

# PROJECT PORTFOLIO

A SCRAPBOOK OF DESIGN/BUILD OVERHAULS

*Woodland retreat*

## THE MISSION

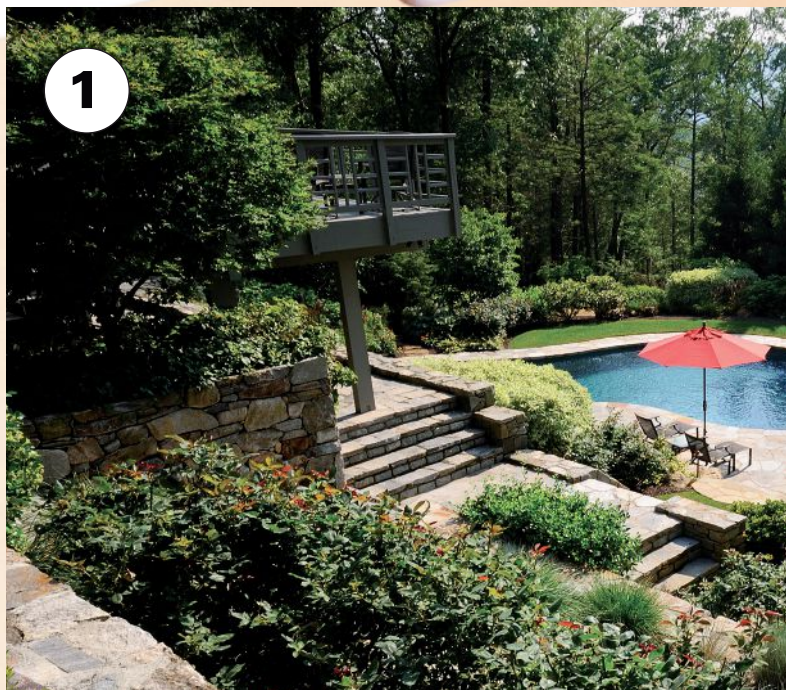
Create an upstate New York oasis for busy Manhattanites.

The new owners of this contemporary house wanted to create a weekend getaway in the Hudson Highlands where they could escape from their busy life in Manhattan. To them, that meant the following:

- › Make the house invisible from the gravel access road and three neighboring properties.
- › Take full advantage of the views of the bend in the Hudson River at West Point.
- › Add a swimming pool and spa.
- › Fully experience the wooded nature of their property by creating paths and enhancing the understory as a Ken Druse-type woodland garden.

The couple turned to The LaurelRock Co., a Wilton, CT-based firm. Led by CEO Dickson DeMarche, FASLA, LaurelRock was able to meet the above goals despite a few challenges along the way, including:

- › The house was situated less than 60 ft. from the access road, at the end of a straight driveway that threaded between ledge outcrops.
- › The garage was only 50 ft. from the northern neighbor's driveway and parking area.
- › Opening views through the trees to the river had to be carefully executed to avoid exposing views to a private boarding school situated downslope.
- › Existing retaining walls at the driveway and under the deck were sound, but the dry-laid walls between them were failing. Also, the steps from the driveway down to the terrace level were relocated to allow for the expanded deck.
- › The septic system location required placing the pool close to the house and on ledge rock, requiring careful blasting.
- › The largest portion of the woods, where the woodland garden was to be created, was inaccessible by machine. To compensate, the LaurelRock team hand-carted materials more than 300 ft.



PHOTOS COURTESY: LAURENCE MERZ PHOTOGRAPHY



## THE WORK

**1 | Step by step.** From near the garage at the entry level, this view shows the expanded deck (at the highest level), the existing stone terrace (at mid-level) and the new steps leading to the upper and lower lawn areas and the pool.

**2 | Holding court.** The pergola strengthens the feeling of “entry court” by connecting the garage to the house. It also adds shadow interest, and creates a foreground frame for the view. Paving replaced gravel at the doors to differentiate pedestrian circulation. Without diminishing the already-restricted maneuvering space for automobiles, planting was introduced to separate the driveway from the house and the end stone wall. It also serves to highlight and frame the entrances and the viewing location under the pergola.

**3 | The water's edge.** Note the new planter wall next to the expanded deck and stairs. Boulders were placed instead of walls to retain grade adjacent to the steps to the lower lawn area, transitioning to the more casual pool area design.

**4 | Natural beauty.** The woodland garden is in the lowest and least-accessible part of the site. Large trees and slab steps were brought in by ball carts. In the foreground is the bog garden, featuring sedges, phlox and primroses.

**5 | Reuse — and reinforce.** Boulders from the pool excavation were used to reinforce the slope between the house and the pool, and to create a retaining wall on the downside of the pool area terrace. Shrubs and vines were planted to stabilize the soil between the boulders. Perennials were then added for color.

**6 | Rock stars.** Masons from MNM Masonry Contractors, Ossining, NY, took care to match the original wall style and tie all levels together.

*As one of the only landscape design/build and maintenance firms in Fairfield County that started as a landscape architectural firm, LaurelRock takes a design-driven approach to its clientele. This particular project garnered a 2010 Environmental Improvement Grand Award from the Professional Landcare Network (PLANET). For more information, visit [LaurelRock.com](http://LaurelRock.com).*



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