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VERANDA



GRACEFUL

A GENTLE PALETTE

TRANQUILITY

INTERIOR DESIGN BY
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LEFT: Gentle palette takes its cue from antique Aubusson rug in a Houston, Texas, living room. Mantel holds rare English Regency bamboo and pinecone plant stands. Chinese dowry chest from 1800s is family heirloom. Antique mirrors with tortoiseshell inlay hang above 19th-century French oak consoles. Matthew Boulton candlesticks from 1800s. Gold leaf Louis XVI chair, 1780, basks in sunlight. Brunschwig & Fils fabric on sofa with Lee Jofa plaid on pillows. Clarence House print covers chair. Window silk from Prima Seta. ABOVE: Lacquer work table (c. 1830) is actually three pieces of chinoiserie topped by swan's neck pediment and standing on claw feet. Oak herringbone floor. Walls custom painted by Wells Design.



LEFT: Trompe l'oeil on antique screen ushers garden motif into dining room. Extending the mood: a plain sisal rug framed with contrast in sisal border. Zax leather seats on chairs. Custom-made iron and rock crystal chandelier by Alcon. ABOVE: Old Wedgwood pattern, "Camelia," belonged to owner's grandmother. French lead urn is 19th-century. Flower arrangements throughout by In Bloom.



OPPOSITE: Harlequin print on slipper chair and skirt fabric on bed by Schumacher. Headboard covered in Stroheim & Romann fabric. Pratesi linens. Draperies in Carleton V soft check. Tole cachepot on primitive pine table.
 ABOVE: Library invites one to linger. Schumacher fabric on sofa; Grey Watkins check on pillows. Chair fabric by Manuel Canovas. Windows feature Clarence House plaid. Old French country pine table behind sofa.

In a Houston neighborhood known for its mansions there sits a dwelling much less imposing in scale but secure in its presence. Not grand but eminently graceful. "The house has personality," says Jerry Jeanmard of Wells Design in Houston. "It doesn't have huge rooms or giant spaces, but it has an intimacy that people really respond to. A gentleness."

Built in 1937 by Staub-Rather, the modest Regency-style home displays fine proportions, which have been respected in subsequent renovations. A former garage was enclosed by previous owners to create a cozy library, a favorite spot during winter. The rest of the year, however, people gravitate toward the latest addition: the aptly named garden room. Walls of win-

dows on three sides make it, literally, part of the garden that nestles around it. Here and in other rooms the selective use of natural materials such as bamboo and sea grass and sisal extend the garden motif in an uncluttered manner.

Since the wife is a partner in the landscape architecture and contracting firm Thompson+Hanson, she wanted

to make the garden an integral part of the house, and vice versa. "First we enclosed the backyard with a brick wall," she explains. "Then we remodeled the house. The living room and dining room were the only original rooms we kept." The renovation took a year and a half; then she was able to begin landscaping.

Thanks to multiple French doors,

the whole back of the house opens onto the garden and terrace. Two bedrooms upstairs also overlook the area with small balconies to facilitate viewing. And, perhaps, a little sun worship. "The house faces South so the light on the back of it is beautiful in the wintertime," she adds.

Surrounded by flowers, the owner chose primarily stripes and checks

and geometric prints for the home's interior, all of them in gentle hues. She credits Herbert Wells for the beautiful colors. "Everyone who comes in my house says it's so serene. His sense of color is incredible."

The living room palette derives from an antique Aubusson rug the designers found in Houston. Wells Design tried the walls in a soft, comple-



Light spills across antique pavers of English blue limestone on garden room floor. Chairs and sofa, upholstered in Travers fabric, are made of sea grass. Tufted wood bench designed by John Hutton for David Sutherland. Antique stone tables were once garden stools at a Long Island estate.

mentary brown. Everything, from oak herringbone floors to tortoiseshell inlay on a pair of antique mirrors, enhances the tranquil earth tones. "We tried to do things in a way that was harmonious with the architecture and with pieces the homeowners had," Jeanmard explains. "You'd be hard pressed to know what was added and what was original. It's not a show-

room house; other than the fabrics, not much is new. It has a feeling of loving accumulation."

Indeed, some fascinating and beautiful items in the home were handed down by a loving grandmother. A nineteenth-century Chinese dowry chest, for example, lends a touch of the exotic and a sense of history to the living room while serving as an end

table. "They carried these chests on poles," the owner explains, and one can imagine a young bride on the other side of the world setting out to establish her own household. Across the room another inherited piece arrests the eye. This chinoiserie cabinet is actually three separate pieces, including a removable hinged writing box and a stand with cabriole legs ending in an



Marguerite daisies cluster around an 1850s French painted urn in quiet corner of garden. Landscaping by owner and Timothy Adcock of Thompson + Hanson.

imal claw feet. "It all comes apart. They used it for traveling."

Weary travelers of any nationality would appreciate the restful environment of this Texas home: an unruffled air that soothes frazzled nerves and helps reorder priorities. The small scale benefits from a delicate hand, both indoors and out, where working with plants and fertile soil puts one in

touch with the essentials—life's cycles, the interconnectedness of every action, every creature. "I'm just a self-taught gardener," the owner claims, downplaying her considerable success. The results prove both hard work and imagination.

Her garden is white. White roses, white azaleas, white camellias. White dogwoods and crape myrtles. And

lots of variegated plants that have white in them.

"The plant palette is all blues and lavenders and whites. I've always liked white gardens," the owner explains, "maybe because the only time I'm at home is at night." And what could be more lovely than white blossoms reflecting the lunar glow? Mysterious. Serene. Magic in moonlight. □