

Decor Maine

ISSUE No.2 2026

LIVING BEAUTIFULLY IN MAINE

THE LANDSCAPE ISSUE

Green Dreams:

5 UNIQUE
APPROACHES
to the ultimate
OUTDOOR RETREAT

The poetry of
POOLSIDE LIVING
IN KENNEBUNK BEACH

A CAPE ELIZABETH
SEASIDE BACKYARD
is transformed

A FILMMAKER
imagines a new frontier
IN CUMBERLAND

A designer's
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UPGRADES LAKE LIFE

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AS A PLACE
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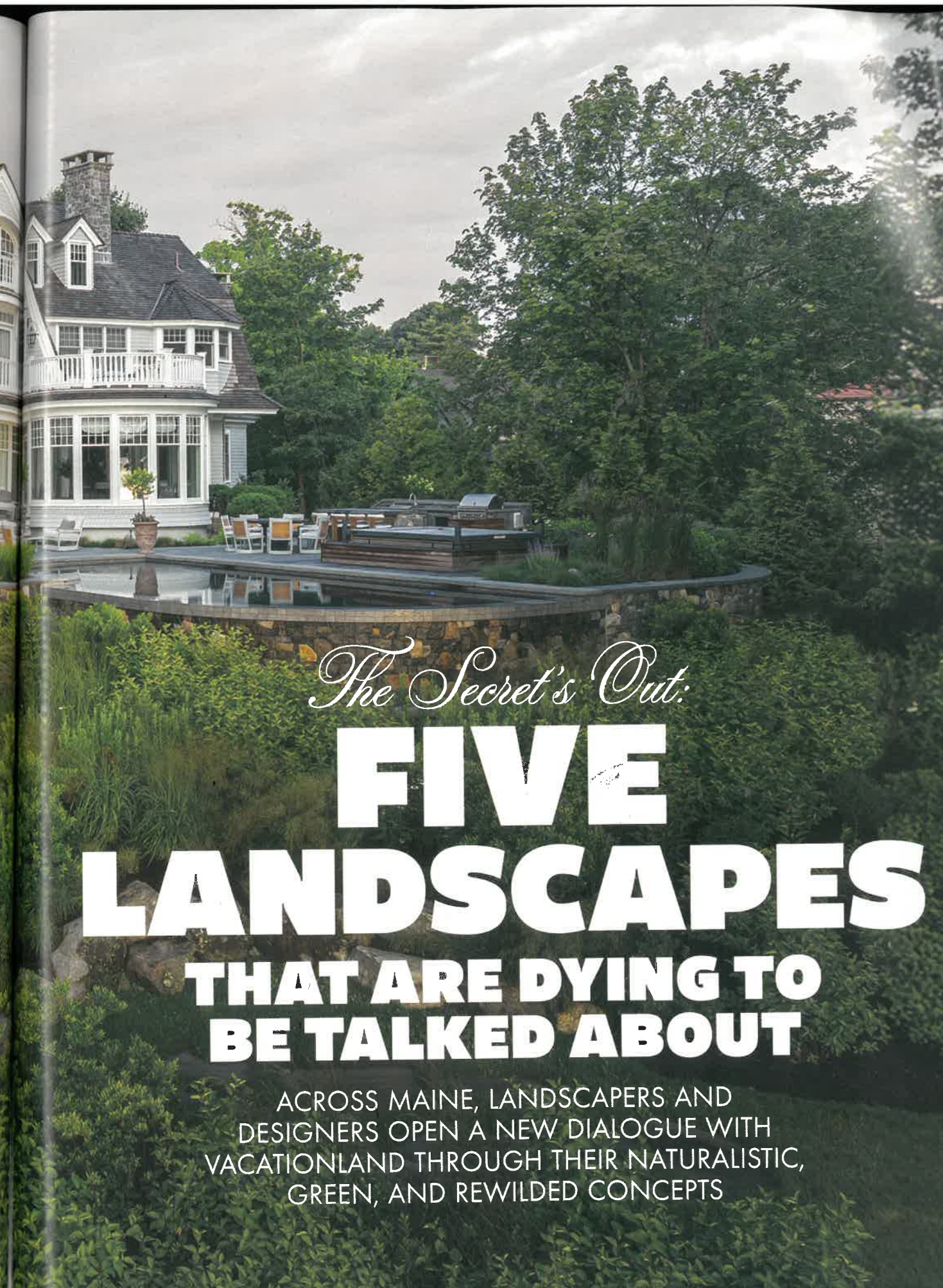
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February/March 2026
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Milkweed, New England aster, and highbush blueberry sculpt this backyard in Cape Elizabeth and make the pool feel almost like a natural swimming hole.

PHOTO BY FRANÇOIS GAGNÉ

The Secret's Out:

FIVE LANDSCAPES THAT ARE DYING TO BE TALKED ABOUT

ACROSS MAINE, LANDSCAPERS AND DESIGNERS OPEN A NEW DIALOGUE WITH VACATIONLAND THROUGH THEIR NATURALISTIC, GREEN, AND REWILDED CONCEPTS



A *Transformation* *in the* **MILKWEEDS**

TERRAPIN LANDSCAPES CREATED AN OUTDOOR SPA AND ENTERTAINING AREA THAT BREATHES NEW LIFE INTO A CAPE ELIZABETH PROPERTY

written by Michael Colbert *photographs by François Gagné*

Balancing flora and form, Terrapin Landscapes created a backyard wellness area fit for purpose. The swimming pool's infinity edge draws the eye over Casco Bay.

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or many landscape architects and designers who work in Maine, an abiding love of the state's distinctive beauty guides every choice they make. For Arundel-based Terrapin Landscapes, leaving the environment better than how they found it is mission critical.

"We work in some of the most beautiful and unique locations in Maine and also very environmentally sensitive areas like sand dunes, salt flats, and rock bluffs," says Mike Corsie, Terrapin's founder.

"We want to take a property that's maybe not so environmentally friendly and turn it into something that not only beautifies the location and gives the client something that they can enjoy but will also, long term, be sustainable and healthy for the environment," he adds.

So when Matthew Cunningham Landscape Design enlisted Terrapin to create a backyard wellness and entertaining sanctuary at a home in Cape Elizabeth overlooking Casco Bay, Terrapin was thrilled to dive in.

The homeowners dreamed up a beautiful, infinity edge pool with an accompanying hot tub. Though they originally imagined a gunite hot tub to match the swimming pool, when they found a prefabricated spa that suited their taste, Terrapin ingeniously integrated the structure into the landscape with the help of carpenter Mark Simoncic. They built a recessed vault to house the spa, and Mark covered it with a custom ipe wood deck. Surrounding greenery allows the water features to melt into the backyard and, beyond that, the bay.

"We didn't want this to be a big, hulking stone site," Mike says. "The planting there was extensive and softens the hardness of all the stonework."

The backyard perches above rocky bluffs, and the site's structural elements presented invitations for innovation. Terrapin hand-selected reclaimed granite street curbing to construct a staircase down to the lower-level beach access, saving material that already has rich patina from being crushed up or disposed. For the pool's fence, they used a wire mesh that disappears into the natural screen offered by the abundant plant life.

Working within the lawn's grade, Mike saw an opportunity to integrate the entertaining area and enhance the integrity of the site. The plantings alongside the back



ABOVE: The ipe wood deck blends the hot tub into the entertaining area while allowing it to make its own quiet statement.

of the pool help hold the slope and thus prevent erosion while also attracting pollinators. Previously, manicured lawn spread across the entire site. Milkweed, New England asters, and highbush blueberries have completely transformed the feeling of the land while assisting with runoff and improving privacy, an added bonus for days spent by the pool.

By replacing the lawn with these plants, the backyard has already begun to evolve and provide new habitat for native wildlife. Both Terrapin and the homeowners began to observe the changes almost immediately. The year they completed the project, Monarch caterpillars started returning to the land.

"You want your garden to be alive," Mike says. "You want it to be beneficial for wildlife as well as aesthetically pleasing. When you use the right plants, you can get both of those." ■



ABOVE: Terrapin Landscapes created a heated driveway finished with pea stone spread over liquid asphalt. Mike says the homeowner loves how driving in sounds like riding over soft gravel. **LEFT:** Every Terrapin Landscapes project contemplates how built features can fortify the surroundings.

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— MICHAEL COLBERT



ABOVE: Reclaimed street curbing finds new life by this sculpture.
OPPOSITE: Mike sees that the vernacular of the American lawn has reduced habitat for native wildlife. This Cape Elizabeth home provides spaces for the homeowners and butterflies alike.

