

# GLASS HOUSES

A modernized Victorian  
retreat gets an updated  
landscape to match

TEXT BY MITCHELL OWENS  
PHOTOGRAPHY BY MARIANNE MAJERUS

BLACK-EYED SUSANS,  
MONCH FRIKART'S  
ASTERS, HEIDEBRAUT  
PURPLE MOOR GRASS,  
AND LADY EMMA  
HAMILTON ROSES  
FLOURISH IN A  
GARDEN BY ACRES  
WILD. FOR DETAILS  
SEE RESOURCES.





A

dding windows always invites more light into a room, but what if the suddenly expansive view isn't up to par? In the case of a charming English country house—a renovated 19th-century stable not far from London—there

was little garden to see once the empty-nest owners decided to add a sunny new kitchen and dining area at the rear of the redbrick building.

“The greenhouse was insurmountable,” the husband says of the sprawling antique conservatory that stood dismayingly close to the planned extension. Still, he adds, he and his wife “couldn’t bring ourselves to destroy something so beautiful.”

Debbie Roberts and Ian Smith of Acres Wild, an award-winning landscape design firm in West Sussex, had a solution. First, reduce the size of the greenhouse to a more manageable footprint; have it restored by the original manufacturer (Foster and Pearson is still in business after more than 150 years); and move it to a distant spot on the property, where its peaked roof would act as an eye-catcher. Second was to transform the outlying woodland and somewhat unrelated outdoor rooms—a few containing plants that had been collected by a long-ago owner

on expeditions around the world—into an enticing stroll that also incorporated an existing swimming pool. That last feature, along with its poolhouse, had been installed crookedly to conform to a kink in the property line; Acres Wild suggested camouflaging the slant with planting beds and stone paving. Finally, once the greenhouse had been relocated, a series of tailored terraces of grass, sandstone, and Yorkshire walling—raised destinations linked with steps and as modern in appearance as the crisp new interiors



**ABOVE** AN EXISTING PERGOLA WAS MOVED TO A HAPPIER SPOT IN THE REVISED GARDEN, AMONG TIBETAN CHERRY TREES AND JAPANESE ANEMONES. **OPPOSITE** THE VICTORIAN GREENHOUSE WAS RELOCATED BEHIND THE SWIMMING POOL.

overlooking them—would extend from the foundation of the residence, offering the kind of entertaining options that the couple had largely deferred as they raised their children.

“There weren’t a lot of areas to socialize in,” allows the husband. That being said, he and his wife were fond of the garden and were willing, somewhat nervously, to overcome the dilemmas that had been identified. “We host the village tennis tournament once a year, and friends and family will come, too.

One of the nice things about the garden now is that we can share it with other people.”

As for the back-of-the-house view that the couple had hoped for and that Acres Wild ultimately provided? It has now been immortalized in a fetching impressionistic oil painting that takes in the scene from a new outdoor dining area—steps, terraces, ornamental grasses, lavender in bloom, and that antique greenhouse, glittering, as everyone anticipated, like a folly in the distance. **▲**