

# DESIGN + DECOR

CONNECTICUT  
NEW JERSEY  
NEW YORK

A modern living room with a dark wood fireplace mantel, a large green plant, and light-colored sofas. The room features exposed wooden beams on the ceiling and a rustic wooden coffee table. The fireplace is lit, and there are decorative items on the mantel and coffee table.

## The Amazing Transformations Issue

\$7.99 US/\$8.99 CANADA



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DISPLAY UNTIL 09/27/20

CHARLES  
HILTON  
ARCHITECTS



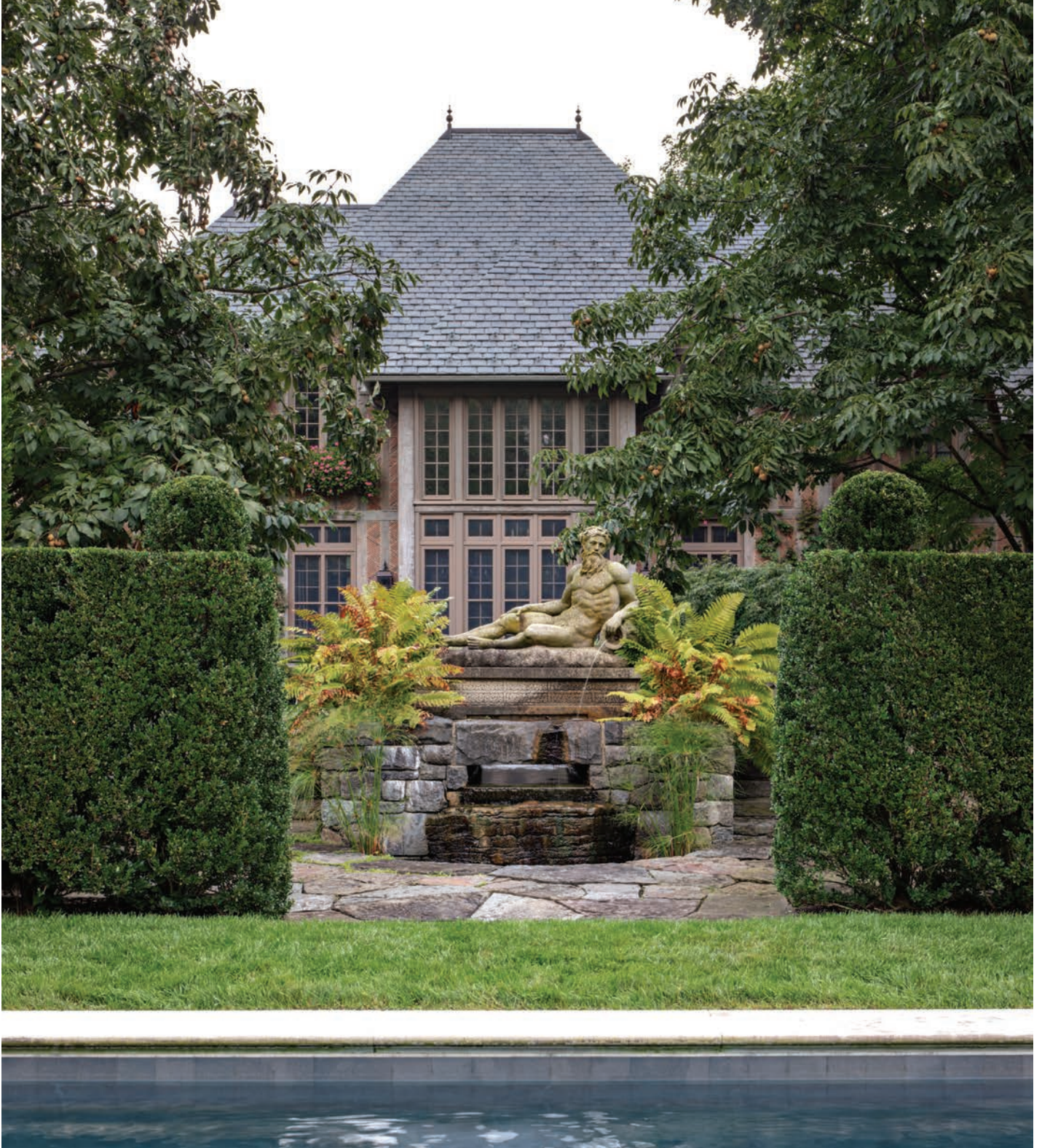


What started out as a small renovation for a beautiful American Georgian home in mid-country Greenwich, CT, ended up as a decades-long labor of love for both the homeowner and the architect, Charles Hilton, of Charles Hilton Architects.

The homeowner first tasked Charles and his team with creating a beautiful kitchen out of an existing, small service kitchen, butler pantry and outdoor porch. The result, a stunning masculine mahogany-clad space, became the seed for a 25-year endeavor— 8 buildings and 10 projects—that defied even Charles' expectations. "We went from doing small renovations to bigger renovations, from small buildings to bigger buildings," says Charles. "They became more unique and personal as the whole place grew. The land developed into a beautiful oasis."

The current property was, at one-point, separate properties. The main home, the Georgian estate, sits on the original property. Over a 10-year period, Charles worked his way through the entire house, doing everything from simple restorations to complete renovations to preserve, restore and enhance the original architecture.

The inside stretched to the outside. The client engaged landscape architect Charles J Stick who specializes in formal classical gardens. Charles enhanced the lush woodland gardens,



planned the properties extensive new circulation, added striking fountains, a circular driveway and dozens of other touches that enhanced the blossoming Georgian atmosphere of the property.

It was at this time, with the building of the greenhouse, pool house and Jeffersonian-style gazebo, that some property setback issues arose with siting the pool house. This issue and subsequent conversations with the neighbor eventually led to the homeowner purchasing the entire adjacent four-acre property, giving him a total of approximately 13 acres. The adjoining property—a handful of dilapidated 1920s Shingle-style buildings with

assorted elevations, irregular forms and multiple renovations, including the main house—offered little direction for how to create an architectural dialogue between the two properties. Inside the original home however, Charles became intrigued by some subtle French influences. In researching the property, he discovered that the original architect was William Dominick, who specialized in French country houses.

Charles traveled to France and visited Marie Antoinette's working agrarian farm on the famous Versailles estate. As he studied the land use and buildings, he realized he'd found the perfect inspiration for his project back in





Greenwich. Coincidentally around this time the owner married a gourmet chef who trained with organic culinary pioneer, Alice Waters at Chez Panisse, and who shared his love of organic culinary cuisine. The new property eventually became their French Normandy-inspired working organic Sleepy Cat Farm, a multiple-acre enclave with a focus on bringing community attentiveness to horticulture, landscape architecture and the value of plants in people's lives. The farm offers seasonal garden visits and a variety of occasional private lectures.

Ensuring historical integrity and transforming the property to the farm's present state of French Normandy loveliness required extensive research, followed by a great deal of creativity and ingenuity. The immeasurable labor gave rise to a beautiful new "barn" structure, which functions as a stunning home, punctuated by its striking three-and-a-half-story tower anchoring a warm and comfortable great room. The "barn" includes three bedrooms, two kitchens, a wine cellar and a root cellar. There are also utility buildings and verdant gardens





that offer secret hideaways amid pristine landscaped walkways intermingled with lovely statuary and focal points.

The limonaia with its extensive south-facing windows, the last building added to the property, offers winter refuge for the estate's citrus trees. The main vegetable garden is a bounty of choice, with a variety of root and seasonal vegetables and gourds. The orchards and berry fields likewise provide a continuous abundance of good things to eat.

"There are bees and honey and berries of various kinds," says Charles. "It's a very extensive organic food production farm, juxtaposed and interspersed with ornamental gardens and beautiful follies and statues. It's really special."

For a more in depth look at the Georgian Estate and Sleepy Cat Farm, pick up a copy of *Classic Greenwich Houses* featuring the architecture of Charles Hilton Architects, published by the Monacelli Press, available September 15, 2020. For more information on Sleepy Cat Farm, go to [sleepycatfarm.com/](http://sleepycatfarm.com/)

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