



HOT PROPERTY

Secret Plot

A private Rockcliffe oasis draws curious neighbours **BY FATEEMA SAYANI**

THE DWELLERS: David and Emylia Marshall—she a Toronto transplant and an exotic-produce importer, he the deputy minister of public works and government services. “Anyone who skimps on landscaping is making a big mistake,” he offers. “When it’s beautifully done, it’s just a daily pleasure,” she says.

THE DRIVE-BY: The traditional and stately Rockcliffe pile has definite curb appeal, but the real treasures are in the backyard, hidden from the street view. That doesn’t stop the word on the grapevine. Neighbours who hear that the yard has “had work” are constantly knocking on the door, seeking an impromptu tour.

THE WALK-THROUGH: The wrought-iron gates open to a

walkway that passes an expansive stone terrace—perfect for entertaining and opera soirees. Get away from the crowd on the great lawn, or meander in the woodland garden. Benches placed throughout the lot offer magnificent views. David Marshall pulled a Mackenzie King and had sculptures flown in from far-flung locales: India (his birthplace) and Mexico are frequent stops. Landscape architect John Szczepaniak calls it an “outdoor living experience” and gives a nod to our collective roots with native trees and plants replacing the Norway maples. “The whole garden is designed to maximize the views into the small forest at the back of the yard.”

THE INFLUENCE: During the brainstorming stage, the owners and the designers looked to Les Quatre Vents (an expansive and artful garden north of Quebec City) and traditional 18th-century English design.

THE SPECS: The 100-by-200-foot property took two years to complete from the design stage to the final planting at a cost of \$300,000.

THE GOODS: A handful of builders and designers helped spruce up the classic crib.

- LANDSCAPE ARCHITECT:** John Szczepaniak
- LANDSCAPE CONTRACTOR:** Rockcliffe Landscaping
- GENERAL CONTRACTOR:** G.M. French Construction Ltd.
- STONEWORK:** Y. Fleurant Masonry
- INTERIOR DESIGNER:** Michael Courdin Design
- CUSTOM WROUGHT IRON:** Curves of Time
- IRRIGATION AND LIGHTING CONTRACTOR:** Greenscape Watering Systems

