

KITCHEN

DESIGN
MAGMA DESIGN GROUP

THE 300-SQUARE-FOOT bluestone terrace overlooking Potter Pond is the family's main gathering spot, complete with a fieldstone fireplace hand-crafted by Magma Design's Neil Best. The concrete table was custom made in the shape of the saltwater pond. Several steps up from the terrace, outdoor cooking is done on a grill (BELOW) built into the fieldstone wall with a bluestone countertop.



S'mores+Sunsets

With stone and wood, a sloped, ragged backyard overlooking a saltwater pond becomes an outdoor haven

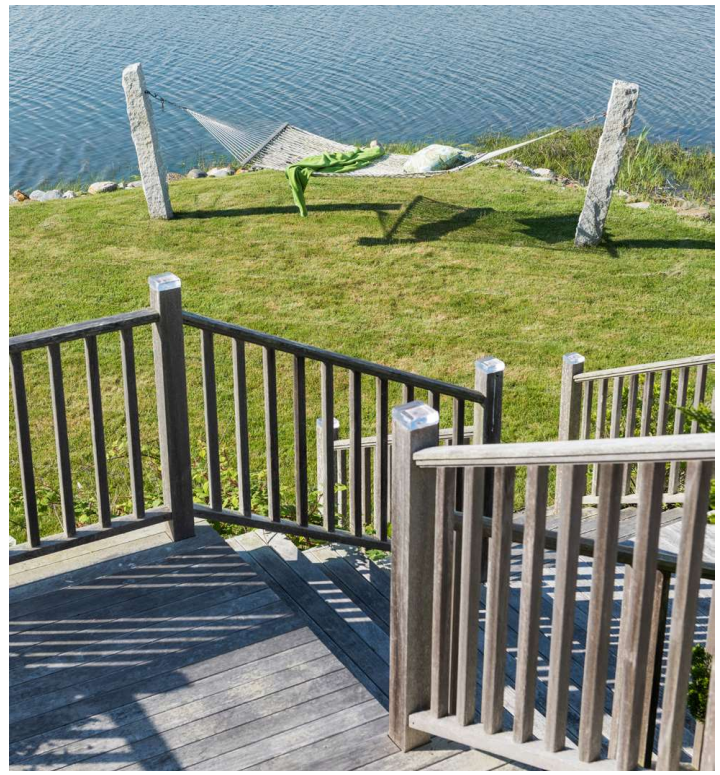
WRITTEN BY JILL CONNORS • PHOTOGRAPHED BY NAT REA

Sitting on the bluestone terrace looking out over Potter Pond, a saltwater lagoon a few hundred yards from Rhode Island's East Matunuck State Beach, it's easy to overlook the massive effort that went into this tranquil scene. Lauren Greer chuckles recalling the state of things when she and her husband, Al Greer, who owns a healthcare manufacturing business, bought the place as a summer home 10 years ago. She worried that their four children, then ages 6, 8, 10, and 12, might fall through the plywood planking over the cesspool or tumble down the overgrown steps tucked into the steep slope.

"I can relax now," says Lauren, an interior designer with Boston's J/Brice Design International, nestles in one of the Adirondack chairs on the terrace. Complete with a built-in fieldstone fireplace, the terrace offers a serene spot where the family can gather in the evening and devour s'mores.



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THE KEY ELEMENT in creating the multileveled yard (LEFT) is the fieldstone-faced concrete retaining wall. Under the wood deck, lattice panels slide open for access to storage. Post caps on the wooden stairway (ABOVE) that leads to the lower lawn, were custom-made by a local glassmaker. The hammock is suspended between salvaged granite posts. The wooden deck (BELOW) wraps around a guest cottage and includes dining table and hot tub.



But she also wanted a place to grill just steps from her kitchen. The resulting outdoor kitchen is level one of this multilayered landscape, the final phase of the project, which, for starters, involved building retaining walls and bringing in fill. Samantha and Neil Best, the creative duo behind Magma Design Group in Rehoboth, Massachusetts, transformed the hillside in stages, with the final piece, the built-in grill, installed two summers ago. Around it, Magma built a fieldstone wall and bluestone counter. To create a food serving area, Lauren had a pale sea-green counter-top custom made of Lightblocks, an architectural resin product manufactured in Nashua, New Hampshire.

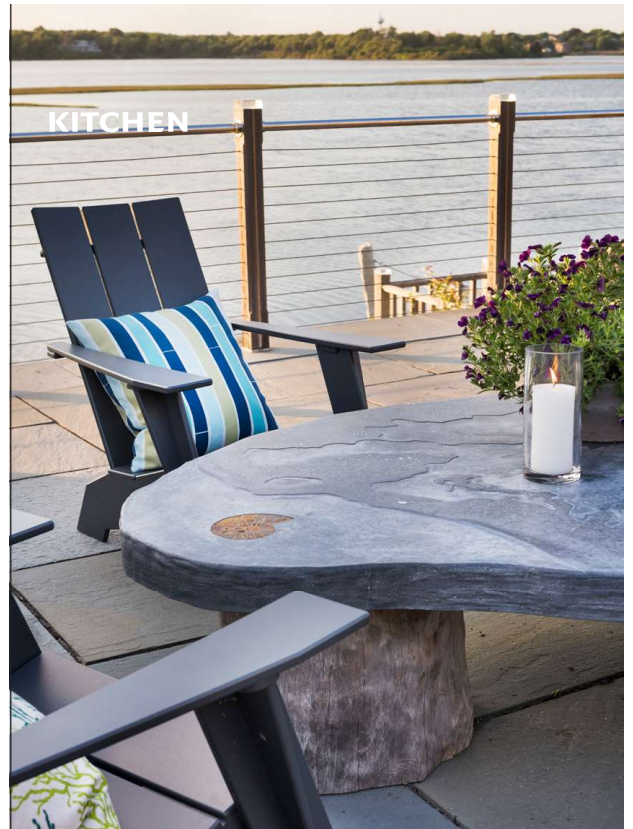
The outdoor kitchen is at the top of the slope. Just two steps above it is a wooden deck with a dining table and hot tub overlooking the pond. Several stone steps down the hill is a 300-square-foot bluestone terrace with a fieldstone fireplace that is the family's main hangout zone. From there, more stone steps connect to the lower lawn and a dock from

which the family can launch a kayak, paddleboard, or powerboat.

"The goal was to give the family a space where they could relax with friends, dine, and get down to the water safely," says Samantha Best, Magma's senior designer. Her husband, Neil Best, Magma's landscape architect and stoneworker, adds, "With the patio and the steps, we were able to establish several vantage points for the view and really make the best use of the different elevations."

Initially, the massive undertaking, which

began in 2008, was focused on the retaining walls and fill — and there were lots of both. The primary wall, made of rebar-reinforced concrete, engineered to coastal standards, is approximately 8 feet tall and 23 feet long. Located about halfway up the hill, it is now the underlying foundation for not only the bluestone terrace but also the wooden deck and hot tub. Viewed from the pond, the wall appears to be made of fieldstone, thanks to Neil Best's craftsmanship, artistry outdone only by that used to build the fireplace, made



THE CUSTOM CONCRETE table includes a nautilus shell positioned to point north. The table rests on pieces of salvaged dock pilings that the homeowner found; she liked the weathered look and that they were hefty enough to support the heavy top. A cable-rail system allows a see-through view of the pond.

of actual fieldstone, every one laid with purpose. “Each stone has a face that gives it character on the exposed side,” says Best. “We don’t touch that side, but we will shape the back of the stones, giving careful consideration to the tight fit. We leave those beautiful faces as is.” Salvaged granite around the fireplace opening give it a sense of age.

For the terrace’s deck, he used full-color natural cleft bluestone in assorted sizes and blue, tan, and brown hues. A steel-cable system provides a railing along the terrace perimeter without interfering with the view of the pond.

On the lower lawn near the dock, Magma created several areas of plantings, edged with boulders, where Lauren Greer grows blueberry and raspberry bushes.

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“It’s just a great place to gather for our family,” says Lauren. “We are out on the deck for breakfast and sunsets too. S’mores by the fire. Family gatherings around the large coffee table in the Adirondack chairs. Lots of badminton on the lower lawn and naps on the hammock! It’s truly wonderful here.” 🏠