




BEFORE



# English

POOF! A STREETSIDE STRIP OF URBAN GROUND MORPHS INTO A SERIES





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# Enchantment

OF GARDEN ROOMS STRAIGHT OUT OF AN OLD-FASHIONED FAIRY TALE





visions of climbing roses, delphiniums, hollyhocks, and catmint danced in Heather Falcone's head as she stood outside her family's new home on a bustling corner in Brookline, Massachusetts.

Heather dreamed of an English garden—abundant, exuberant, colorful, beautiful. But when she opened her eyes, reality stared back: a pitiful swath of 98-pound-weakling rhododendrons and azaleas unable to match the muscle of a Queen Anne home that could pass for a stone castle. Just scraggly shrubs and mulch. Lots and lots and lots of mulch.

"I hate mulch," Heather scowls. "And there I was with a yard of feet-deep mulch."

Certainly, it had to go. The purge, though, brought a new problem. "I was kind of overwhelmed," says Heather, a Brooklyn boutique owner with the dirt from just one, much smaller, garden project

under her fingernails. "I had created a little English garden at our previous home, but this was a lot bigger task. I was sitting there with a bare yard and my husband, Steve, ribbing me: 'I love what you've done with it, Heather.'"

So her search was on for the right landscape design partner. It turned out to be harder than swiping to true love on Tinder. "I wasn't inspired by a lot of landscapers," Heather says. "I like a classic look with tons of flowers, not a modern garden with low-maintenance grasses and such."

Then she stumbled on Jim Douthit's portfolio, an artist's palette of color. "We were on the same wavelength right away," Heather says of Douthit, principal of the Wayland, Massachusetts, design firm A Blade of Grass. "He has a great eye, plus the experience and practicality I needed to take the collage of a million pictures I had collected and help me turn them into the garden rooms I wanted."





**Entry gate** Walk through an iron gate (a Brimfield Flea Market find) to the Checkerboard Garden, where patterned pavers lead past a circular flower bed.

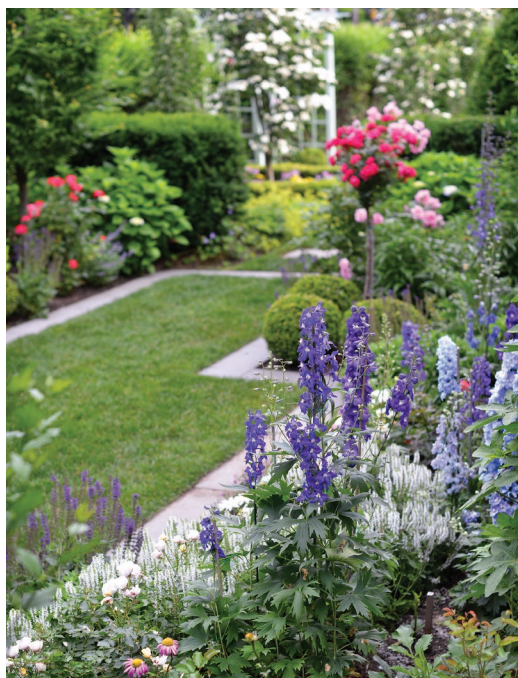
**Family** Heather Falcone cherishes time in the garden with her husband, Steve Cherry, and Lila, 5, and Sam, 13.

**House** The family's home dates to 1885.

**Transitional garden** Perennial beds filled with delphiniums, hollyhocks, and viburnum line the charming pass-through that connects the entry garden to backyard areas, including a bluestone patio. Lines of stone pavers give the space a formal air.

**Flowers** Heather's love of old-fashioned blooms is rooted in her childhood and garden tours with her English grandmother. Fittingly, Heather's colorful beds include eye-catching purple alliums and an abundance of roses.

**Preceding pages** A pergola covered in climbing roses and clematis shades an inviting seating area.







The garden rooms concept resonated with Douthit, who saw it as the key to beefing up the presence of the narrow U-shape yard. “I envisioned a series of rooms, each opening onto the next to create a kind of journey,” he says. To begin, Douthit replaced the old driveway with a natural-stone and polyurethane aggregate that resembles pea gravel but is more stable. He outlined the drive and lawns with blue-stone and brownstone pavers that mesh with the stone house.

Next came trees—arborvitae and buckthorn—that give the corner lot a secluded feel. Then came the garden structures and finally perennials, which were a treat for Douthit to include. “Heather is really a dream client for me, someone who is truly interested in tending a garden and not afraid of high-maintenance plantings,” he says. “I felt like I could really design the space exactly the way I wanted it to look without any limitations. My style tends toward very lush, layered plantings, which isn’t for everyone.”

The transformation from bare lot to blooms took three years. “Gardening is not for impatient people,” Heather says. “But that’s one thing I love about it. It takes time, but every year things change, and it gets better. A garden surprises you.”

For Heather, the highlight is roses—lots and lots of roses. “I love the ‘Gertrude Jekyll’ English rose the best,” she says. “But my go-to rose is climbing ‘Blaze’ because it’s strong—the flowers hold up even when it’s raining. And for part-shade, you just can’t beat ‘William Baffin’.”

Billowing catmint also plays a spectacular role in boisterous, carefree borders. “It grows like crazy, smells great, and really draws in the bees,” Heather says. “It flops a little, but I tie it up, then give it a hard prune in June. By September it looks really good again.”

A lavender lane of ‘Six Hills Giant’ catmint and ‘Globemaster’ allium leads to a rose-covered pergola, painted the same blue-green



## Details

**WHERE** Brookline, Massachusetts

**CONDITIONS** One-third-acre corner lot in Zone 6b

### HIGHLIGHTS

Landscape designer Jim Douthit turned a barren yard into a series of English-inspired outdoor rooms stuffed with vibrant flowers. A privet hedge and 'Green Giant' arborvitae act as a living privacy screen.



as Heather and Steve's front door. "I like a verdigris color," Heather says. "It meshes so nicely with the copper accents on the house."

The beautiful setting draws Heather, Steve, and their children, Sam and Lila, outdoors for meals, playtime, and plant-peeping. "Lila loves it when the garden first comes into bloom in spring," Heather says. "She goes out and, as we say, looks at the 'babies.'"

Even the work—endless flowers mean endless deadheading—is a joy to Heather. "Being in the garden, caring for it, is an excuse to be outside," she says. "It gets you in touch with nature and clears your mind. It makes me feel happy."

She pauses for a look around the landscape, smiling at a passerby who thanks her for the gorgeous scenery. "Having a garden, even if it's small, is a lovely thing to do," Heather concludes. "It adds so much beauty to our lives." 🌿

**Landscape designer:** Jim Douthit

**Backyard** Square perennial and vegetable beds demarked with potted boxwood topiaries snuggle up to a bluestone patio.

**Urn detail** Antique garden accents add a sense of history and character.

**Tiny dancer** The lawn adjacent to the patio is the perfect place for young Lila to get in some alfresco ballet practice.

**Seating** A chaise longue on the patio brings a splash of sunny yellow to the colorful scene.

