



made to look natural

A trough, stream and pond bring water to a high desert area

When landscape designer Laurie Van Zandt was hired to transform a 7-acre grassy field into a series of gardens, she tried to disturb as little as possible of the northern Utah landscape. She wanted to respect the natural beauty of the setting as well as preserve it for her clients, who like the unmanicured look. The owners had relocated to Utah from Florida to be closer to their grown children and grandchildren. They wanted spaces that would provide enjoyment for all. To achieve that goal, Van Zandt introduced a vegetable garden, a pavilion for shade, a fire pit, a lawn area for playing badminton and, the star attraction, a three-part water feature.

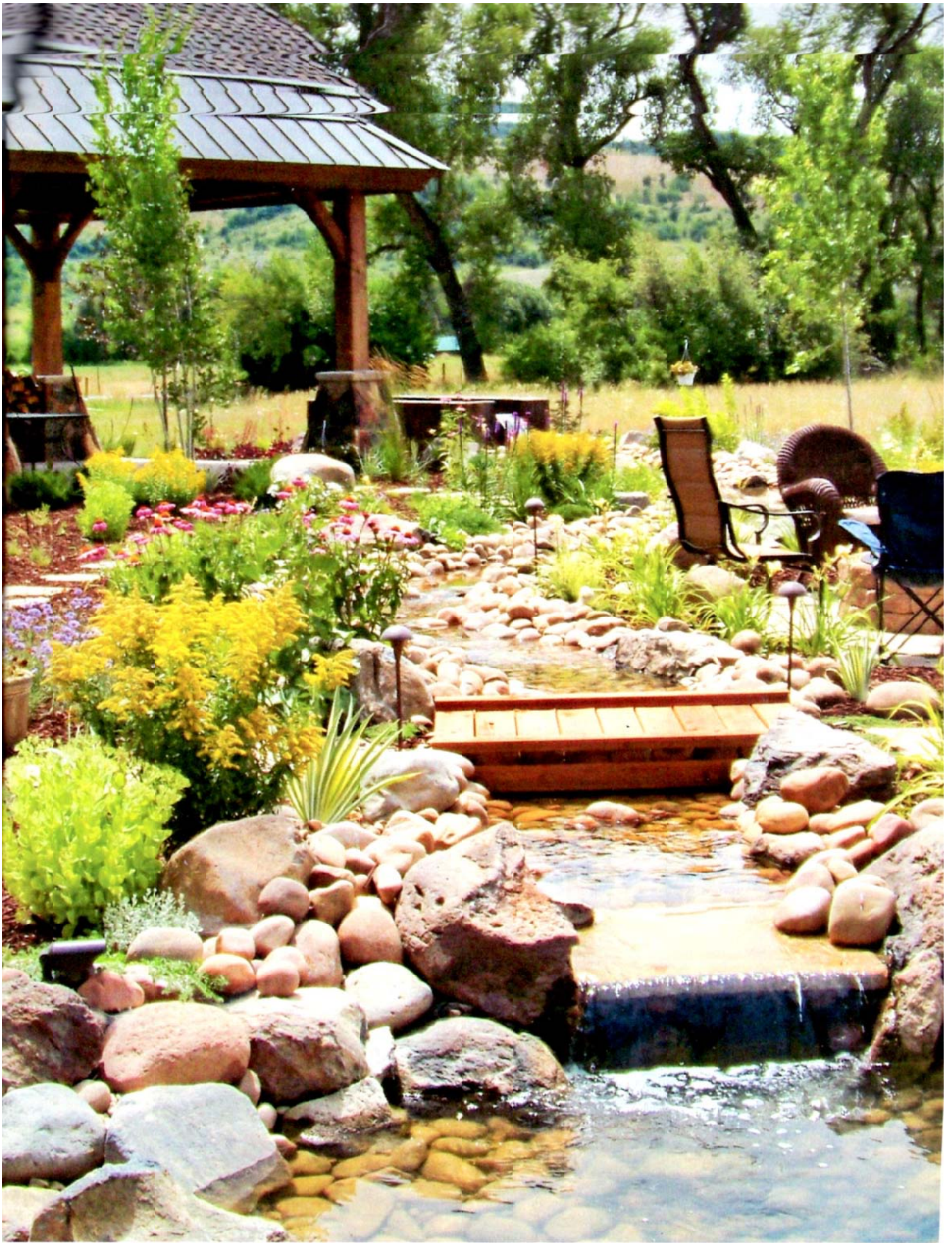
Because of the flat site and native plantings, she didn't want to create a splashy big pool and dramatic waterfall. Instead, she fashioned a trough out of concrete, which was acid-stained with multiple colors to match the setting and then beaten with a hammer so it would look old and appropriate for the farm site. "We literally hired a guy to come in and do the acid stain and beat it up so it looked like an abandoned livestock trough," Van Zandt says. The water feature also was extended with a 60'-long riverbed lined on either side with area rocks; it culminates in a big

The pavilion provides a shady place to view the mountains and enjoy the stream.

ABOVE LEFT: Low plantings complement the stone pillar and thick beam entryway.

Photography: Laurie Van Zandt







Rocks were spread among the loose plantings so they look like they belong in a stream setting.



Natural stone pathways resemble a rambling riverbed

How to fill in a new landscape

Designer Laurie Van Zandt views her work as an art form that requires time and creativity, yet most homeowners want instant results. Some of Van Zandt's quick tips:

Create rooms by adding instant structure. A pavilion, a fenced vegetable garden with a shed, a perennial garden with a water feature and a terrace with a low wall all immediately convey a defined space.

Repeat shapes. Whether you use the same rectangles, circles or organic forms, they will convey the look of a thoughtful, finished design.

Introduce materials and architectural detailing from the house into the setting. This, too, conveys a cohesiveness that suggests a well-planned design. Use stone from the house on a terrace, or repeat a style of a column, door or window.

behind the scenes

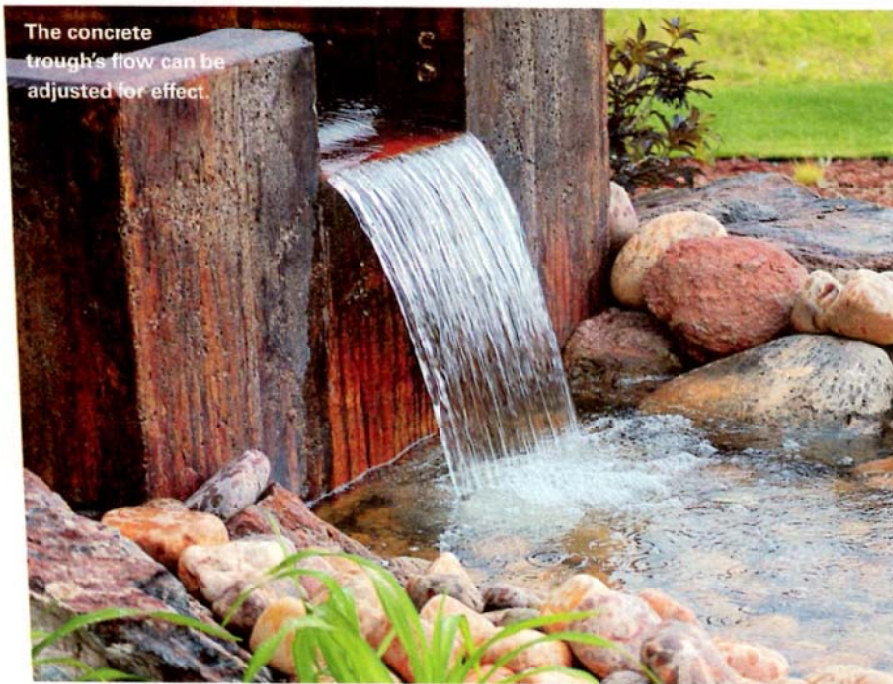
Landscape designer: Laurie Van Zandt, The Ardent Gardener Landscape Design and Project Coordination, Huntsville, UT, theardentgardener.net, 801-388-8103

Challenges: Redesign 7-acre site to incorporate garden rooms; use an intense palette

Best outcome: A concrete trough was designed to resemble an abandoned animal livestock trough, made more realistic with an adjoining stream

Main plants used: Robusta cottonless cottonwood (*Populus deltoides* 'Robusta'); Flame amur maple (*Acer ginnala* 'Flame'); subalpine fir (*Abies lasiocarpa*); ivory halo dogwood (*Cornus alba* 'Bailhalo')

Zones: 3-4



The concrete trough's flow can be adjusted for effect.

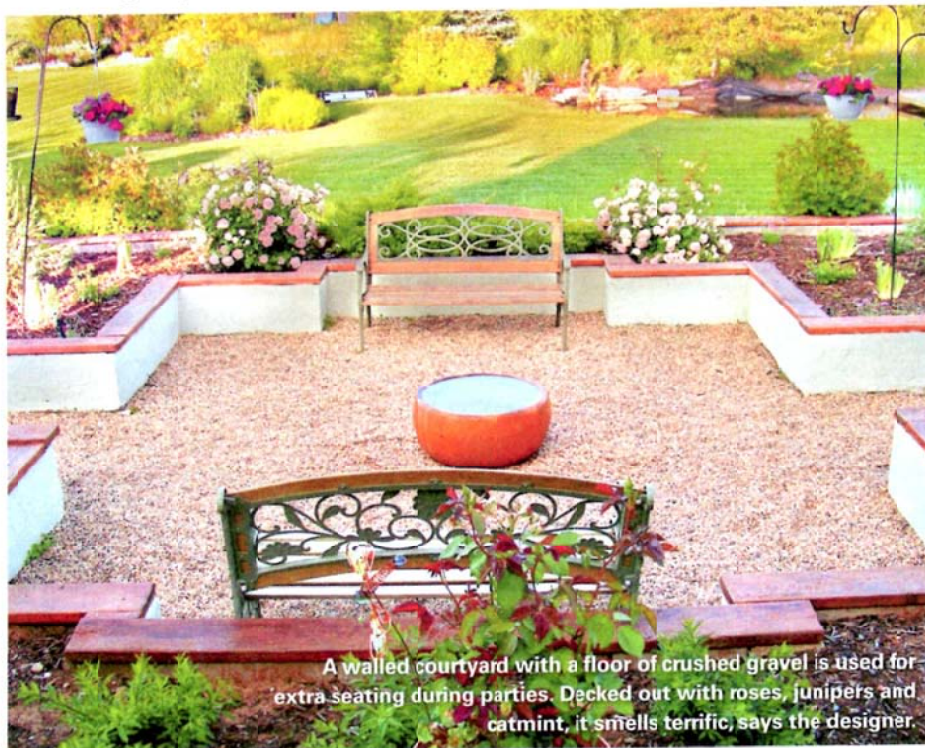
pond where the clients' grandkids play "The pond has a sandy pea gravel bottom that allows them to wade in without hurting their feet. There are also big, flat stones that the kids can sit on," Van Zandt says. Part of the secret of success was the designer's careful placement of rocks. A landscape contractor had originally put down the stones, but he did so with such precision that it looked like a machine had placed them, she

says. She "messed" up the rocks to reflect better Mother Nature's more natural handiwork. "I literally spent eight hours doing so," Van Zandt says, laughing.

She added plants such as irises and catmint and cottonless cottonwood trees, and constructed the pavilion to provide a shady cover from which to view the distant ski resort, Snowbasin. They sure aren't in Florida anymore!

potpourri of garden spaces

It's all about sustainability and spots to enjoy fabulous mountain views



A walled courtyard with a floor of crushed gravel is used for extra seating during parties. Decked out with roses, junipers and catmint, it smells terrific, says the designer.

behind the scenes

Landscape designer: Laurie Van Zandt, The Ardent Gardener Landscape Design and Project Coordination, Huntsville, UT, thearden@gardene.net, 801-388-8103

Challenge: Learning what plants would survive in northern Utah

Best outcome: A pond and botanic garden with different plants that allow her to show results to clients; she also gained spaces for her own entertaining

Main plants used: Flame amur maple (*Acer ginnala* 'Flame'); water birch (*Betula occidentalis fontinalis*); European mountain ash (*Soibus aucuparia* 'Cardinal Royal'); Gray Gleam juniper (*Juniperus scopulorum* 'Gray Gleam'); Mint Julep juniper (*Juniperus chinensis* 'Mint Julep')

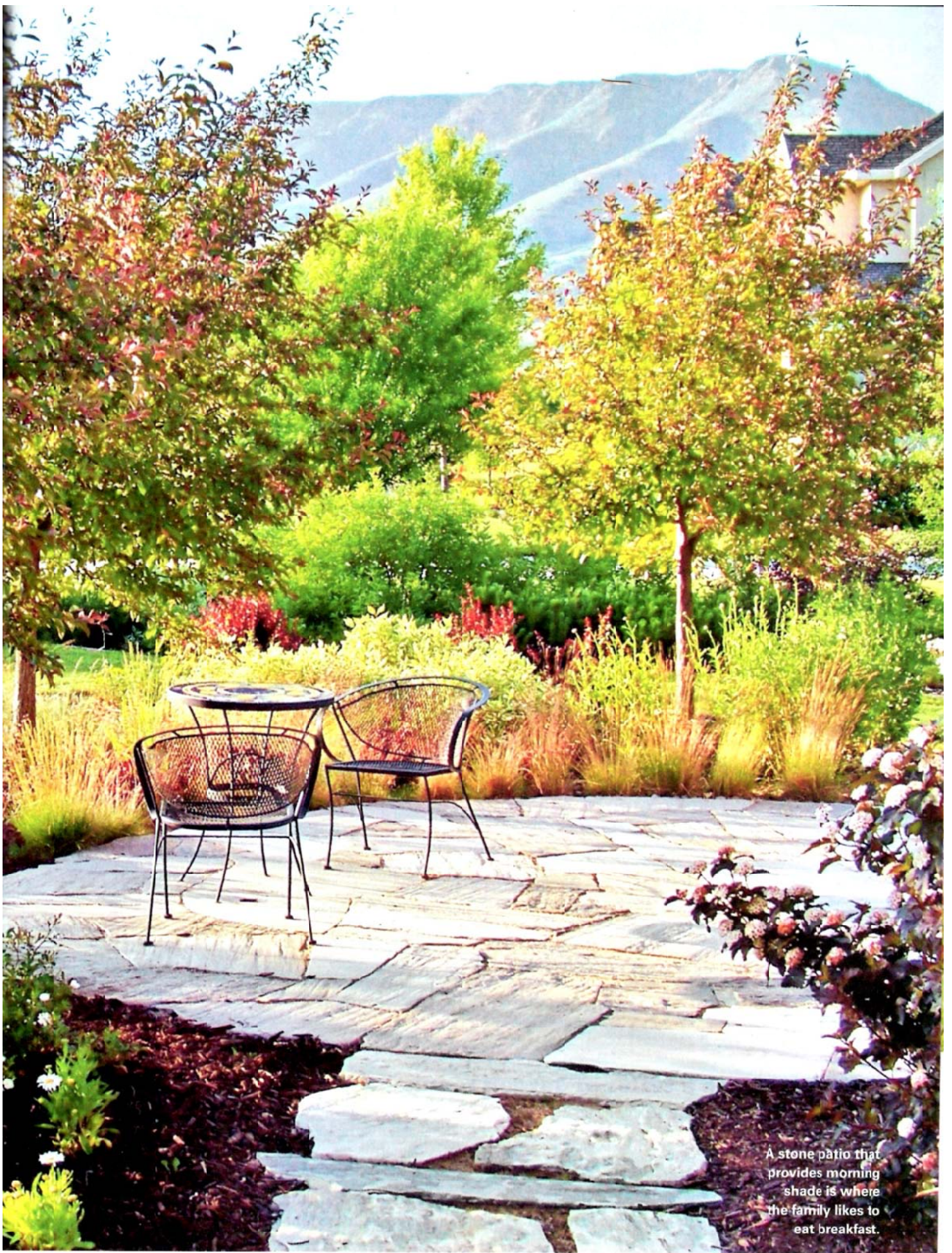
Zones: 3-4

When landscape designer Laurie Van Zandt moved to Utah from Southern California, she was able to learn firsthand about gardening a different type of topography. "I had come to vacation in this part of Utah—an hour north and east of Salt Lake City and near ski country, but really didn't know what the farm setting would be like to transform and take care of," says Van Zandt, who relocated with three reluctant young children. She purchased a two-story house on a 1-acre lot (far larger than her former postage-stamp California site), which offers fabulous mountain views and easy-to-tend soil.

During her first winter, she designed the garden as a series of rooms that reveal



Photography: Laurie Van Zandt



A stone patio that provides morning shade is where the family likes to eat breakfast.



How to create a series of garden rooms

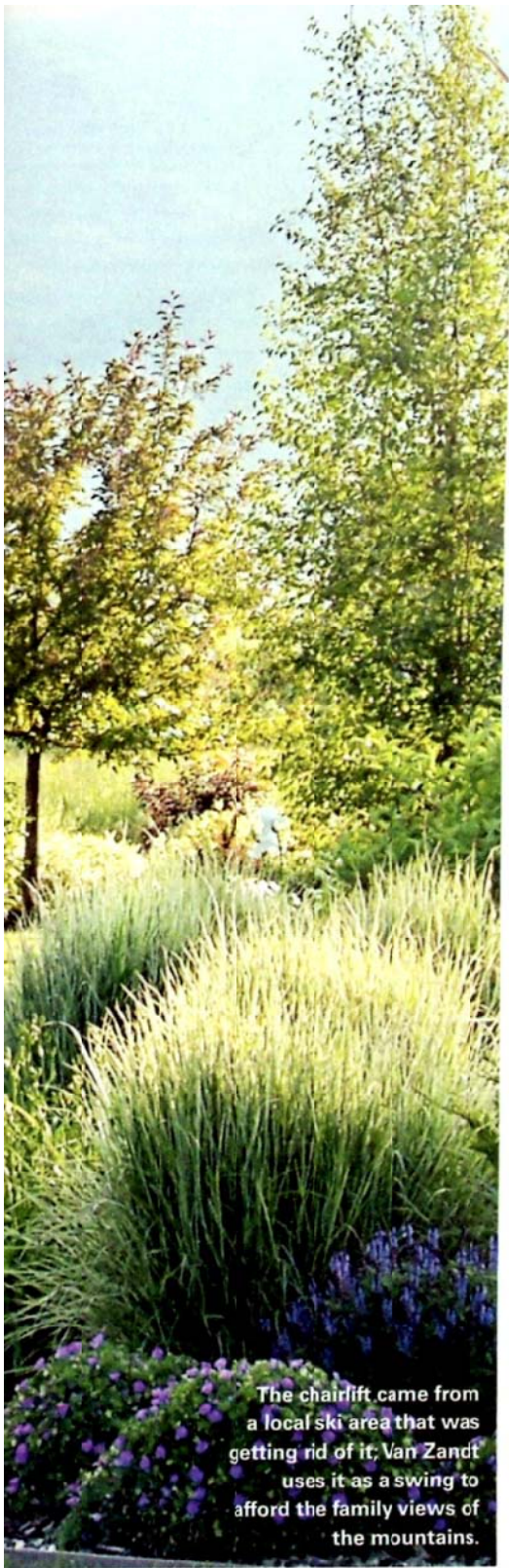
Fashioning separate gardens that look unique and, at the same time, part of a whole is difficult. Here's what garden designer Laurie Van Zandt did:

Introduced different feelings. A mix of materials, colors, textures and scale gives this garden its unique flavor.

Repeated something to link the spaces, whether color,

texture or scale. For example, Van Zandt reused some of the same stone materials and plants, including birch trees, roses and irises. She also duplicated the idea of a round paved patio in her fire pit area.

Connected the gardens with paths. How wide they are, and what they're made from should depend on their use.



The chairlift came from a local ski area that was getting rid of it; Van Zandt uses it as a swing to afford the family views of the mountains.

Van Zandt's imagination: a main deck across the back, where many can gather; a formal garden several steps down that also serves as a transition to the lawn; a walled sitting area with a gravel "floor," low cinderblock partitions for extra seating, big planters filled with roses, catmint, irises and junipers. Van Zandt added a bowl in the center filled with water for trickling sounds; a reflecting pond is filled with



salamanders and other fish and surrounded by Adirondack-style chairs. A tiny Japanese garden with a stone patio and one chair is the designer's retreat, which she's packed with coral bells, junipers and irises. A secret garden filled with miniature plantings is entered through an arbor and screened by an 8'-high hedge. The hedge is called Tall Hedge, a buck thorn that grows rapidly.

TOP: The "three boys" sit on a rock ledge by the pond; they add a soft, whimsical touch.

ABOVE: Variegated irises are the unifying plant used throughout the designer's garden; they smell like grape jelly, she says.