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NATURE'S ALLURE



the magic of GITANJALI

The estate is Dinyar and
Gool Wadia's passion and
best expression of home

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PRINCIPAL PHOTOGRAPHY BY DURSTON SAYLOR

Harmonious Home Named for Rabindranath Tagore's Nobel Prize-winning book of poems, *Gitanjali*—the name of Dinyar Wadia's home—literally means “song offerings,” and suggests ideas of harmony and beauty.



PHOTOGRAPH BY JONATHAN WALLEN

There's an ease to Dinyar and Gool Wadia's New Canaan estate, Gitanjali, that only comes from years of intense involvement. Trial and error. Patient experimentation. Time invested by devoted gardeners. "When I bought the house, it was a disaster," says Dinyar. "My wife actually cried when I showed it to her—that was her first reaction. I'm told the house started life as a barn. It then was the carriage house." The old garden had fallen into disrepair. "Everything was bare and brown."

But it has been Wadia's professional mission to lift the detritus and transform worn, tired designs into environments not weighted down by age and tradition. As the principal of Wadia Associates, he's gone through the process

many times and is an excellent coach to his clients. "It's fun to take care of a garden," he cautions, "but it takes time and it's also expensive."

Arborists spent the first year-and-a-half just clearing away the poison oak and ivy vines that smothered the trees. Borders were marked. A complete deer fence was installed ("otherwise you are fighting the wind"). Magnificent specimen trees—two enormous Atlas cedars—were brought back to health over a course of five years.

Now, 22 years on, the verdant 10-acre grounds are unrecognizable. In addition to Dinyar and Gool, two gardeners are employed on the estate full-time, with a special crew appearing in mid-March to edge and mulch the borders. Named Gitanjali after an epic poem by the Indian poet laureate

Floral Design Lilies and hydrangeas (THIS PAGE) are staples throughout the garden. The microclimate of this small courtyard (OPPOSITE PAGE) allowed tender lavender to thrive in the center plot.





**Glorious
Trees**

This magnificent Japanese maple was relocated from where the pool was built in 2002 and is one of two preserved from the previous garden.



PHOTOGRAPH BY JONATHAN WALLEN



Ivied Walls (ABOVE) English and Boston ivies are encouraged to clamber over the buildings. Says Wadia: “It’s a misconception in America that ivies damage the surface. In Europe, there are climbers all over their homes. It only gets into the brick, stone or stucco if there are cracks; you have to maintain the substrate.” **Hidden Treasures** (TOP LEFT) Potted plants are used throughout the garden. Wadia’s current favorites are small succulents (BOTTOM LEFT)—some of which he brought home from the Chelsea Flower Show—that are “tucked into every nook and cranny.”

Rabindranath Tagore, the estate is the Wadias’ passion and their best expression of home.

Wadia developed his eye growing up in Mumbai, India, the son of a builder. His firm, Wadia Associates, is listed among the Institute of Traditional Architecture’s top 10 traditional architecture firms. The “Wadia Style” is a process of discovery, he says, “making a home just right for the neighborhood, just right for the family, just right for the family and the friends, and just

right for the family and the kids.” It’s how he approached the design of his own garden, too.

“I experimented on myself,” Wadia says. The house had been styled like an English cottage—heavy furniture, everything stained dark. “But that time has come and gone,” he notes. “Today people don’t want their grandmother’s house.” And neither did the Wadias. Inside and out, wood trims were lightened, colors brightened. But they wanted to keep a cottage feel in the

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gardens. Great care was taken to preserve what already was there—including a large climbing hydrangea by the front door and those two magnificent Atlas cedars.

Seeking horticultural inspiration, the couple traveled to Wisley, home to the Royal Horticultural Society's flagship experimental gardens and some outstanding borders. They came back with fresh ideas and a young British garden designer in tow, who was eager to work in America. "Alistair, Gool and I laid out the design," notes Wadia. A serious problem with flooding was successfully transformed into the brook garden, and, he says: "It's now prob-

ably the best part of the property. Some of what we did was successful, some of it wasn't. Eventually, we hit our stride."

Carefully detailed greenhouses and a potting shed were built to look like they've been there forever. With the greenhouses came a great selection of plants in pots, as well as a forklift to move them in and out of the garden. "Years on, along came our present gardener, John, who took it from there. He's a genius in his own right, and we're all very happy," says Wadia. "The garden has been very good for us—it gives me the quiet and peace that I need at the end of the day." 🌻

Sunny Disposition With a mind to views from inside the house (OPPOSITE PAGE), the gardens are designed to have something blooming in every season. A canary yellow trumpet vine (THIS PAGE) clothes the arbor by the pool; hedging is a chain-link fence interwoven with hornbeam.



PHOTOGRAPH BY JONATHAN WALLEN