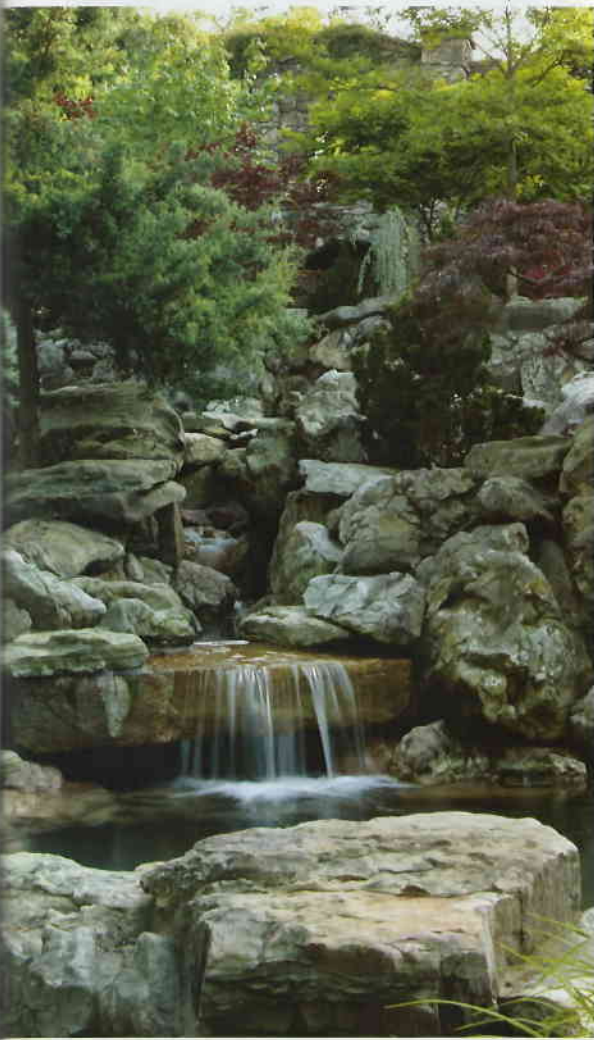


# GLORIOUS GARDENS



## On a Grand Scale

This Old-World paradise blends romantic English sensibilities with natural Ozark style

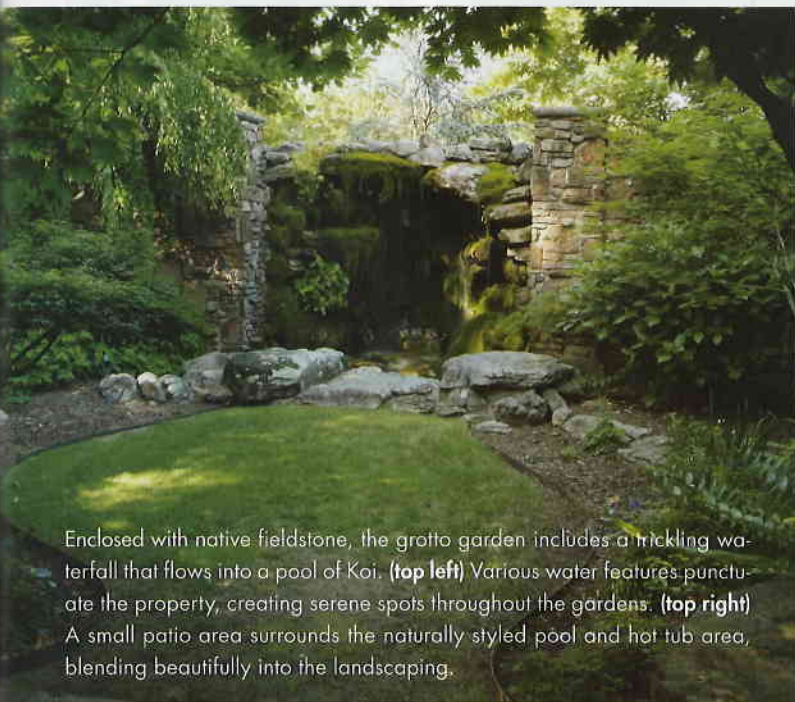
TEXT: SHARON MOSLEY

PHOTOGRAPHY: LARRY PENNINGTON

**E**nglish gardens have long fascinated us with their romantic vistas and secret rooms glimpsed through stone gateways and cloistered courtyards. So when one central Arkansas family decided to re-create the spirit of the historic Arts and Crafts gardens of Great Britain combined with the naturalistic ambience of the Ozark Mountains, they called on Mark Robertson, ASLA of Mesa Landscape Architects, Inc. in Little Rock, to add a grand garden to their 12-acre estate.

Mark, the managing principal with Mesa, has considerable award-winning experience in designing zoological projects, botanical gardens, such as Garvan Gardens in Hot Springs, and state parks throughout the United States. Mark's extensive travel in remote areas of South America and elsewhere, as well as his background in horticulture and ecology, made him and his firm well suited for an exotic residential project such as this one. "The garden evokes a sense of formality and symmetry as you enter it from the home," says Mark, who worked on the extensive project for four years. "It evolves into less formal and naturalistic environments the further you move away from the house."

The garden space closest to the residence consists of a raised cut-flagstone patio and carved stone balustrades



Enclosed with native fieldstone, the grotto garden includes a trickling waterfall that flows into a pool of Koi. (top left) Various water features punctuate the property, creating serene spots throughout the gardens. (top right) A small patio area surrounds the naturally styled pool and hot tub area, blending beautifully into the landscaping.

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(left) The sunken garden features a breathtaking fountain powered by a computerized control system, as well as a low flagstone edge for convenient seating. (bottom left) Smaller, more intimate gardens can be explored through a castle-like arched doorway, decorated with vibrant, blooming flowers and lush green plants.

overlooking a sweeping lawn. Extensive landscape borders of stacked native fieldstone surround the beautifully manicured zoysia lawn, and all of the garden beds consist of custom-blended soil for the collection of many cultivars of Japanese maples, hollies, Little Gem and Hasse magnolias.

Down the stairs at the far side of the lawn is the sunken garden, which is centered on an elliptical-shaped fountain that utilizes a computerized control system to choreograph ever-changing effects. The smooth black aggregate known as Pebble Tech provides a sleek and durable finish, while also creating an illusion of depth, and the large flagstone edge provides ample seating.

Through an arched doorway, visitors are invited to explore the first of several smaller, more intimate garden rooms. Hand-forged panels separate the space from the adjoining courtyard. To the left, the grotto garden is enclosed with native fieldstone, and a small fountain mimics a spring trickling out through mossy crevices and into a pool filled with Koi.

For such a grand project, Mark brought in large and unusual plant material from around the United States. "We didn't just draw out and design and place the plants. We actually brought in the specimens and placed them before we decided what we wanted to do in each garden," he says. "This approach provided maximum flexibility and allowed the garden to evolve over time." ■ SEE SHOPPING GUIDE FOR DETAILS.



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