cobblestone pavers. Cotoneaster bushes, which are covered with red berries in winter, grow on either side; The French on this stepping stone at the herb garden entrance translates to "Grow old with me, the best is yet to be." At right, the sweet autumn clematis vine clings to the arbor framing a blue gate from a dealer in Lambertville that leads into the back yard from the driveway. "The paving lends the space a sculptural, two-dimensional feeling," says Bakshi. "Even in the pathways, I like to see artistic features – open spaces, symmetry, a spherical look for the lawn areas. My garden is my palette where I can express my esthetics."

Opposite page: Lavender grows in front of a blue gate surrounded by a hedge of boxwood; the gate also hails from Lambertville and was refinished in Caldwell. Beyond it lies the herb garden, whose gravel pathways run past raised beds full of chives and oregano. "People walk through and rub their hands in the thyme, and find the scent to be delightful," says Bakshi. In the upper left corner, tall zebra *miscanthus* grass separates the herb and rose fountain areas. Behind the bench is another screen, a straight, compact hedge of emerald *arborvitae*. "If you can't take in the whole garden at once, you're curious to see more," she says. ■

