

Design finds

Making a Yard 'Very Wild,' Yet Still Fit for Entertaining

The architect Morris Adjmi made a steel stove and a fountain key elements of his outdoor space at his Fort Greene, Brooklyn, townhouse.



Morris Adjmi and his partner, Elizabeth Blake, wanted a garden they could use nearly year-round.

Credit...Clark Hodgín for The New York Times



By **[Tim McKeough](#)**

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For the architect Morris Adjmi, collecting well-designed objects and inspirational art is as natural as waking up in the morning. Mr. Adjmi, 66, has long filled his home with sculptural furniture, lighting and tableware, and relished hosting art exhibitions at [his namesake firm's busy studio](#) in Manhattan.

When Mr. Adjmi recently renovated his new townhouse in the neighborhood of Fort Greene in Brooklyn, where he lives with his partner, [the ceramic artist](#) Elizabeth Blake, he was intent on bringing that same focus on intriguing items to the backyard garden.

“I wanted to have a very wild garden that almost felt like it wasn’t designed,” where a few special objects would pique people’s curiosity, Mr. Adjmi said.



The garden is intentionally a little wild.

Credit...Clark Hodgkin for The New York Times

To create the space, he worked with the founders of the landscape design firm [Harrison Green](#), whom he met while collaborating on the North American headquarters of the hair care brand Davines. That building, in Brooklyn, is right next to the Wythe Hotel, which Morris Adjmi Architects also designed.

Beyond establishing a sense of wild nature, Mr. Adjmi also wanted a garden he could use nearly year-round, even when temperatures drop and the sun sets earlier. That made accessories that provide warmth and light important.

After finishing the garden this summer, Mr. Adjmi hosted a party last month with 17 guests on a cool evening. “I had the fire going, and it started the party off with an amazing warm energy that made everybody so comfortable and feel so welcome,” he said. “I couldn’t get them in the house.”

The architect recently showed The New York Times a few favorite products that he uses in the garden.



Easy Upgrade Wick portable lamp, from \$159 at [Graypants](#)

Credit...Clark Hodgkin for The New York Times

“I have tons of plug-in and battery-operated lamps,” Mr. Adjmi said. But the Wick rechargeable lamp is his favorite. “I really like that lamp because it speaks to modern technology applied to a classic item: The candle gets reinterpreted and it looks good,” he said. “I think it’s beautiful.”

Available in five different plated-aluminum finishes, Mr. Adjmi chose a simple black for his lamps because the color reminded him of wrought iron candlesticks. With an integrated dimmer, the LED lamps can be tuned to a desired mood, carried wherever they're needed and provide light for up to 150 hours between charges, which makes them easy party companions.

Mr. Adjmi moves them between indoors and outdoors, he said, along with patterned Josef Frank throw pillows he bought in Stockholm that he tosses on his outdoor daybeds before guests arrive.

Adding simple accessories like lamps and throw pillows to the garden, he added, can make a big difference in the way an outdoor space is perceived.



Splurge

Shaker Outdoor Grill, about \$1,350 at [Wittus](#)

Credit...Clark Hodgkin for The New York Times

A highlight of Mr. Adjmi's garden is this weathering-steel wood stove designed by the Norwegian company Espegard. The unit is sold as a wood-fired grill complete with a grilling rack, but it also delivers all the warmth and visual appeal of an outdoor fireplace.

"What's really nice is that it's plug-and-play," Mr. Adjmi said. "It comes in a box. You screw the legs on, put the stove pipe on and you've got an outdoor fire."

Positioned at the back of his garden, the unit has a striking angular form that makes it attractive even when there's no flame. But when he fills it with logs and

lights a match, it really comes into its own, whether he plans to cook a meal or not.

"It creates an instant celebration," he said, noting that the visual flickering of the fire draws guests in. Once they arrive, he said, the unit seems to give off as much heat as a bonfire.



One of a Kind

Antique hand pump fountain

Credit...Clark Hodgkin for The New York Times

Mr. Adjmi wanted a water feature as part of his garden, but not something that looked like a typical fountain with stacked basins or spurting jets. To create a unique water feature, he worked with Harrison Green to build this custom fountain around a 19th-century French cast-iron hand pump.

Running continuously into a 19th-century French limestone bowl, the fountain looks as simple as a spigot that has been left slightly open, even though it uses recirculating water.

“It plays nicely with the plants as opposed to being this big statement,” Mr. Adjmi said.

He enjoys catching glimpses of the fountain from his kitchen table, as well as the way it softens the sounds of the city when he spends time outside.

“You see it, you hear it, but it’s not screaming for attention,” he said. “It’s about creating that sense of discovery.”

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