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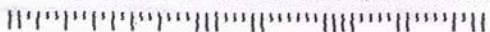
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DESIGN ELEMENTS

AROUND THE BEND

The best garden paths turn a simple stroll into an adventure.

By Bruce Irving

IN THE METAPHORIC WORLD, garden paths have gotten a bum rap: Being led down one means you're in for deception. Happily, things go better in the real world, especially in the strolls made possible by some of today's best landscape architects. To them, a path is a metaphor of a different kind, a way to tell a story, a thread binding a tapestry together, an invitation to slow down and reflect or to have an adventure.

Julie Moir Messervy, Affiliate ASLA, imagines the paths she designs as streams moving through the landscape, with pools, rapids, meanders, and waterfalls. "People move the

same way," she points out. "They pool at obstacles, like a threshold, then they snake along single file, like along a winding path, then cascade down a set of steps, only to pool again at a terrace." Even a straight path fits the model, like a canal bearing the traveler toward a goal—a vista, or an enticing curve up ahead.

As one could say about life, curves are a crucial part of any journey. They promise change—a new view, a new feeling—and should deliver on that promise. "Watch how children respond to a curve they can't see around," Messervy says. "They run like mad to see what's hidden." A child or adult running

A relaxed pathway through native grasses in a New England garden designed by Sheila Brady, FASLA, of Oehme, van Sweden & Associates makes a connection between a naturalistic foreground and the undisturbed forest beyond.

DESIGN ELEMENTS



Stairs lead to a stopping place and beyond, *above*, in a Santa Barbara, California, residential design by landscape architect Susan Van Atta, ASLA. Julie Moir Messervy, Affiliate ASLA, designed the woodland path, *right*, at Mount Auburn Cemetery in Cambridge, Massachusetts. A meandering path, *opposite*, by Kris Horiuchi, ASLA, of Horiuchi Solien allows the stroller to enjoy harbor views until finding a surprise—a terrace with a pool—around the bend.

down the grassy path designed by Kris Horiuchi, ASLA, for a Cape Cod client would be amply rewarded: Around the bend lies a hidden pool terrace, tucked into a densely vegetated slope for privacy and protection from the harsh ocean winds. It's a delightful surprise after the formal terraces, privet hedges, and gardens of the main house.

A similar embrace of human nature informs the work of Gregory Lombardi, ASLA, who designed an "Asian-inspired" garden on the North Shore. "When I first got to the site," he recalls, "it was the child in me who absolutely *had* to get to the edge of the property to look over the cliff. I decided we should take that universal impulse, distill it, and give it back to the visitor." Thus his path leads to a perfect circle of a terrace, a destination point that cannot be denied. However, rushing there isn't the intention—there are more adult pleasures to be had beforehand. To someone standing on the lawn above the terrace, a graphic zigzag of huge bluestone steps makes it clear that a journey awaits. Those abrupt changes in direction demand



a more deliberate pace, even a change in consciousness, as the visitor is forced to drop his gaze from the big view of the ocean and onto the path. There he might see the "wild and woolly" drifts of flowers that contrast with the manicured lawn; stopping and looking up reveals a changed view. "Breaking it down to a series of vignettes," says Lombardi, "forces a different level of awareness."

Rough-hewn stepping-stones have a similar effect in another Asian-influenced garden by Sheila Brady, FASLA, of Oehme, van

