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Art by Elaine Karton

Avant Garden

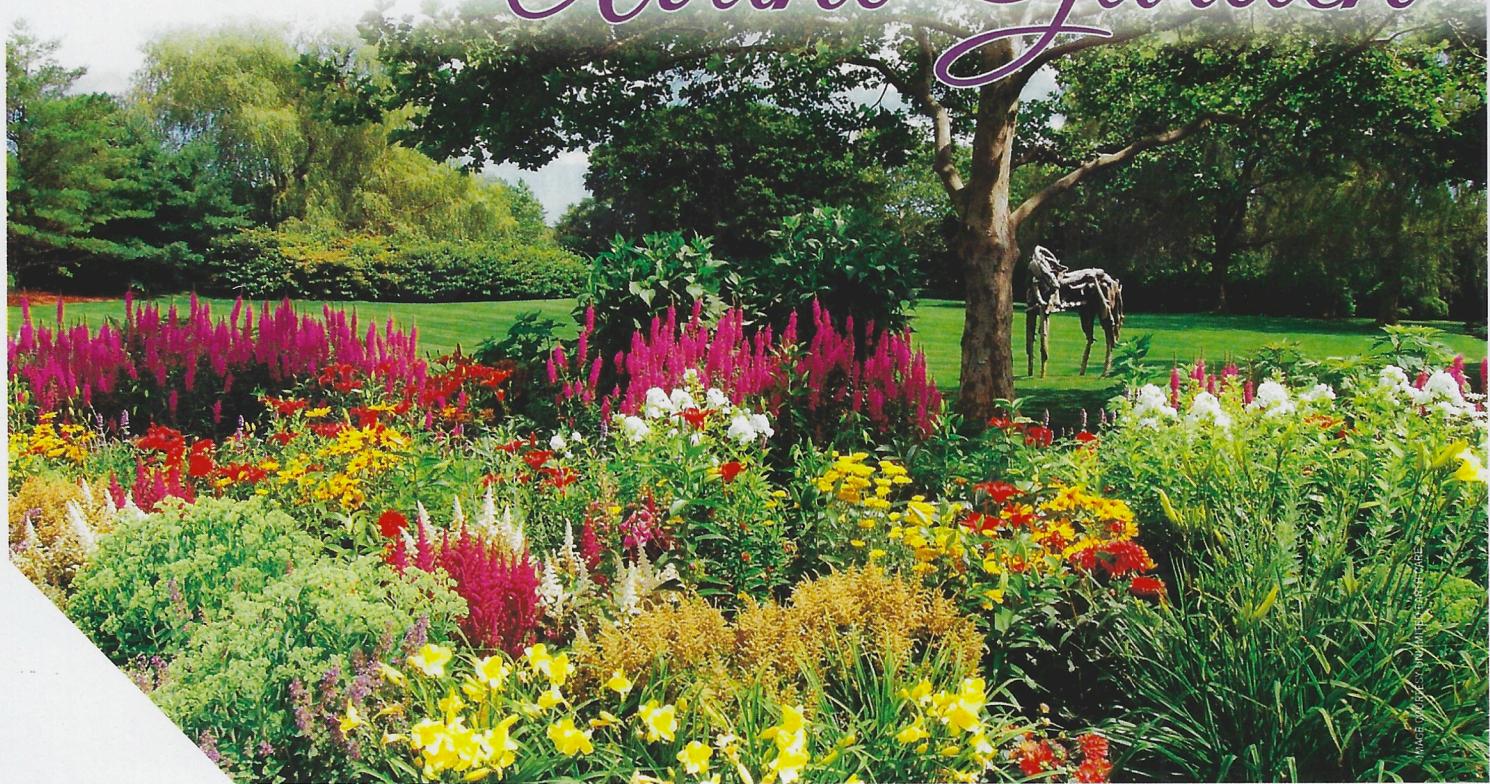


IMAGE COURTESY OF UNLIMITED EARTH CARE

BY LEE MEYER

Few places are as renowned for both their natural beauty and for the aesthetics of the homes rising up amid those environs as the Hamptons. And few have mastered the art of using one to enhance the brilliance of the other like Frederico Azevedo.

Sitting in his bright, airy showroom and concept store in Bridgehampton, an extension of the simple elegance he prides himself on, Azevedo is reflecting on how he makes the environment and architecture work in concert. "I like always to plant to the architecture," says the award-winning landscape designer, lecturer, writer and Unlimited Earth Care owner, who is known for his beautiful and evocative landscape design throughout the Hamptons and beyond. "The first thing I do is look at the architecture and then expand the view of the house. You design to create more depth of the building. That's a very important touch."

Azevedo crafts his designs to complement the house and make it feel natural in the environment. "You have to make sure it doesn't look like a block in the middle of a lot," he says, "but that it will blend gracefully with nature and will make spaces that look infinite. You create a whole movement inside of the landscape that the house is in."

"Local" is a concept that permeates the Hamptons lifestyle on many levels, and landscape design is no exception. In the last few years, Azevedo has noted how native plants have become popular among his clients. "Either people want to get into more sustainable landscapes—and using native plants helps a lot—or they want to combine them with well-adapted plants," he says. "That's a big trend. Native plants require less maintenance and they resist better during changes of weather or storms because they're from the specific environment. And landscapers have tried this for many years. You can do amazing landscaping with native plants and combine them with some that are not from our environment."

A longtime Hamptonsite, Azevedo loves the diversity of space that surrounds him, the opportunities to ply his craft. "The different kinds of areas that we have—farm fields, oceanfronts, the woods. The Hamptons has all these different kinds of nature in one place. It's not just a lot of shoreline; we have a mix of farm fields, woods, shore. If you get a

project on the shore, it'll be totally different than in the woods or a farm lot. You have the opportunity to stay in one area but work with all different kinds of landscapes." Not to mention with all kinds of properties. Azevedo is notably excited about the influx of luxury condominiums, "like the Watchcase in Sag Harbor. All these apartments look for landscaping on the balconies and terraces, and because owners are in the Hamptons, they want some kind of landscaping. We have all these opportunities to create different landscaping with different kinds of situations."

The diverse aspects of nature can be a challenge, Azevedo admits. "Plants can be fine, and then five years later, they become diseased and you don't know why! Or predators like deer or wild turkeys appear in the area. So everything becomes a challenge!" he laughs. "The challenge is adapting the design to the changing environment. You have to be thinking about what's happening tomorrow. Here, the world is changing so much."

As much as he is enamored with and inspired by the Hamptons, Azevedo has also found a good deal of new inspiration for his work by traveling. "I love to see what other landscapers are doing in different parts of the world," he explains. "I go to Europe a lot and research there. Anywhere I go—I'm curious to know how people are improving nature."

"I like to be close to new designers," he continues, "designers who create outdoor accessories and use outdoor elements, especially the ones who use recyclable materials. They're in touch with the idea of conserving the environment."

Coming off last year's 20th-anniversary celebration of Unlimited Earth Care, Azevedo believes in a long-term relationship with his clients and emphasizes that the best design takes time. "You're working with nature. Everything is exposed. They're going to grow and change," he says. "Time is a thing that's hard to understand...the best landscape is the one you wait for and watch mature."

The Unlimited Earth Care showroom and concept store is located at 2249 Scuttle Hole Road in Bridgehampton, NY.