

# Country Gardens

## The Many Looks of Country

farmhouse,  
fanciful, formal  
& more

**SIMPLE**  
Water Gardens

**PERENNIAL  
BORDERS**  
Made Easy

**10  
ideas**

to jump-start  
the season

Instant impact  
**Tabletop Magic**

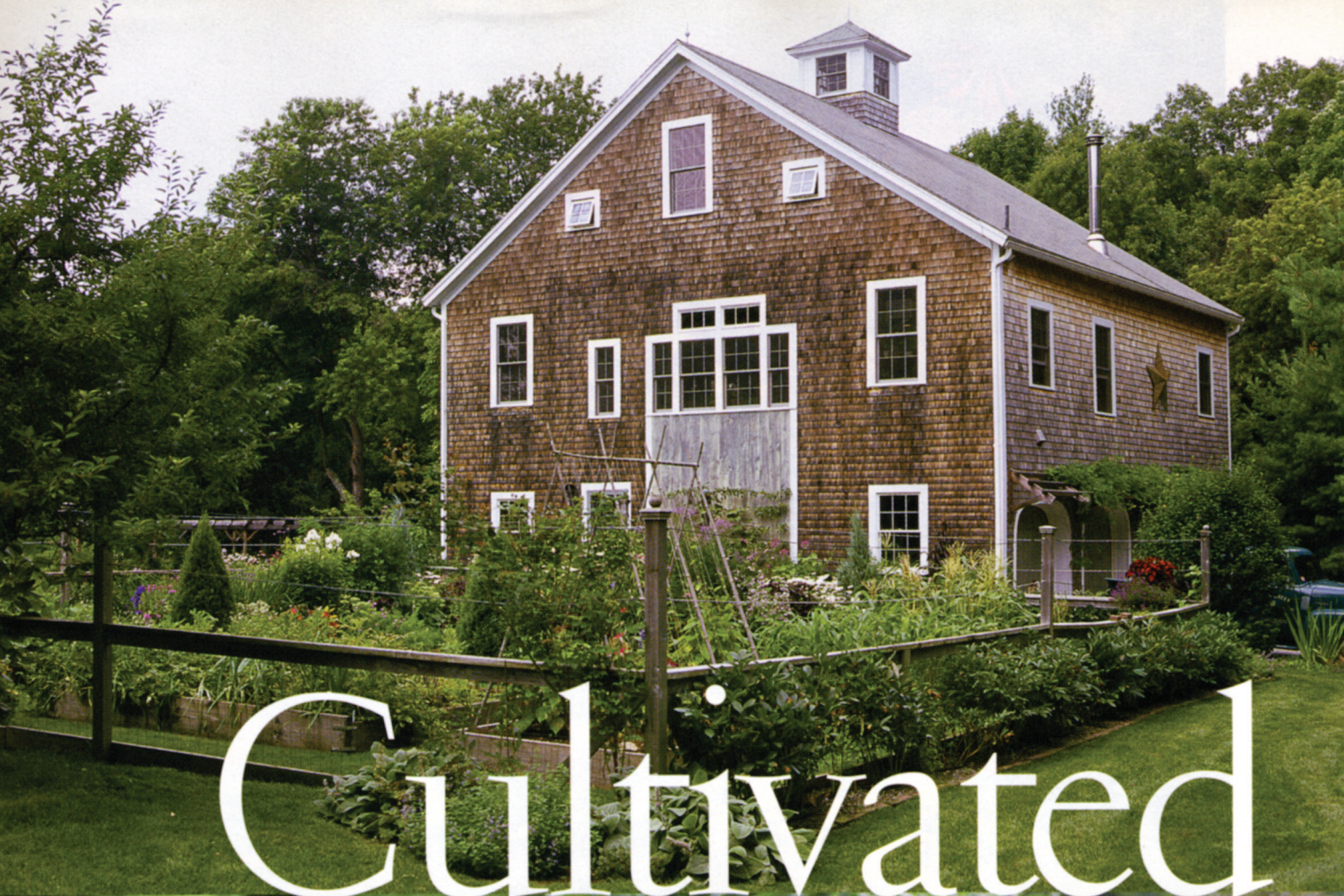
[www.bhg.com](http://www.bhg.com)

Display until May 24



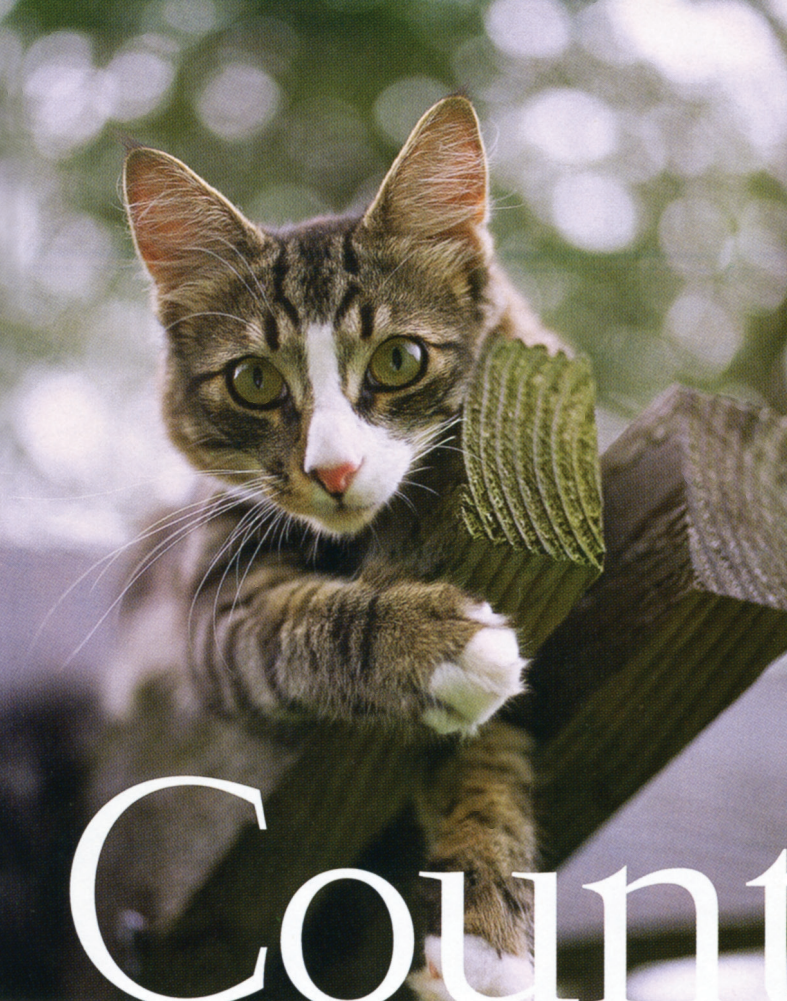
5 2 >

\$4.95 U.S., \$6.95 CAN.



# Cultivated





# Country

## A New England garden blends cottage charm with formality.

Born and raised on a farm, but comfortable in an impeccably formal look—it's the brainchild of a couple, one an artist and the other a craftsman, who found a home in rural Gloucester, Massachusetts.

Hilarie and Eric Holdsworth conceived the idea for a dressed-up country garden after making a cozy home for themselves in an 18th-century barn—rescued from demolition in Maine, then reassembled on their 3½-acre property. After transforming the barn, they turned their attention to the landscape.

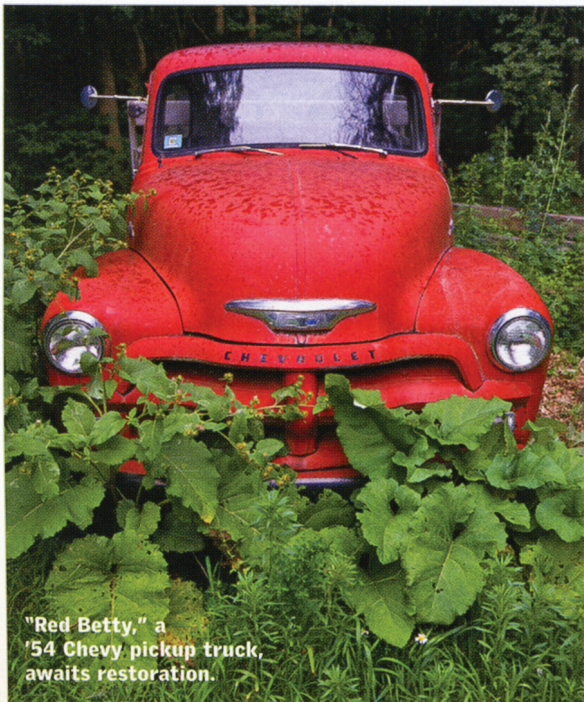
Hilarie discovered a knack for designing in three dimensions. “I was always out in the garden. It seemed wherever I looked, I was creating pictures.” Friends and neighbors encouraged her to start her own landscaping service; she did, calling it Walker Creek Garden Design, which now includes a three-person crew.

Eric, who restores antique trucks as a hobby, provided Hilarie a green '52 Chevy with an updated V-8 engine. Her work vehicle soon became her trademark. “Everyone recognizes me,” she says. “My truck is quirky and fun.”

*Opposite top* The Holdsworths' home is a refurbished mid-1700s dairy barn from Albion, Maine. The adjacent fenced perennial and vegetable garden features a formal layout. *Opposite bottom* Eric and Hilarie Holdsworth. *Top left* Haggis is one of several kittens that romps around the property. *Top right* A solid flagstone walkway would look too tidy, so the couple arranged the pavers more casually so grass could grow between them.

by DEBRA LEE BALDWIN    *photographer* ERIC ROTH    *field editor* HILLARY MAHARAM

Inside the fenced garden, a strip of grass flanked by billowing flowerbeds leads from the gate to a brick-bordered circular area in the center. Four paths intersect here, creating an axis.



"Red Betty," a '54 Chevy pickup truck, awaits restoration.

The same could be said of the Holdsworths' garden, which showcases Eric's building skills, Hilarie's eye for design, and their shared delight in collecting bits and pieces of old agricultural equipment. For example, a round hole in their garden gate, which they cut with a jigsaw, frames a rusty, 8-inch-diameter wheel that lends just the right note of farmhouse charm.

When designing a garden, Hilarie lets the site inspire her. "Whether Shingle, cottage, or Colonial, each place has its own personality," she says.

Included in her own landscape are a circular herb garden, flanked by two curved pergolas on the home's west side, and a 2,000-square-foot fenced vegetable/flower garden on the south. Both areas have geometric lines that show to advantage when viewed from second-story windows. "The designs are especially dramatic in winter, when plants are dormant," Hilarie says.

Six paths radiate from the herb garden's center, which Eric enhanced with a recirculating fountain—a surprise gift for Hilarie "that looks like it has been there forever," she says. In both herb and fenced gardens, overflowing

“I was always out in the garden. It seemed like wherever I looked, I was creating pictures.”  
—Hilarie Holdsworth

Hilarie planted hollyhocks (*Alcea rosea* 'Zebrina') to intermingle with vegetables in the fenced garden. Sugar snap peas grow on the bamboo trellis in the rear.

**GARDEN AT A GLANCE | ZONE 6**  
SIZE 3½ acres  
AGE 5 years AGE OF HOUSE 250 years  
SPECIAL CONDITIONS Excellent soil, sandy loam, acidic pH.



Eric created and installed a recirculating fountain as a birthday present for Hilarie. The fountain acts as a focal point within the circular herb garden.

plant material “takes the formality down a notch,” she adds. “Looseness acts as a counterbalance.”

Their vegetable garden needed to be fenced to keep out wildlife. Though deer can jump 10-foot fences, the Holdsworths wanted a lower barrier to preserve sight lines. Their solution was to string heavy-gauge wire horizontally above a 3-foot wood fence. This brings the total height to 7 feet, but deer have yet to vault it. “The wire seems to confuse them,” Hilarie says.

Plants that deer don’t like—such as peonies (*Paeonia* spp.) and lamb’s-ears (*Stachys byzantina*)—overflow the 40×50-foot garden, soften its perimeter, and segue into the lawn.

Brick-lined beds contain beets, lettuce, squash, and more, growing amid white Asiatic lilies, Shasta daisies (*Leucanthemum × superbum* ‘Becky’), fluffy clusters of *Cleome* ‘Pink Queen’, intensely fragrant *Nicotiana glauca* ‘Grandiflora’, and purple *Veronicastrum virginicum*. Sugar snap peas and cardinal climber (*Ipomoea × multifida*) twine around bamboo trellises that lend height to the overall composition.

Eric harvests vegetables, does the mowing, and with Hilarie’s help, tackles stonework and construction projects. “And,” Hilarie adds with a laugh, “if I beg hard enough, he helps me weed.” □

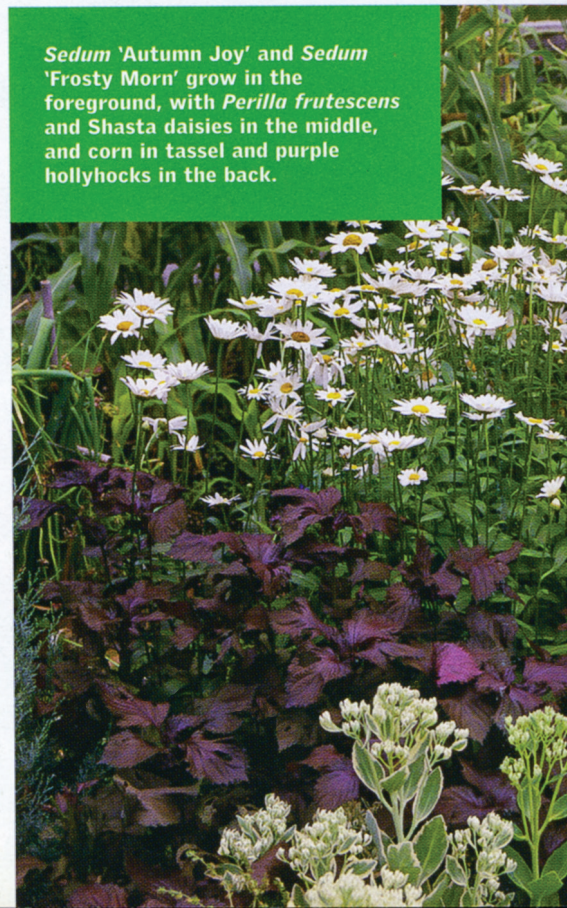
For more information, see the Buyers’ Guide on page 100.

## RELAXED FORMALITY

Hilarie Holdsworth shares these tips for how to blend a country-style garden with formal touches.

- Create the bucolic look of a New England apple orchard by planting flowering crabapples (*Malus* spp.) in a grid. Many common cultivars (such as *Malus* ‘Sugar Tyme’ and *Malus sargentii*) are disease-resistant, massed with bloom in spring, easy to grow, and—unlike traditional apple trees—don’t require a lot of maintenance. In fall, birds feast on the small, tart fruit.
- Enhance your vegetable garden with flowering perennials, annuals, and bulbs. Vegetables can be beautiful by themselves, but the added colors and textures of inedible ornamentals will make the garden more appealing.
- Flowers come and go quickly. If you base your garden on them, it’ll be languid much of the year. Instead, emphasize foliage and texture. Hosta is a good choice, as is *Ligularia dentata*, which has big, round leaves. *Stachys byzantina* ‘Helene von Stein’ and low-growing lavender cotton (*Santolina chamaecyparissus*) have silvery-gray leaves that form soft, velvety mounds.
- Plants with bright foliage, such as *Coleus* cultivars with golden-yellow leaves, look stunning in contrast with purple-leaf plants, which in turn lend visual depth to a garden. Some favorites: Coralbells (*Heuchera* ‘Amethyst Myst’ and *Heuchera* ‘Stormy Seas’), *Tradescantia pallida* ‘Purple Heart’, hyacinth bean (*Lablab purpureus*), *Perilla frutescens*, *Ajuga reptans* ‘Atropurpurea’, and sea holly (*Eryngium* spp.).

*Sedum* ‘Autumn Joy’ and *Sedum* ‘Frosty Morn’ grow in the foreground, with *Perilla frutescens* and Shasta daisies in the middle, and corn in tassel and purple hollyhocks in the back.





*Top* Over time, Hilarie replaces overgrown herbs in her circular garden with perennials, such as Shasta daisies. "I've learned never to plant mint," she says. "It takes over!"  
*Bottom* Stone steps planted with sedum, violets, *Ajuga*, and thyme lead from the driveway to the garden's path.

