

Where's Wimi? You guessed it! We have winners to last week's challenges. 3E.

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# Home & Garden

## home of the month

August's profile of a well-designed living space  
See more photos and other Home of the Month entries online at [www.newsobserver.com](http://www.newsobserver.com), key word: **architectural**. Next month's home: The Foxgate



### entrance

Careful choices in materials can make all of the difference. Weathered wood, metal, stone and concrete subdue the impact of the built features of the site. The approach allows the many colors of the natural landscape, as well as powerful accent colors – the red wall – to emerge as the most important images.

PHOTOS COURTESY OF JWEST PRODUCTIONS

# some enchanted entry

Deck and patios help guests descend into another world

Today's Home of the Month is reviewed by Kofi Boone, an assistant professor in N.C. State University's Department of Landscape Architecture. Home of the Month, a collaboration with NCSU's College of Design, shows possibilities in constructing a living space that's well thought-out and built with the homeowners' living patterns and preferences in mind. Each month we profile a new home selected from designs by area architects. The goal is to offer inspiration and knowledge that can be applied to any living space.

BY KOFI BOONE AND WETA RAY CLARK  
GUEST COLUMNIST/HOME & GARDEN EDITOR

Just because a house is in a beautiful location doesn't mean it is connected to that site. We've all been in homes with spectacular views but no interest or image from the street. Or we've seen buildings that required so much engineering and changes to the site that the natural features that attracted us in the first place were erased. Or places where you couldn't tell how to enter or move through. The design for the outdoor spaces of the Wheeler Residence represents a contemporary take on these issues.

In creating a sequence of patios, stairs, walks and a deck, architect Louis Cherry of Cherry Huffman Architects PA gracefully shows how homeowners can improve the way an existing home relates to its site — without having to start from scratch. The selection panel called the design an "inspiration for current homeowners."

The Wheeler house is a 1950s-style modern structure tucked deep in woods not far from UNC-Chapel Hill. Homeowner Larry Wheeler wanted outdoor living areas that would enhance his home's "California-style design" and accommodate landscape art as well as large gatherings. As director of the N.C. Museum of Art, Wheeler often hosts fundraising re-

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### the project



## the wheeler residence

- architect | Louis Cherry
- firm | Cherry Huffman Architects PA, Raleigh
- project location | Chapel Hill
- number of patios and decks | One deck, 2 garden patios and several walkways.
- unheated square footage | About 1,200 square feet
- year completed | Ongoing
- cost | Unavailable
- key design concept | Landscape



# some enchanted entry

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ceptions of more than 100 guests. When guests arrive, it was important that they know how to get into his place, which could be confusing because there was an entrance on the side of the house.

The changes all had to be accomplished on a hilly site. "The driveway slopes pretty much down to the house," architect Cherry says. In fact, much of the land is densely wooded and sloped. Cherry's solution amounts to extending the house into the landscape through gardens and new outdoor rooms.

The design begins with a sculpture at the top of the driveway's 12- to 15-foot descent. Visible from the road, the sculpture anchors a narrow garden of mostly evergreen plantings — shrubs, bushes and azaleas — that cascade down to the residence. As a result, the house, which is set deep into the woods, is visually pulled out to the road.

When visitors travel down the garden-laced concrete driveway, further accentuated by the mature forest enveloping it, they are deposited at a wall and parking area. From there, visitors enter through a garden gate.

"We were trying to pull the point of entry down from the street so that when you enter and park your car, you enter into a garden space," Cherry says. "That garden space helps to create an entry court that is not as steep."

Through the gate's sliding door is another world, where visitors find a concrete wall painted bright red, sculptural plantings, a Japanese rock garden and a goldfish pond. Meshed with the sounds of a gurgling fountain that drown out incidental road noise and the hum of a nearby air conditioner, the elements come together to complete a serene, Zen-like entry experience.

Where to enter the residence is no longer a question. A series of broad steps and small terraces along the front gently deliver visitors to a stairway that leads up to a gracious second-story deck at the side of the house. Or a turn to the left takes visitors to a patio garden in the backyard. Weathered cypress, concrete and metal subtly blend with the colors and textures of the house and landscape.

Ornamental plantings, planted by Wheeler and Donald Doskey, create a sculptured landscape zone that helps extend the architectural zone.

"These plants are more architectural than naturalistic," explains Cherry, speaking of the Japanese maple, water lilies, bamboo and other plants that grace the space. "That type of landscape extends the living space into the landscape."

The plant palette requires lots of attention. "We put in an irrigation system this year that has helped," Wheeler says. "That was a big concern because there was so much new plant material that required watering and care."

(Considering water restrictions becoming the norm, native plants can fulfill the roles of design while reducing the need for irrigation. Many contemporary landscape designs use more native plantings, which not only require less water, but are better adapted to their place and provide food, forage, and shelter for birds, butterflies and other local fauna. Additionally, numerous options in place of paved parking will slow and filter storm water while providing a hard surface for cars.)

In the backyard, a patio (Wheeler refers to it as a breakfast garden) of "probably 450 square feet," Wheeler guesses, contains three smaller gardens — one of bamboo, one filled with herbs and another of annuals.

Up the wide stairs (about 12 feet wide) is the second-story deck. While serving as an entry point and extension of the living room, the deck enhances the experience of the house. It projects several feet out from the house into the trees. Wide stairs and a platform hide supporting posts, making it appear as if it is suspended in midair. Wood and metal rails are swallowed by surrounding trees, leaves and branches. Standing on the deck or sitting in the living room, there's a feeling of floating amid the trees. While perhaps the least sensational (it has no special machinery, walls or sculpture), this deck is the most impressive feature of the outdoor additions.

Overall, the design of all the spaces of the Wheeler Residence very successfully deals with a few powerful images of the site: the steep downhill and lots of trees. You see how a house does not have to just be the building on a site, but can be the building and its entire yard.

"The whole house is about being in nature," homeowner Wheeler says. "All the touches were about bringing the natural environment into the house."

Guest columnist Kofi Boone can be reached at [homeandgarden@newsobserver.com](mailto:homeandgarden@newsobserver.com).

## CALLING ALL ARCHITECTS

With just a few more Home of the Month profiles left for 2006, we are starting our search for house designs to feature in 2007. Registered architects practicing in North Carolina are invited to submit designs completed since Jan. 1, 2001. The single family house designs can be for new construction or a major renovation or an addition. The designs should demonstrate quality use of space, affordability, new ideas and solutions for real living issues. A panel of architects and architectural critics will select the top designs that we'll feature next year. Registration deadline is Oct. 2. Entry submission deadline is Nov. 1. For details and forms, visit [www.design.ncsu.edu](http://www.design.ncsu.edu) and click on the Home of the Month icon. Or send e-mail to [homeofthemonth@ncsu.edu](mailto:homeofthemonth@ncsu.edu).

PROJECT CREDITS | GENERAL CONTRACTOR: LESLIE BUESING, HILLSBOROUGH; LANDSCAPE DESIGN: LARRY WHEELER AND DONALD DOSKEY; PHOTOGRAPHER JWEST PRODUCTIONS



## raised deck

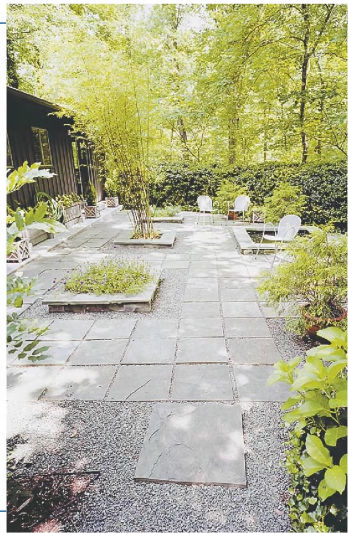
The wood cantilevered deck, swallowed by surrounding trees, helps to connect indoor living spaces to outdoor areas. "I don't think of the building as being separate from the site," says architect Louis Cherry. With comfortable furniture and minimal railing, there is little separating the experience of the home from the garden.

PHOTOS COURTESY OF JWEST PRODUCTIONS



## exterior

Japanese garden design and the midcentury California-style design of the Wheeler Residence are the inspirations for the new outdoor rooms and gardens that extend this house into the landscape. Weathered cypress, concrete, gravel and metal create a soft palette that blends gracefully into its landscape.



## backyard patio

The backyard patio, called the breakfast garden, is about 600 square feet. The lush setting, which features three gardens, is a perfect space for catered dinner parties or for mingling. Gravel, ponds, concrete and various plants maintain the calm outdoor theme.

## architect's aim

"The main intent was to create a more gracious entrance into the site and the home by bringing the site out so that you enter into a court space. (This) creates a series of outdoor experiences until you get to the house and up to the front door. It's extending the architecture of the house into the landscape," Cherry says.



Cherry

## the plan

The blue shaded areas indicate the outdoor spaces that were added to the Wheeler Residence. The large space to the right includes the inner courtyard, the front entrance and the cantilevered deck. The backyard patio is on the left.

