



NATURAL MATERIALS AND LIVING CREATURES COME TOGETHER HARMONIOUSLY IN ALICE SHIRAKAWA'S ASIAN-INSPIRED RETREAT.

Perched at the edge of a man-made pond, a gazebo offers views of iridescent fish. The lush landscape includes rhododendrons, mountain laurels, bold-leaved ligularia, and a hemlock that shades the gazebo.

BY DOUG HALL PHOTOGRAPHS BY ROB CARDILLO PRODUCED BY KELLY WATTS



BETTER BY DESIGN >> from Z12

Traditional Japanese gardens leave nothing to chance. Stones are painstakingly arranged, and plants are pruned and shaped in imitation of natural landscapes. The result is like nature, only better.

It was this idealized vision of nature that Alice Shirakawa had in mind when she hired a landscape architect to redesign her suburban Philadelphia backyard. She gave him a snapshot taken on a trip to Japan, showing a mountain trail curving past evergreens and boulders. Make my garden look like this, she said. She wanted it to be serene and peaceful, as well as a welcoming place for animals. Just as Alice wished, the renovated garden has the restful ambience of a woodland glade—an unexpected pleasure on her block, where houses are close and privacy is precious. >> or Z16

Splashing water imparts a cooling, calming influence on the garden. Bearberry plants are tucked into the stone wall to the right of the waterfall. To the left, a Japanese maple spreads its filigreed purple-tinged leaves over the stones.