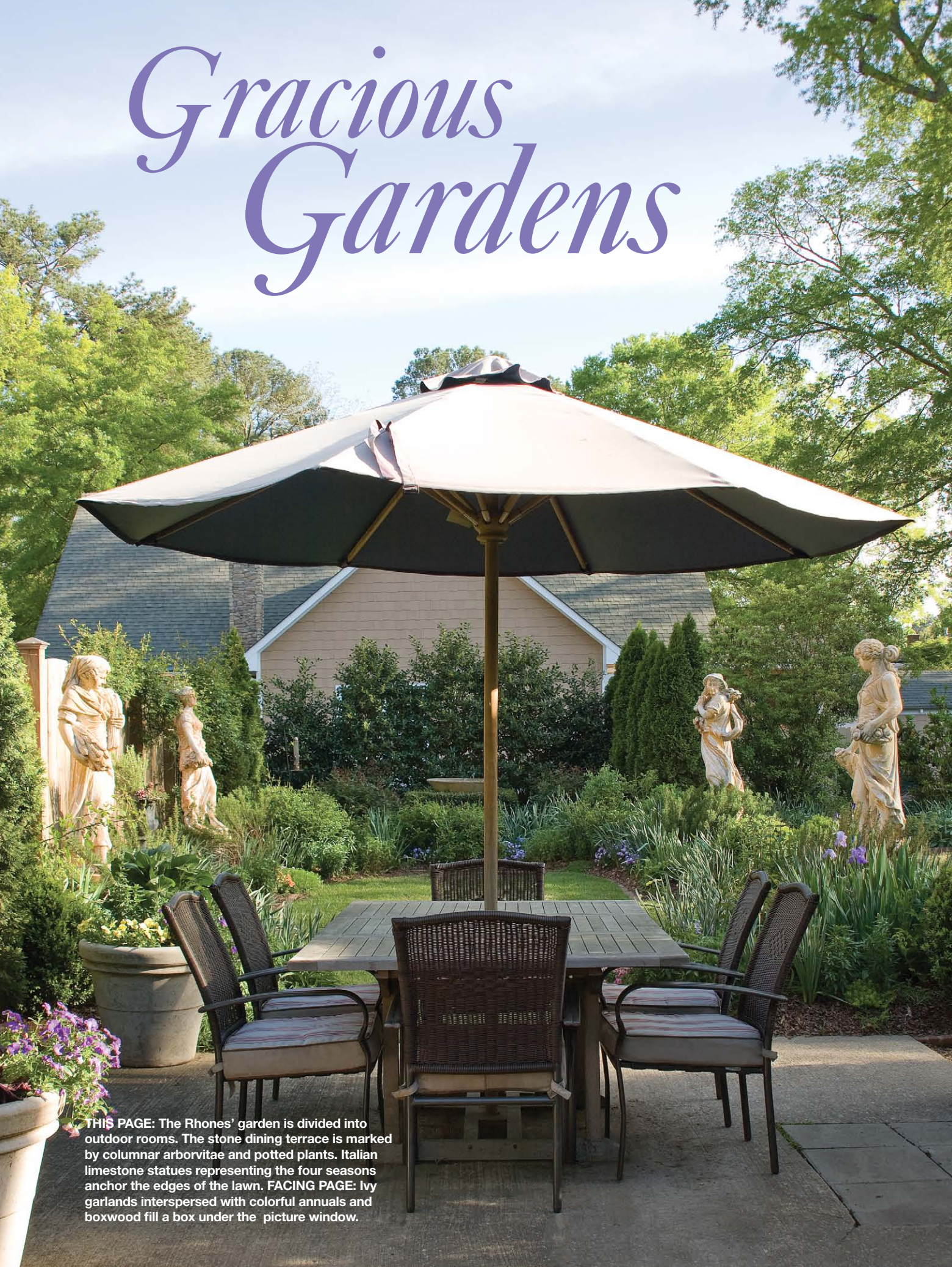
Gracious Gardens



THIS PAGE: The Rhones' garden is divided into outdoor rooms. The stone dining terrace is marked by columnar arborvitae and potted plants. Italian limestone statues representing the four seasons anchor the edges of the lawn. **FACING PAGE:** Ivy garlands interspersed with colorful annuals and boxwood fill a box under the picture window.

Text by JUNE MAYS *Photography by* SYLVIA MARTIN

Randi and Troy Rhone's pastoral paradise was revealed to the public last spring for the Garden Conservancy's Open Days Tour. Their outdoor spaces extend the presence of their cottage by creating distinct rooms for alfresco living.

Cars slow down to catch a glimpse of the home owned by Randi and Troy Rhone, despite its location on one of the busiest streets in Crestline. The modest shake cottage embodies the nostalgic feel of a Norman Rockwell painting with its American flag, neatly clipped boxwoods, circular pea gravel drive, and perfectly planted window box. Troy, owner of Troy Rhone Garden Design, wanted a home that unified all aspects of the property. "We blended the interior design, the outside architecture, and the garden," says Troy. "What you see outside complements what is inside." Dividing the outdoors into garden rooms, the landscape has a floorplan feel with its strategic use of planting beds and placement of antique statuary. Gravel paths form hallways, and borders seemingly become walls. A gate surrounded by camellias and arborvitae operates as a front door of sorts.

Once inside this outdoor living area, a stone terrace sets the scene with a dining table and umbrella surrounded by columnar arborvitae and voluminous pots spilling over with colorful annuals. A second garden room, distinguished by boxwood hedges framing a carpet of grass is punctuated by four classical statues. Beds of iris, achillea, daisies, and sweet William add color. Troy designated a back corner to raised beds for a kitchen garden. The opposite corner showcases 10 varieties of roses planted around an urn. Other areas include confederate jasmine, cotoneaster, hydrangea, forsythia, magnolia, banana shrub, holly, and peonies—all wondrous additions to this extraordinary plot of land.

Outdoor Rooms

You don't have to have an estate to create garden rooms. All you need is healthy soil and your imagination—or a landscape designer. Here are Troy's tips for creating your own outdoor retreat.

- **Start your project with pencil and paper.** It's easier to rough sketch an idea before mapping it on your property.
- **Consider elements of a floorplan.** Remember to include a dining area, a nook for reading, kitchen, and connecting hallways when determining your spaces.
- **Use stakes and string** to define your plan outdoors. Take advantage of the site to determine flow of pathways, steps, angles, and borders.
- **Keep height and privacy** in mind when creating walls for your rooms. Plan focal points with garden ornaments or fountains.
- **Decorate each room with a different palette of plants**—both in texture and color. For flow, carry one plant over to the next to visually connect the rooms. Intersperse annuals to fill in with seasonal color.

Kitchen Gardens

A kitchen garden, sometimes called a potager, heralds from the French (*jardin potager*). The word refers to an ornamental vegetable garden in a structured space. Intermixed with flowers and herbs to enhance its beauty and fragrance, a smartly planned potager with good soil can provide bouquets and produce for the home all year long. To maximize space, consider trailing plants such as berries or squash. Use guy wires and stakes to provide support to taller plants. Be sure to keep herbs trimmed to prevent them from flowering. And remember, the garden isn't just supposed to be pretty—you should always enjoy the fruits of your labor.

resources: landscaping: **GARDEN DESIGN** • Troy Rhone • 205.226.8677 ext. 100 • troyrhone@yahoo.com landscaping: **JANE MENENDEZ** • 205.871.2169 • jlgmenendez@gmail.com landscaping: **GARY WEBB LANDSCAPING** • 205.655.7974 • For more about the Garden Conservancy's Open Days, visit www.opendaysprogram.org or www.gardenconservancy.org.