

BIRMINGHAM HOME & GARDEN

INSPIRED LIVING FOR BIRMINGHAM & BEYOND

Homes
with
Soul
CHARACTER
+ STYLE

Modern HEIRLOOMS

KEEPSAKES FOR THE NEXT GENERATION

Antiques
AT THE
Gardens
RETURNS

NYC NOW
3 BIRMINGHAM NATIVES
SHOW US THEIR NEW CITY

FABULOUS FALL
Comfort
Food

WORTH THE WAIT

A NEW GARDEN PLAN FOR A HISTORIC HOME SEAMLESSLY BRIDGES A CENTURY OF STYLE.

Text by CATHY STILL MCGOWIN / *Photography by* JEAN ALLSOPP



Photo by Cary Norton



ABOVE: The kitchen addition looks straight out to the garden and new fountain. “We like to leave the doors open so we can hear the splash of the water,” homeowner Sara Ford says.

THIS IMAGE: A row of boxwoods divides the garden into two distinct spaces. The fountain side is formal with neatly-trimmed greenery. The area with the rose towers is more free-flowing thanks to an abundance of flowering perennials.

RESOURCES: **Landscape architect:** Golightly Landscape Architecture **General contractor:** Fry Construction, Inc. **Landscape contractor:** Green Again, Inc. **Masonry:** Birmingham Stone **Fountain:** Fountains of Birmingham **Brick:** Old Carolina Brick **Fountain bowl:** Design by Golightly Landscape Architecture; carved by Tracery Stone **Gate hardware:** Brandino Brass **Pots flanking fountain:** Elegant Earth **House renovation:** Linda Beth Martin Interiors **Path lights:** Copper Moon



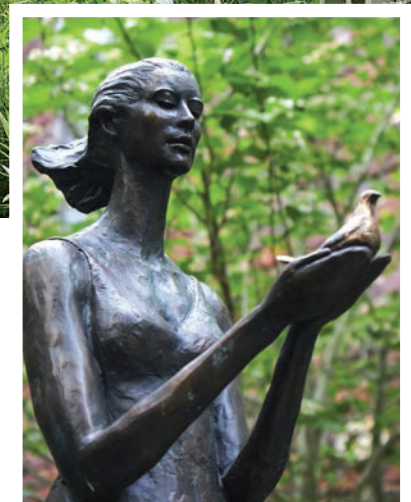
Get to Know
JOHN GOLIGHTLY WILSON

Birmingham native and Clemson graduate John Golightly Wilson, has 25 years of experience in residential landscape architecture and garden design. From tidy courtyard gardens and exterior renovations to master designs for new construction and estates, Golightly Landscape Architecture provides comprehensive and site-specific plans designed to draw clients outside and into the garden.

When Sara and Russell Ford purchased their 1926 Tudor almost 25 years ago, they had kids at home and a wish list that included a new kitchen and garden. But, as it usually happens, the children took priority and the home projects turned into “we’ll do it one-of-these-days.” Five years in, the couple managed to create a garden in the side yard, but the back of the house was left to grass and asphalt. Twenty more years in, they knew it was time to take action. “We waited until our kids were out of college before renovating,” Sara says. “Russ and I both believed that if we couldn’t do it right, it wasn’t worth doing.”

Working with designer Linda Beth Martin, the Fords started with a kitchen overhaul. As that project neared completion, they engaged landscape architect John Golightly Wilson for help with the rear view. “The kitchen addition has floor-to-ceiling doors that open to the outdoor space,” John says. “Those doors served as the catalyst to create our dream garden.”

With a few parameters from the Fords, John put colored pencil to paper and began



The Fords found the bronze sculpture by Tom Corbin at a gallery in Atlanta. Integrating the piece into the garden design, John centered it on pavers in front of living room windows and surrounded it with four Winter King Hawthorns (*Crataegus viridis* ‘Winter King’).

“Residential landscape design should complement the personalities and lifestyles of our clients. We strive to create spaces that serve as timeless canvases for outdoor living.” —John Golightly Wilson

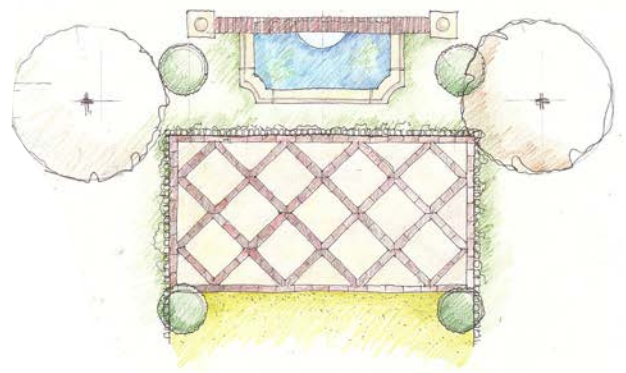
sketching a plan—one that would evolve across conversations and shared ideas. “The Fords’ attention to detail—from planning to construction—was a huge part of the success of this garden,” John says. “I also relied on the skills of Fry Construction for the complicated fountain construction, as well as Green Again to install the landscape.”

Garden elements helped define two distinct spaces while uniting them with each other and the home. “There’s a yin and yang happening between the two areas,” says Sara, who studied horticulture at Mississippi State University. “On the fountain side, the only color comes from the purple iris in the spring. Everything else is just green. However, the statue garden is mostly flowers. There’s more color, and the plants get a little wilder and spill out onto the paths.”

In both spaces, John and the Fords carefully considered materials that would fit in with the age of the home. For example, the fountain wall repeats the home’s chert rock foundation while hand-moulded bricks on the fountain and along the paths mimic the home’s exterior.

Other elements hearken to traditional forms. A symmetrical series of obelisks guide the roses (*Rosa Penelope*) upward, an arched gate and opening provide garden portals, and a bronze sculpture depicting a girl with a bird in hand offers a modern take on classic garden statuary.

The garden just finished its third growing season, and the Fords continue to enjoy watching it evolve and change with the seasons. Forgoing a regular maintenance service, they prefer to do the work themselves. “Russ and I are both gardeners so we spend a lot of time out there,” says Sara. “Russ painted the fence, gate, and obelisks. And we are always adding and editing. Right now, we’re taming the wild, late-summer look and finding options for fall interest.”



The garden plan started with a conversation as well as John’s early hand sketches. He then turned those sketches into a combination of 3D modeling and computer-generated plans. From there, more ideas evolved, and the final plan unfolded.

