

CAPE COD TIMES

Bedworks Design creates gardens with a Cape Cod twist

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CHATHAM — The crew from Bedworks Design had their work cut out for them one hot day in June. They were preparing, planting and weeding an acre's worth of a cultivated garden at a home in Chatham.

Five flats of New Guinea impatiens sat inside a circular drive for planting. Hydrangea, Japanese Forest grass and Black and Blue Salvia would create the white, blue and yellow color scheme Shayne Watson, had designed for the area. The flowers and grass were well-suited for the shade cast by a tall oak tree.



Bedworks Design owner Shayne Watson, left, works with Madison Gavin, center and Selina Field on a Chatham property ahead of the summer season. *Steve Heaslip / Cape Cod Times*

Watson is the owner of Bedworks Design, Inc, a boutique landscape design company in Chatham.

What started as a job she could do while raising six-month-old twin sons has blossomed into a career she loves. It helped that she grew up on the Cape, gardening alongside her father, who taught her the basics and gave her a love of roses.

It wasn't always easy. A single mother for years, she worked out of a Toyota Corolla.

"I had nothing," she said.

She was able to count on help from her mother for back-office work, and occasional childcare. Eventually, she bought a home in an area of town that was zoned for commercial enterprises so she could work out of her house.

When her kids were old enough to go to school full time, she went back to school herself, taking classes at the Landscape Design Institute at Harvard. She also studied coastal zone management so she could design gardens appropriate to Cape Cod properties.

Her first client was well-to-do. Other jobs came by word of mouth.

Landscape team of horticulturalists and gardeners

Bedworks Design is now headquartered in a shop in Chatham with garage space for three trucks and a fenced yard for bushes and plants.

During 20 years of operation, Watson has developed a discriminating clientele with the resources and space to create beautiful gardens at homes in Chatham, Harwich and Orleans.

Her team of horticulturalists and gardeners specialize in gardens and landscapes with particular attention to land management issues and the installation of delicate rose gardens.

The home in Chatham where her four-woman crew was working that hot June day is a perfect example of the work Bedworks Design is capable of.

Within the space of that acre garden, there were microclimates to consider, where the shade and sun fell, areas protected from the wind and areas where salty ocean winds would reach.

A semi-circular hedge of boxwood protected one end of the pool. Containers were neatly spaced against the side of the house — waiting to be filled with flowers. Those flowers would have to tolerate full sun and heat because of the stone patio they sat upon. The crew had 162 different flowers — all annuals — to plant.

Marion Gast, a gardener transplanted from New York City during COVID-19, was working the pool area. Selina Field, a Cape Cod gardener for 20 years, used a shuffle hoe to weed a 100-foot-long perimeter bed. Ornamental evergreens towered over her, casting long shadows at her feet.



Candice Pike prunes shrubs at a Chatham property as part of the all-female Bedworks Design landscape team on Tuesday. *Steve Heaslip / Cape Cod Times*

Candice McGaugh carried a barrel filled with weeds to the company's truck. The facility manager also fixes the trucks and equipment, sharpens blades and takes care of all the tools.

Madison Gavin, an eight-year employee, was weeding behind a bank of ornamental evergreens.

“I seek out gardeners,” Watson said. “These are amazing, strong, creative women who make it happen.”

David Austin roses are a specialty

Watson’s all-female crew isn’t the only thing that sets Bedworks Design apart. Watson is a devotee of David Austin, a British rose breeder who was able to merge the repeat flowering of New World roses with the heady aromatic fragrances of Old World roses. He has introduced more than 200 rose varieties to the world.

“Roses speak to me,” Watson said. “They are a romantic flower, not just because you give them to people, but that’s part of it.”

Roses are also a lot of work. One of Watson’s clients has 100 roses on her property. It’s painstaking work for the Bedworks Design crew to deadhead flowers, remove the yellowed leaves, and check for fungus.

“We’re there every three weeks treating, fertilizing, and weeding,” Watson said. “Roses don’t like to compete.”

But there is a reason people love roses, and Watson makes it a point to showcase the possibilities. She has what she calls an example of a “typical” rose garden in an alcove of a building she works out of. The L-shaped area has a mix of ornamental evergreens and four different varieties of David Austin roses, Skylark, the Generous Gardener, Gertrude Jekyll and James Galway.

One of his most famous roses is the Gertrude Jekyll with beautiful pink quartered rosette flowers.

“You have to smell this,” Watson said, calling it a “quintessential old rose fragrance.”

Off to the side is a climbing rose called the James Galway. Another pink repeat blooming rose, it was Watson’s mother’s favorite. She’d look out the window often to enjoy it.



Bedworks Design specializes in David Austin bred English roses which were on display on a Chatham property on Tuesday. *Steve Heaslip / Cape Cod Times*

“To me, he’s (David Austin) is a true gardener, an artist, a designer, everything,” Watson said.

Tarragon, oregano, irises, peonies, astilbe, and other native plants provide depth, texture, and comparison. Watson thinks mixed plantings make the most beautiful gardens.

She also uses other varieties of roses besides David Austin roses.

A Fourth of July is a customer favorite. Bred for dramatic color, it showcases red and white striped, long-lasting blooms. She’ll pair them with clematis, another climber. She’ll add hardy carpet roses that grow low and bloom all summer long, but without much scent.

“David Austin only breeds for scent, viability, disease resistance, then charm,” Watson said. “It must be charming.”



Fourth of July variety roses bloom out in front of the Bedworks Design company headquarters in Chatham on Tuesday. *Steve Heaslip / Cape Cod Times*

Watson works with clients on the garden design, what colors to include, taking into account the microclimate, the soil conditions and the sun and shade. She’ll even take cues from their home and décor, gauging their color preferences as well as their personalities.

“I see my clients as partners in developing a shared vision,” she said. But plans must also include environmental conditions.

Landscape design that fits Cape Cod

“You must work with what the climate and the space is calling for,” she said. “A space will call for a certain plant or a certain design. You have to consider a client’s aesthetic. You have to consider their budget.”

The redesign of a shade garden patio with plants and labor can run \$3,000. A large landscape installation can cost \$200,000.

“It’s expensive and I’m aware of that,” she said. “I tell my staff, ‘Pretend this is your grandmother’s yard.’”

Landscape and garden design costs can run the gamut, but 10% of a home’s value is an oft-cited figure to get the best cost-to-value ratio. Those costs include any stonework, irrigation, walkways and tree plantings required. Watson does the design work, but she subcontracts out for those jobs.

“We have symbiotic relationships,” she said. “We need each other.”

Her clients pay handsomely for her crew to care for their gardens. Sixty clients rely on her for garden care. More are on a waitlist.

“Gardens are about emotions,” Watson said. “People hire us to make them feel better. COVID-19 has had a huge impact. People want to look out their home office or just look outside and feel good.”