

this photo: A narrow window with a seat brings much-needed light into the tunnellike staircase.

Modern touches and timeless beauty bloom amid this renovated 1840 cottage and its gardens.

quiet. simplicity

this photo: Restorative, flowing gardens adorn this half-acre property and embrace the historic roots of the home. A significant number of the perennials, such as elderberry, rhubarb, pawpaw, and thyme, are edible as well as ornamental.





Professional gardener Sigrid Gray, former horticulture director

at New York City's The Battery and gardener at Cooper Hewitt, Smithsonian Design Museum, chose a storied New York site and Cape Cod-style home to plant roots for herself and her business, Take Root Design. Her village's name, Kinderhook, dates to Henry Hudson, who chose the Dutch word *kinderhoek*, meaning "children's corner," to describe his stop there on the river, where Native American children greeted him.

A historical marker dates Sigrid's home to 1795, but as architect James Dixon began what he calls a series of "interventions" (rather than one full-blown renovation), the bones revealed a vigor and style more appropriate for 1840.

"Originally Sigrid only wanted to spruce up the kitchen," Dixon says. "But as I looked around, I realized there was a little bit more to be done than picking cabinets." One such item was the roofline. "The original had probably been changed two or three times," Dixon says. "The ceilings on the second floor were so low you couldn't stand up along the edges." A new gambrel roofline captures much-needed ceiling space, pours light through new divided-light windows, and fits into the village's Dutch history.

"So much of what we did was undoing the bad changes, peeling them away to allow the house to do what it's supposed to do," Dixon says. Whenever anything original was uncovered, it was like finding treasure. The original wide-board wood floors in the living room were exposed and retained, gaps and all. A somewhat newer but still antique floor in the dining room was also left intact.

"The ceiling in the living room was absurdly low," Dixon says, "but Sigrid does unexpected things. She chose two high-backed sofas for the space. The result is cozy. On a cold day, with the wood stove burning, you feel embraced."

The pale palette is a nod to Sigrid's Scandinavian heritage. "The icy blue-gray walls in the bedrooms are so elegant and serene you don't instantly notice them," Dixon says, "but when you do, you realize they are perfect."

The kitchen—"the seed of the project"—opens to the landscape. "Stone and brick stoops connect the house to stone and brick terraces," Sigrid says. "Foxgloves and corn poppies self-seed between the stones and bring the garden close under the windows." Together, the roots of many things—the land, the history, the home—bring abundance.

For resources, see page 96.

opposite: Tall furnishings with modern sculptural flair bring a stylish counterpoint to the rustic floor and low ceiling in the living room. *this photo:* During renovation architect James Dixon discovered an original section of beaded-board walls and shiplap ceiling—unusual in their placement. He kept that atypical application in the dining room. Contemporary art underscores the fresh simplicity.





this photo: Niches and nooks add character and contemplative spaces. "My house is meant to be quiet in the landscape," homeowner Sigrid Gray says.

“On a cold day, with the
little wood stove burning,
you feel embraced.”
— James Dixon, architect



clockwise, from top left:
Kitchen updates include
cost-effective brick tile—easy
to maintain and a seamless
transition to the terrace, an
important connection for the
garden-loving homeowner.
Dahlias echo the gardens’
bounty indoors. Even modern
amenities maintain simple
silhouettes. Sigrid nurtures
her gardens, which include
some 7,000 perennials and
bulbs, many native. The
peaceful tones of the house,
patios, garden shed, and
lush perennials create a
natural harmony.



*farm*made
modern

*lesson
number*

8

Covering floors and walls in wide wood planks, beaded board, and tile (rather than modern drywall) gives a historical home architectural authenticity.



opposite: A new gambrel roof allowed for airier spaces on the upper level. The master bath is two steps higher than the bedroom, dramatizing the approach. *above left:* The orange chair nestles up to a window in the guest bedroom overlooking the gardens. The floors are new cost-efficient wide-board pine stained a soft gray “that can get beat up and develop a wonderful patina,” Dixon says. *above right:* A slatted teak screen crafted by the contractor separates the pedestal sink from the shower in the guest bath. A dormer reflects in the round-framed hexagonal mirror. *below left:* The walls and ceilings are clad with painted wood to accentuate the character of the historical home. *below right:* Cool blue-gray paint coats the master bedroom walls’ horizontal wood planks for a quiet, calming effect.

