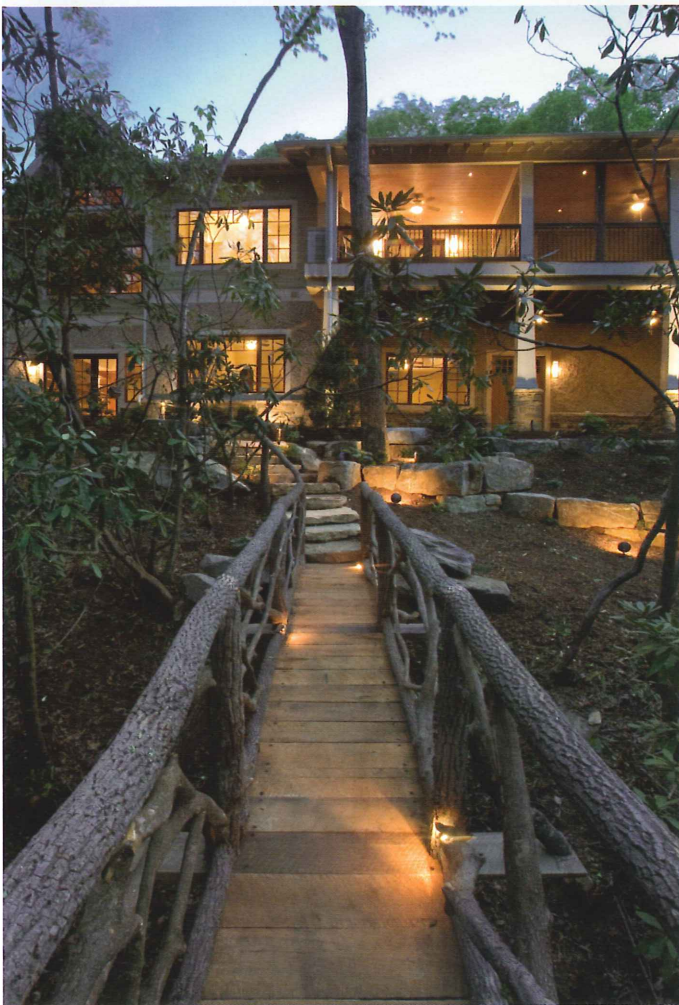


MOUNTAIN CRAFTSMAN STYLE HOME

more than meets the eye

ACM Design's back-to-nature bungalow is a product of close attention and much collaboration, resulting in a sensitive residence that opens magnificently to mountain views



by Thalia A-M Bruehl

Amy Conner-Murphy comes from a family of gardeners. Seven years ago, when she started North Carolina's ACM Design, which specializes in designing high-end homes, she knew her focus would extend into the realm of landscaping—and beyond that, the multitalented firm also offers an in-house interior design team. “Our design philosophy is ‘From Garden to Hearth,’” Conner-Murphy says. “No one else in the area works quite in the same way. The interior design is just as important as the architectural design, which is just as important as what’s outdoors. I love that we think about all of the aspects of living in a home in our design.” This all-encompassing outlook has extended into every home the firm has done, including one recent residence built directly into a mountainside.

The Mountain Craftsman Style Home, which was completed in 2008, started with a hike. “The property was just this beautiful mountainside covered with 80-year-old rhododendrons all in bloom,” Conner-Murphy says. “The clients said, ‘We love this property, we’d love you to come hike it with us.’ So we trudged through the rhododendrons and along this stream that bisected the property. There’s a little waterfall at one place in the stream as well.” The client was impressed by Conner-Murphy’s vision for the unique site and wanted to begin work right away.

For Conner-Murphy, the first step was observing the clients in their current home, watching them make meals so she could see how they moved around in their kitchen, taking the opportunity to really understand how they wanted to use the new space. “They really opened themselves up to us so we could really understand their needs and do a good job for them,” she says. “This helps make the difference between designing a house and a home for someone.”

OPPOSITE TOP: The fire pit is a cozy detail in the outdoor space.

OPPOSITE BOTTOM: A rustic bridge, which connects the fire-pit patio to the back of the home, was built from trees and rhododendrons removed from the site during construction.

RIGHT: All rainwater is collected and reused to irrigate the landscape, which consists primarily of indigenous plants. BELOW: High-efficiency gas fire boxes fit with a traditional dry-stack stone fireplace to offer warmth and beauty to the great room.



The Mountain Craftsman Style Home is nestled into the hillside; from the street it looks like just a small bungalow. On the backside of the house, however, where the creek flows through, the property opens up to a great space for outdoor living. “The landscape designer, Jennifer Brown of Greenmeadow Landscaping, did incredible boulder work to further enhance the outdoor feel, and then we created an outdoor fire-pit area across the creek from the house,” Conner-Murphy says. “There’s also a bridge that spans the creek that was built from trees and rhododendrons removed from the site during construction.”

Conner-Murphy also credits the project team for the home’s magnificence. “The builder we worked with on the project, Sean Sullivan of Living Stone Construction, is very committed to green building, as are we,” she says. The home’s many green features include high-performance windows, bamboo flooring, cork flooring, low-VOC paints, Energy Star-rated appliances and heating systems, and a lighting- and mechanical-control system, which helps maintain lower energy usage. The home received a Gold-level certification from North Carolina’s Healthy

“We created an outdoor fire-pit area across the creek from the house. There’s also a bridge that spans the creek that was built from trees and rhododendrons removed from the site during construction.”

—Amy Conner-Murphy, Founder

Built Homes initiative, an equivalent Gold certification from LEED, and it was awarded Best Green Building Home by the North Carolina Homebuilders Association in 2008. The project took three years to complete from start to finish but ended exactly where it began, with a hike. “The family was so pleased with our work,” Conner-Murphy says, “but their favorite thing is that they can now be out their front door hiking immediately.” **gb&d**

A MESSAGE FROM LIVING STONE CONSTRUCTION

Working with ACM and the Greens was a great experience as well as a challenge. Like with the rest of our projects, we were able to offer ideas, practices, and finishes to fit the client’s budget. In so many cases, building a custom home in the mountains represents a challenge because of the site. This project was no exception because we had to meet a budget while building a home over three lots joined by a bridge built from felled lumber. Our mission is to provide our clients with a new or renovated home that exceeds their expectations. And although we are mission-motivated, we are value-driven. Despite being the recipient of many awards and being featured on network TV, the recognition that LSC values most is from its continued friendship with architects and their clients ... and ACM Design and the Greens were no exception.