

TRADITIONAL HOME

February/March 2014

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MAKEOVERS,
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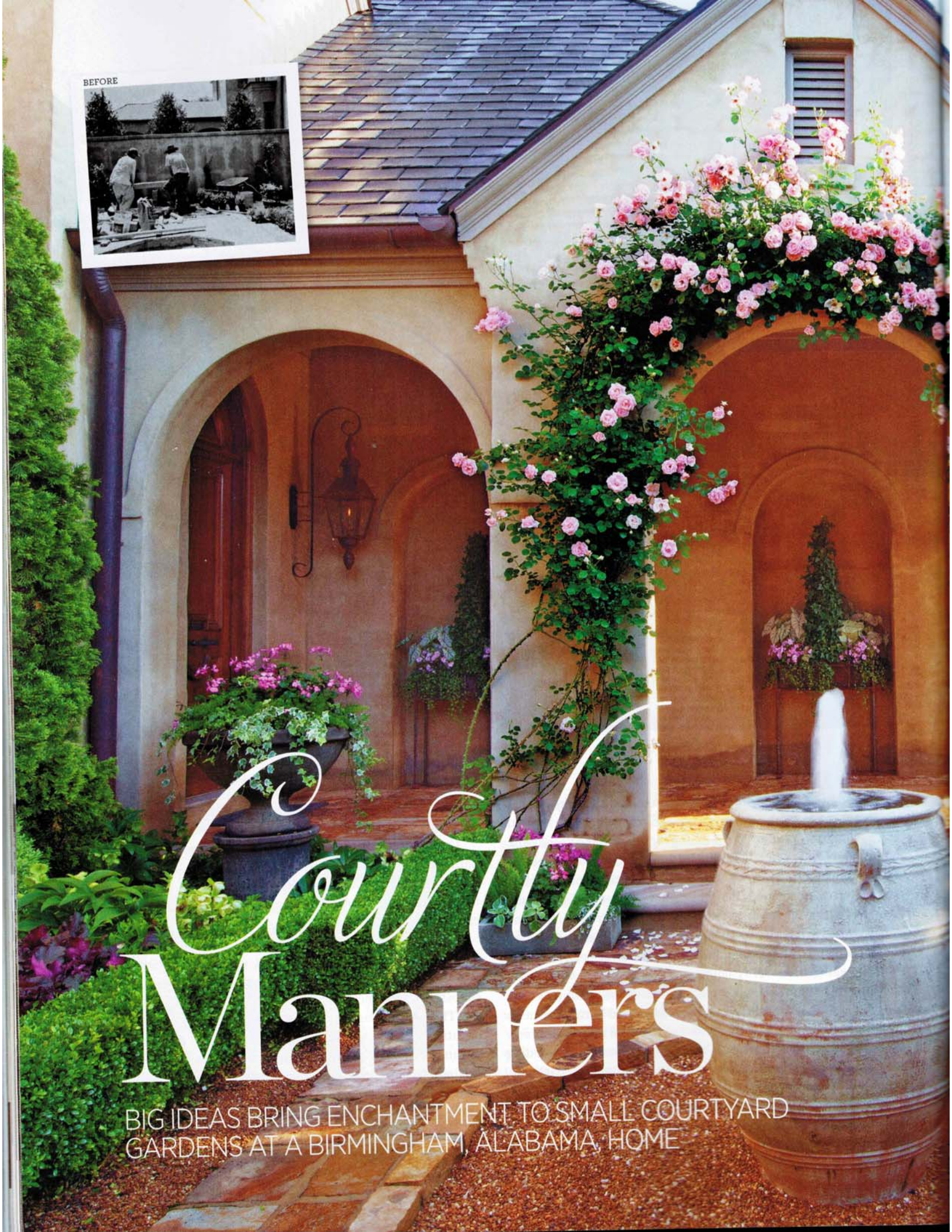


BEFORE

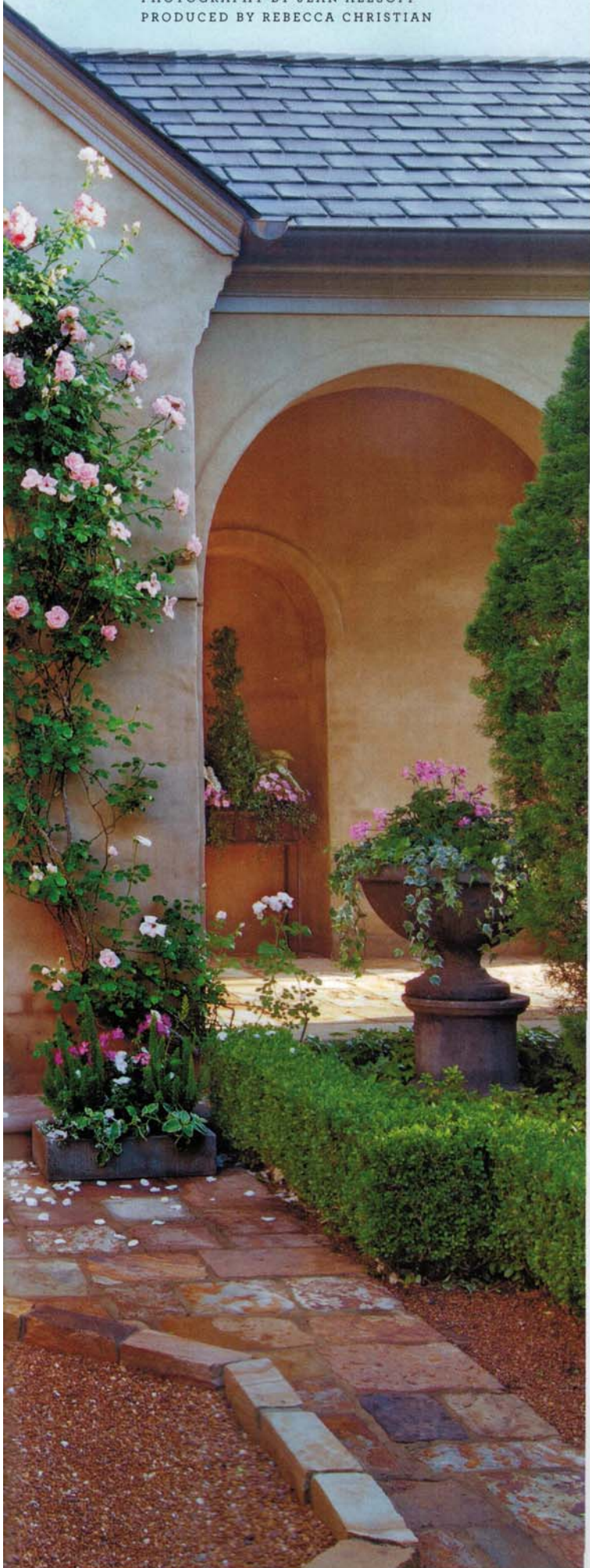


Courty Manners

BIG IDEAS BRING ENCHANTMENT TO SMALL COURTYARD
GARDENS AT A BIRMINGHAM, ALABAMA, HOME



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BEFORE



Downsizing from a family home on a large suburban lot to a garden home means less maintenance. But it can also mean less privacy. Birmingham, Alabama, residents Judy and Jim Carns didn't let narrow lot lines infringe on their planned lifestyle change. Instead, they built a home with a walled garden that offers plenty of seclusion as well as an enchanting setting that never fails to delight guests.

When the couple moved in, they had little more to work with than a brick patio and Birmingham's red clay soil. Enlisting garden designers Max Garcia and David Swindal, Judy asked for privacy, sanctuary, and a garden that looked as if it had always been there. "Even though our house is new, it has an old-world ambience that sets the tone for the gardens," she says.

The designers set about adding structure to the existing 10-foot-high garden walls that surround the 3,000-square-foot area. "We didn't want the walls to look like a fortress," says Garcia, "so we

varied their treatments, adding brick, fountains, planters, niches, and tall foundation plants."

At the home's entrance, a loggia opens onto the front garden. A row of 'Emerald Green' arborvitae blocks the street view. Another wall covered in creeping fig ivy overlaid with a crisscross trellis of 'Confederate Jasmine' separates the courtyard from the neighbors. A burbling fountain drowns out street noise.

Back loggia Extending from the home's dining room, the sheltered indoor/outdoor room offers cushy rattan seating with Sunbrella-fabric cushions. **Fountain** A lion's head set into a brick arch spouts water into a small pool that features aquatic plants. The brick helps break up the expanse of the stucco walls. **Preceding pages** Arches frame the front loggia. 'New Dawn' roses over the center arch and an urn fountain set a serene tone.

Patio garden Although the garden is only five years old, mature plantings, climbing vines, and hanging baskets combine in clever arrangements to give a timeless feeling. **Alleyway** An antique iron gate opens onto a beautifully landscaped sandstone path that leads to the rear garden.

BEFORE



Chock-full of diverse flora, including boxwood hedges framing seasonal blooms, dwarf fruit trees, and 'Little Gem' magnolias, the Carns garden provides a constant flow of colors and fragrances that change with the seasons. Antique French chairs mix with new iron seating throughout and contribute to convivial gatherings.



Potted asparagus ferns and geraniums in the front courtyard



Surrounding the fountain, hedges of clipped 'Winter Gem' boxwood frame beds filled with Judy's favorite hues of purple, pink, and lime green. A spray of 'New Dawn' roses cascades from the center arch of the loggia. "The blooms are magnificent," says Swindal. "Even when they fall, they create the most exquisite pale pink carpet. You have to cherish them to the very last petal."

An antique iron gate accesses a 5-foot-wide alley that leads to the rear loggia and garden. Dense with ferns, hostas, and impatiens, the border of the sandstone path brims with blooms and texture. "This is my favorite part of the garden," says Judy. "It reminds me of a narrow alleyway in Charleston, South Carolina. The front garden reminds me of Tuscany—though I have never been there," she adds with a laugh. "The back garden recalls New Orleans and Savannah."

Much like these old cities, the garden evolved without any strict plan. "Judy would see something in a book, or we would have an idea and we would make it happen from there," Swindal says. "I'm the



URN FOUNTAIN



GARDEN GATE



Details

WHERE Birmingham, Alabama

CONDITIONS The red clay was replaced with fill dirt and topsoil

CLIMATE Humid and subtropical with hot summers and mild winters

HIGHLIGHTS Walled courtyard gardens connected by a narrow alley, plus two fountains and a wide variety of plantings and ornaments that offer year-round interest. A multitude of containers—big and small—allows the owner to experiment with different plant combinations and change out seasonal color on a whim.

HOUSE

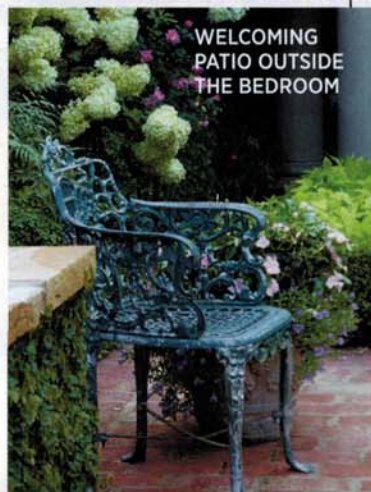


dreamer, and Max is the one with the skill to make things happen.” So Garcia and Swindal worked to fill the back courtyard with Southern ambience. “Because of the tight constraints of the lot and the height of the walls, interior windows looked straight out to the bare stucco walls, so we also had to create a view,” notes Garcia.

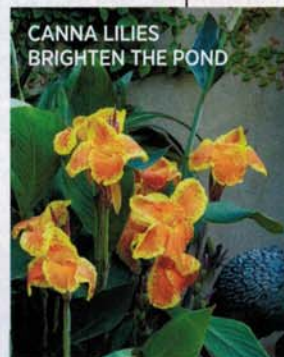
Filling the void, water splashes into an aquatic garden brimming with lotus and lilies. An arbor offers a shady spot along the back wall. “My garden is a mix of formal and casual,” explains Judy. “I love the casualness of black-eyed Susans and sunflowers combined with elegant and dazzling tropicals like orchids and mandevillas.”

From every vantage, there is something to behold. Judy enjoys the comfort of the loggia, and the front garden’s stone bench is “my little private place where I enjoy meditating and just being still and quiet.” Sometimes, she steps out onto the roof of her second story just to take it all in. “You can see the whole garden from up there,” she says. 🏡

Garden designers: Max Garcia and David Swindal (gartenfestilc.com)



WELCOMING PATIO OUTSIDE THE BEDROOM



CANNA LILIES BRIGHTEN THE POND