



Ocean Meadow

For this beachside house designed by architect Francis Fleetwood, Ed Hollander created a transitional landscape that relates to the climate and topography found at the ocean's edge. Beginning at the entrance drive, which is planted with a single row of apple trees that refer back to the agricultural context of the area, the landscape unfolds as a low-lying, scrubby tapestry of spaces sharply delineated by microclimates. Along one side of the drive (which itself is pushed to one side of the property) is an ensemble of shrubbery raised on an earthen berm to enclose sunken basketball and tennis courts. The ensemble includes several varieties of white hydrangea — a staple of this seaside vacation area's landscape vernacular — that are resilient to the tough conditions of salt and wind. These include Annabelle, such *Hydrangea macrophylla* varieties as 'Sister Therese,' and the lacecap Lanarth white and the *H. paniculata* varieties 'tardiva' and 'unique.' The design is calculated to give a sequence of bloom from late June through September, and remind the viewer of an old-fashioned, lushly planted country lane.



AS THE HOUSE COMES INTO VIEW IT APPEARS THROUGH A LACE CURTAIN OF MATURE HONEY LOCUSTS THAT WERE CHOSEN TO CREATE A SCULPTED, "WINDSWEEP" LOOK. THE HOUSE ITSELF ACTS AS A SCREEN OR DOORWAY THROUGH WHICH THE OCEAN CAN BE GLIMPSED BEYOND. Working closer to the house, the richness of the landscape gives way to a more spartan seashore quality. Here the plants are chosen for their ability to withstand sea spray and high winds, a choice both practical and aesthetic, creating a progression that becomes increasingly harmonious with the natural dune landscape at the ocean's edge.

Unlike most oceanfront properties, where the house is placed as close to the water as possible, the architect decided that it would be smarter to pull this house back and site it farther from the water. As a result, the views from the house incorporate the dune and the scrubby vegetation, creating a more complete and richer presentation of nature.

TOP: The entry drive is lined with white flowering hydrangea, which help to screen the tennis and basketball courts set below grade.

ABOVE: The entry walk, a diamond pattern of 2- by 2-foot bluestone slabs, transitions to the front lawn as pavers "slip away" into the grass.

RIGHT: The negative edge pool was designed to visually connect the rear terrace of the house to the ocean in the distance.



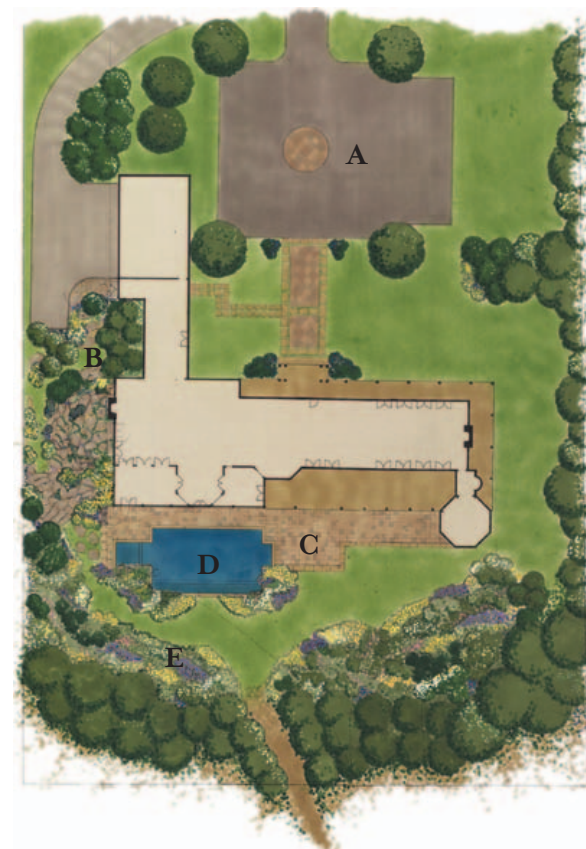
As we move through the house, which occupies that transitional zone between land and sea, the microclimatic changes occur quickly and over a very short space. Within just a few yards there are different soil, wind, salt, and temperature conditions, which are reflected in the plant palette by the presence of windswept grasses, rugosa rose varieties, and “wild” flowering perennials that look like they could have escaped from the native dune but which were intentionally sited for effect.

Around the western side of the house, in a small space at the edge of the narrow lot, Hollander carved a small rock garden into the dune where it is protected from the winds and salt spray. This is planted with lavender and creeping winter berry and provides an excellent vantage to study the transition between the agricultural, orthogonal landscape on one side of the house and the wild, seashore dune landscape on the other.

Everything about the design of the ocean-facing side of the house refers outward to the dynamic view — from the lack of tall vegetation (which would focus attention inward) to the placement of a negative edge pool. As a result, the landscape is best read as a sequence, moving from front to back, from inward to outward, from lush farmland to rolling seashore. The landscape is also intensely useful, addressed to the needs of a multigenerational family that occupies it for frequent get-togethers. Some members may want to play tennis away from the spray and wind; others may want to go for a walk on the beach; others may stay on the terrace, sort of straddling both worlds. The total property area is small, but through the use of a cogent spatial organization Hollander was able to make it seem commodious.

To fit all of these “programs” (as designers call client needs) into a single design required making sharp distinctions in the landscape. The clearest of these is the distinction between the old agricultural landscape on the north side of the house, which is used to site most of the active recreation spaces, and the ocean landscape on the south side, which is intended for more passive uses. Much of the design strives to heighten this already existing division. For instance, the driveway culminates in a large, square autocourt on perfect axis with the great room of the house. The formality is accented by an overly wide walkway of bluestone, patterned in rigid geometrical form, given the barest definition by lines of boxwood. On the other side, the landscape drops off into curving, informal topography before eventually dissolving into the dune. Rather than making design details like stone and plants the focus of attention, the emphasis is on the natural, stunning view.

“Great care was taken to sculpt the landscape so that it felt like it was resting upon a natural dune that was part of the existing transition zone,” says Hollander’s partner Maryanne Connelly. To increase the illusion, plants from the beach were brought upland as far as possible to “blend the house landscape seamlessly with the native landscape.”



- A Entry Court
- B Sunken Rock Garden
- C Rear Terrace
- D Negative Edge Pool
- E Transitional Dune Garden



RIGHT: The sunken rock garden creates an idyllic setting for an outdoor shower.

BELOW: A spa is located at one end of the pool to preserve the integrity of the negative edge.

FAR RIGHT: Looking out over the pool to dunes and ocean beyond.

