

THE FRONT PORTION OF THE STRUCTURE IS A TEAROOM AND MEDITATION SPACE THAT LOOKS OUT ONTO A SOOTHING GARDEN. POLISHED CONCRETE FLOORING AND A RED CEDAR CEILING DELINEATE THIS AREA FROM THE GREENHOUSE. THIS PART OF THE BUILDING ALSO HAS A GREEN ROOF COVERED IN NATIVE GRASSES.

Serenity *by Design*

This sleek and multifunctional backyard retreat was created with inspiration from Philip Johnson's Glass House.

By **DEVLIN SMITH**

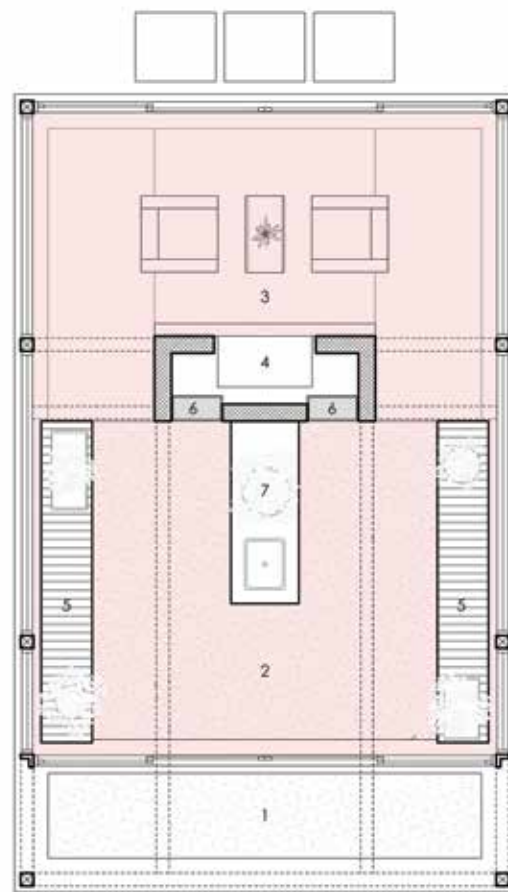
Photography by **PETER VANDERWARKER AND GREGG SHUPE**



PROJECT OVERVIEW

- **LOCATION:** Weston, Massachusetts
- **CLIMATE:** Weston has warm summers with highs averaging in the 80s, and freezing winters with temperatures dipping into the teens.
- **DESIGN:** This glass-and-steel greenhouse and meditation space was inspired by Philip Johnson's Glass House.
- **SURROUNDING PLANTS:** The green roof is planted with native grasses. The interior houses a number of bonsai trees cultivated by the homeowners.

(BELOW) THE STRUCTURE HAS TWO DEFINED SPACES—A MEDITATION ROOM AND A GREENHOUSE—WHICH ARE SEPARATED BY A LARGE GLAZED-CONCRETE-BLOCK CHIMNEY. GLASS SLIDERS ON BOTH THE FRONT AND BACK CAN CONNECT THE STRUCTURE TO OR DIVIDE IT FROM THE OUTDOOR SPACES. THE GRAVEL USED IN THE BACK IS CARRIED THROUGH TO THE OUTDOORS. CONCRETE AND STONE SLABS CREATE A WALKWAY THROUGH THE GRAVEL TO THE FRONT ENTRANCE.



IN THE LATE 1940s, FAMED ARCHITECT PHILIP JOHNSON TOOK UP the challenge to build a glass house that would blend almost seamlessly with its natural surroundings. Completed in 1949, Johnson's 55-foot-long and 33-foot-wide Glass House is located in New Canaan, Connecticut, and the structure is a National Trust for Historic Preservation Site.

Nearly three hours away from New Canaan, in Weston, Massachusetts, an architect, landscape architect and general contractor took inspiration from Johnson's design to create an idyllic outdoor space where their clients could meditate, cultivate bonsai and relax in nature.

1. PORTICO
2. BONSAI GREENHOUSE
3. MEDITATION ROOM
4. GAS FIREPLACE
5. POTTING BENCHES
6. STORAGE CABINETS
7. WORK COUNTER & SINK





THE HOMEOWNERS USE THE BACK PORTION OF THE GLASS-AND-STEEL STRUCTURE AS A BONSAI GREENHOUSE. IT FEATURES A FLOOR COVERED IN LOCALLY SOURCED PEA STONE GRAVEL, TEAK AND GALVANIZED METAL WORK BENCHES, AND A GRANITE COUNTER WITH A STAINLESS STEEL SINK. A GLASS ROOF COVERS THIS PORTION OF THE STRUCTURE, ALLOWING THE SUNLIGHT TO SHINE THROUGHOUT THE SPACE.

Colin Flavin of Flavin Architects collaborated with Peter White of ZEN Associates and Mark Doughty of Thoughtforms Corp. to create the glass-and-steel structure. "It is designed to contrast with the home, in the spirit of garden 'follies,'" Colin says. Space was made in the back garden for the new structure by removing a swimming pool.

DISTINCT SPACES

The structure is divided into two sections, each serving specific functions. The front is a meditation space (also used by the homeowners for reading and relaxing). It has a gas fireplace, polished concrete flooring and a red cedar roof. The back is the bonsai greenhouse, which features easy access to a sink, counter and work benches. Different flooring and roof materials create distinct spaces within the configuration, while still allowing an open flow between rooms.

Gravel is carried out into the garden, the design of which was inspired by Japanese tea gardens. The home's woody surroundings beautifully frame the idyllic space. The dark tone to the steel structure and darker finishes for the interior fixtures and accessories were selected to blend in with the surroundings.

Erasing the boundaries between indoors and out—a major feature of Mid Century Modern design—is beautifully realized in the space and is a standout aspect for its architect. "My favorite element is the building's transparency, where the interior plantings appear to merge with the exterior," Colin says. ☼