

My fascination with live oaks led me to live on St. Simons Island. The oaks inspired me to build a wild garden surrounding a 1958 brick ranch house with shutters that hung drunkenly, giving the place the look of a Dr. Seuss illustration.

The first project was to create a barrier between my neighbor's driveway and my own. Karen Babson, the owner of Island Pond and Nursery, helped me choose a mixture of plants to run down the drive, creating a privacy wall. Today, there is a tall wall of variegated pittosporum, wax myrtle, viburnum, ligustrum, anise, rhododendrons, a Southern Magnolia, cassia and ferns.

The old oaks and hickory trees on the back of the property were arranged so they allowed for and encouraged the flow of chi (Chinese for life-force energy) around and through the yard. To enhance that flow I used wabi-sabi, a

Japanese gardening technique that emphasizes contrast in garden design. I designed convex and concave beds to flank the

entrance to a circular fern garden. Behind the fern garden was a wild holly woods with several huge pig nut hickory trees, bamboo and several azaleas. I added some Chinese privet

and variegated duranta bushes, a few more azaleas and a hedge of tea olives. A

Walter's Viburnum tree hung out of

the woods tumbling over a small concrete deck at the edge of a backyard shed.

In the convex bed, I pruned a sickly unidentified tree to exaggerate its horizontal growth pattern. A year later it was a handsome oriental-looking tree with little purple plums. I planted a circle of enormous liriopie around the base of the tree.



Behind the convex garden was a group of large elephant ears. To these I added a second variety, a black illustris. It makes an amusing setting for relaxing on a wood bench under the tall hickory canopy.

Later, I extended the convex circle outwards with a ring of lilies that I was given by my neighbors. A wonderful pineapple

birds and butterflies. I planted light mauve agapanthus under a vitex bush, which is a butterfly favorite.

To start the concave bed I planted a tall thin river birch whose verticality contrasted with the horizontal plum tree in the convex bed. Light green ferns at the feet of the birch morphed into a concave arc of

