



*George Hughes' Magnificent*  
**ENGLISH ESTATE  
GARDENS**

A Master Gardener Showcases the  
Art and Architecture of His Storybook  
Country Estate and Cottage Gardens

BARRINGTON HILLS COUNTRY ESTATE | *Written By* LISA STAMOS | *Photography By* LINDA M. BARRETT



**A** SHY BOY in his early years while living in Southwest Michigan, George Hughes did very well scholastically in school. But aside from his schoolwork, Hughes' greatest lesson was something he discerned, an insight of incredible wisdom for someone of his age. "I was not popular, and people wanted me to fit in," he said. "But I decided I did not need to, and that's been a blessing, because I have followed my own path. This has allowed me to stay true to who I am, and to express my vision, not that of someone else."

College took Hughes to Michigan State in East Lansing where one of the humanities requirements led him to art history class. "I was fascinated and came to love the subject. Today I use what I learned there—composition, scale, color, and texture," he said. After college, a goal was to leave his small hometown.

His plan was to study architecture in Chicago, where he relocated to, but he couldn't afford the tuition. Yet he found himself intellectually immersed with licensed architects, law students, and actors, all of whom were waiting tables along with Hughes. "I met an architect who worked on the North Shore, and he asked me if I might consider a part-time job with his company," Hughes said. "So, I helped during summers for a few years and really found myself. He left some clients for me

when he retired that I took on. That was in 1990 when I started my business."

"I have known George Hughes for many years," says Vicky Wauterlek, a Barrington client. "George is a good, kind, compassionate, and talented man. His work stands in a class by itself and there is no adequate way to describe his work other than breathtaking!"

Hughes went to England, France, and Italy to visit the top gardens and study art and design principles. Key influences include Lancelot "Capability" Brown (1716-1783), England's pre-eminent landscape designer who forever changed England's landscapes to a sweeping, informal style. Russell Page (1906-1985) was the foremost landscape architect of his time worldwide. And Rosemary Verey (1918-2001) designed the notable gardens at Barnsley House, as well as the estate gardens of Elton John. Hughes attended the RHS Chelsea Flower Show and visited the Cotswolds.

### A RENAISSANCE MAN

As an equestrian who enjoys dressage and the patience it requires, Hughes moved to Barrington Hills with his two dogs, while keeping his horse at a boarding barn in Michigan for a time. He enjoys teaching others and can be found at Uulke Farm in Barrington Hills. "It's important to take the time to do it right. I nurture my plants and

gardens as I do my horse and dogs.

Hughes creates exceptional English gardens with French and Italian accents. His fascination with plants and their Latin names has fostered his journey to excellence with perennials. The stunning gardens and landscaping shown in this feature were generously offered by its homeowners for us to share. They offered these words.

"George, a brilliant landscape designer, was entrusted with the task of designing our garden from the very beginning. We gave him complete freedom to express his creativity, and he hand-selected every plant, designed the fences, gates, and even played a significant role in the dovecote design. It was an awe-inspiring experience to witness his creative visions transform into a living, breathing work of art. Each garden we have created is a unique and immersive experience, a testament to George's talent and passion for design."



## THE DOVECOTE

George Hughes was instrumental in the design of the dovecote (his pride and joy), which echoes the architecture of the estate home. It's a little structure that makes a huge statement, Hughes says. The iron gate, also designed by Hughes, connects a gravel path around the home towards this charming garden folly that historically housed pigeons or doves. Layered flowers and plants beautifully line the path. The fragrant sweet autumn clematis blanketing the brick is trimmed to assure a view of the architectural details.





## STRUCTURAL ELEMENTS

Structural design adds great interest and leads us from one part of the garden to the next. Hughes designed wooden trellises and pergolas to carry the home's architectural details out into the gardens. A magical stone walkway is lined with boxwood hedges and layered with hydrangea, BloomStruck, and calamintha. Twin statuaries guarding a shaded iron bench invite a rest. The parterre garden uses boxwood hedges to contain numerous plantings and includes a peaceful reflecting pool with flowering Lotus.



## THE ART OF DESIGN

George Hughes loves to create plantings with layers, unique foliage, and a variety of shapes. The wispy, white *Artemisa lactiflora*, a member of the daisy family, is a favorite. Gladiolas add a magnificent pop of color and join other flowers tucked away in cutting gardens. The estate's backyard was cleared of boxelder trees to open to a terraced lawn for soccer practice and enchanting social events. The path to the dovecote is a stunning blend of flowering layers with every angle a bewitching view.



## EXTENDING ARCHITECTURE

The formal rose garden, with a few seasonal blooms remaining, is a stunning geometry of boxwood hedges, roses, delphiniums, clipped lilac standards, and an armillary sundial. The white garden offers layers of white and green with contrasting leaf shapes. Hedging contains this garden that, like the formal rose garden, is enjoyed by the homeowners through their windows.

“Quality is never an accident; it is always the result of high intention, sincere effort, intelligent direction, and skillful execution; it represents the wise choice of many alternatives.”  
– GEORGE HUGHES

