



## VINTAGE VIBE

Old-school plants and smartly tailored furnishings give a fresh look to the back patio of this Howard Van Doren Shaw mansion.

*By Zlata Kozal Naumowski // Photography by Tony Solari*

At this spring's Lake Forest Showhouse & Gardens, the interior rooms brimmed with contemporary color and pattern—the lacquered green sitting room of a girl's bedroom was a photo favorite, judging from our Instagram feed—but the gardens provided a calming counterpoint to the color and swag of the house.

All 920 square feet of the sunken back patio were awash in soothing and lush tones, courtesy of Lake Bluff-based Mariani Landscape ([marianilandscape.com](http://marianilandscape.com)) and Chicago's Alessandra Branca ([branca.com](http://branca.com)), who collaborated on a design that would complement the 1920s manse built by prominent North Shore architect Howard Van Doren Shaw. "Knowing people would see color

and contemporary settings in the interiors, we wanted something calming and serene on the outside," says Carrie Woleben-Meade, Mariani design principal. "A white-and-green palette felt very calming." She adds, "We wanted an axial design with classical lines to pick up that time period. We thought, 'What would someone have done then?'"

Traditional boxwood hedges, white hydrangeas and green euphorbias work harmoniously with the English country style of the house. Add to that white geraniums and tulips—or "old-school plants," as Woleben-Meade calls them—and you find a garden with a "vintage, throw-back feel" that the designers were after. The calming space **CONTINUED...**



From top: The back patio of the 2017 Lake Forest Showhouse & Gardens got a makeover, thanks to Mariani Landscape and designer Alessandra Branca; stone planters and walls provide the space with classic bones.



...CONTINUED emerges as you walk out of the center hall of the five-bedroom estate set on 2 acres near Lake Michigan. "We wanted to create a classic vintage garden with sentimental plants," Woleben-Meade says unapologetically.

Meanwhile, A-list designer Branca, a past honorary chair of the event that benefits the Infant Welfare Society of Chicago, brought in furniture to create an outdoor living room that was both relaxed and elegant. She installed a vintage coffee table with a glass top, as well as vintage dining chairs and sofas amid the back patio surrounded by lush elm trees. Branca outfitted the metal furnishings with cushions in Perennials outdoor fabric and embellished them with her own black ribbon, beautifully injecting a modern structure of black and white color into the space. "The best spaces are a mix of old and new," she says.

In the center of it all is an existing fountain with a playful bronze statue of a girl. Mariani Landscape added water plants to ground the statue "so she doesn't look like she's skipping through," Woleben-Meade says. Timeless terra cotta clay pots scattered throughout contribute to the relaxed feeling, while indirect lighting from lanterns enhances the ambiance. Black garden pyramids provide scale and drama, and the bluestone chip gravel pulls everything together. "It's a real simple palette," Woleben-Meade says of all the elements carefully selected in this rear area of the home that was previously lacking style. Adds Branca, "It's a very classical garden." ■



Clockwise from top left: Black metal pyramids lift the eye upward; vintage favorites like hydrangeas and boxwood fill planters as well as the garden; the crisp white-and-black palette is repeated in the outdoor living room furnishings.