



Southern Living

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# Tailored to Perfection



LEFT: Formal architecture calls for simple planting. The key to success in this design is restraint, keeping the plant palette along the foundation to four species: English ivy, mondo grass, Gumpo azalea, and boxwood.

Although the plantings give little seasonal variation in color, interest lies in the contrasting leaf shapes and shades of green. The English ivy varies from the bright green of its new growth to the dark green of its mature foliage. The leafy carpet makes a pattern that holds its own against the adjacent brick drive.

Along the foundation, the fine blades of mondo grass provide the dominant texture. Its black-green color complements the dark green shutters. Although their leaves are small, the Gumpo azaleas below the windows stand out by virtue of their rounded leaves and lighter green color. Their placement also emphasizes the windows.

Two black iron urns accent the entry and create an imaginary triangle with the pediment over the door. The urns contrast with the cream trim. Functioning as sculptural ornaments, they remain empty to highlight their classical form.

Because there is no grass to mow, weed, and fertilize, the landscape achieves a true low-maintenance status.

The design is so appealing that the lack of a lawn can be easily overlooked. The drive enters the property with a direct view of the front door, turns right at a generous circle of paving, and continues around the side of the house to the family entrance. Bordered with brick and centered with an antique millstone the circle serves as an entry court.

The drive substitutes for the lawn, creating a simple foreground to the home. The color value of the dyed gray concrete is consistent with that of a lawn and matches the brick used in the house. All in all, this is a design that is timeless in style, with the simplest of needs.

Linda C. Askey



The most formal clothing is often strikingly simple. Consider the black tuxedo with white tucked shirt or the classic little black dress with a strand of pearls. So it is with a landscape. As this home in Atlanta illustrates, simple plantings combined with formal architecture create an understated elegance.

"It's a very simple, clean design—very tailored," says landscape architect Bill Smith. "Because it is a one-story house, the plantings had to be low. Otherwise, they would have brought the facade to its knees."

Working with only a handful of different plants, Bill sculpted beds that ease the home into the surrounding land. "It looks the same in the winter as it does in the summer," he notes.

Creating surprisingly low maintenance, the evergreen beds require little besides an owner's blowing leaves from the paving, edging the ivy before it creeps onto the drive, and trimming the ivy growing on the house wall before it gets onto the soffit. "I wanted the ivy to look as if it is never quite reaching its goal," Bill explains. "I never want a straight line at the soffit."



ABOVE, LEFT: The entry bricks are set diagonally in a clever basket-weave pattern to give the appearance of herringbone. LEFT: The ivy climbing the wall is periodically pulled away so that it appears to be just filling in.