

Agrarian Gifts

Presented with a large, perfectly flat site surrounded by preserved farmland and ocean views, it's easy to imagine any number of ways to fill the void with a house, garage, pool, and vegetable garden. A common solution might have been to cluster the buildings and recreational amenities together, letting the edges go a little wild. But this Long Island, N.Y., house and landscape work together to create the opposite effect: one that celebrates the

simplicity of traditional farmsteads by pushing the buildings out to the property's edges and making a meadow the centerpiece.

The design is an urban riff on rural agrarian utility. "We thought it would be interesting to make an object building that sat at the very edge of the agricultural preserve and left the site open and unspoiled," says Marc Turkel, AIA, LEED AP, a partner at New York City-based Leroy Street Studio. The barnlike house hugs the 2.5-acre site's northern edge, and its louvered rainscreen

A design team finds poetry in a former potato field.

By Cheryl Weber, LEED AP

In a nod to utilitarian farm buildings that once dotted the landscape, this barnlike house overlooks a natural meadow bounded by hedgerow poplars. Thin stainless steel pickets (sans horizontal bands) poke up through the grasses and secure the rear pool zone. The pool's stonework reappears on an interior fireplace.

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The long, rectangular landscape is an interplay of solid and void. "Instead of having a meadow around the edges and a lawn in the center, the edges define the meadow that you move through to get from house to pool to bocce court," says Reed Hilderbrand's John Kett. A poplar tunnel (opposite, top center) separates the driveway from the meadow. Mown paths lead to the garage and pool area.



skin disguises a series of open-air porches and courtyards intertwined with the interiors. Almost from the start, Turkel worked with Reed Hilderbrand Associates, of Watertown, Mass., to develop a sympathetic plan for the long, rectangular site.

At its heart is a grassy meadow—a rectangle with crisscrossed mown paths leading to the pool, bocce court, and vegetable garden at the property's far end. Conceived as a modern parterre dotted with London plane trees, its simple pattern is best viewed from the house's second story, where the living areas are located to capture ocean views. The decision to move the outdoor destinations away from the house was logical too. "The clients wanted the whole property—not just the area around the house—to be an active garden experience," says project landscape architect John Kett, an associate at Reed Hilderbrand.

The pool's placement means it doesn't dominate outdoor entertaining. And with young children in the house, the rear zone is secured with thin, 4-foot-high steel pickets running through the meadow. It's an elegant solution to a difficult practical dilemma that often ruins domestic landscapes. "The grasses are 24 inches to 30 inches tall," Kett explains. "We wanted to be able to read that fence line in the meadow."

Trees with agrarian connotations reinforce the landscape structure. Reed Hilderbrand used the indigenous rural pattern of hedgerows to define the plot's long edges and to create a tunnel for the driveway. So it's not until visitors drive up along the property line, walk toward the house, and look back that they experience the garden's full breadth. The hedgerows' fast-growing poplars are the first line of defense against the salt air. Running in the opposite direction are loose groves of ornamental and fruit trees, such as crab apple, hawthorn, and cherry.

Turkel credits the team effort for the way the landscape underscores the architecture, and vice versa. "Reed Hilderbrand is very rigorous about the way it develops the project with an overall concept," he says. "We joke about policing the parti, but in fact [the partnership] leads to a stronger, more coherent result." ■

Project Credits: Architect: Leroy Street Studio, New York City; Landscape architect: Reed Hilderbrand Associates, Watertown, Mass.; Builder: Lettieri Construction, Westhampton Beach, N.Y.; Photographer: Paul Warchol, except where noted.

