



This 5,000-square-foot Craftsman style home in Black Mountain received a Gold Level HealthyBuilt® certification.

Mountain Harmony

A Black Mountain home hits all the right notes



by Joanne O’Sullivan . photography by Tim Burleson

You can hear the music of the tumbling creek from the master bedroom, soft and melodious most times, others a little up tempo. During a rain shower, the drops falling on the seam metal porch roof in the back provide a soothing rhythm section. As an ensemble, all the elements of Bill and Elizabeth Green’s mountain retreat work together in perfect harmony. But the setting—tucked into the side of a wooded slope in Black Mountain—can’t help but steal the show.

“It’s really nestled into the hill with a quaint cottage look,” she says, comfortably spacious, without appearing “imposing or ostentatious.”

Architect Amy Conner-Murphy of ACM Design in Asheville had a lot of natural talent to work with on site—the creek, the dappled canopy of trees, the native rhododendron and laurel and moss-covered boulders. But she also had a gifted team to help preserve the best of the site while creating an inviting, energy efficient home. Working along with builder Sean Sullivan of Living Stone Construction and his project manager Sam Arrowood, landscape designer Jennifer Brown of Greenmeadows Landscape Design, and lighting designer Mario Salamone of iLux Innovation, she was a conductor of sorts, making sure each detail of the design hit the perfect note.

“It was love at first sight,” says Brown of her initial encounter with the property. Unlike some building projects, landscaping wasn’t an afterthought here. Brown was involved early on, and her plan was integrally tied in to the drainage design for the slope. Closer to the home, Brown chose plants that were in tune with the

Arts and Crafts style of the house and offered year-round interest, among them Japanese maple, dogwood, redbud, and pyrus japonica. “There are plants tucked in here and there,” says homeowner Elizabeth Green. “You notice a different one each time.”

Heading down the Tennessee field stone steps to the terrace in the back, oak leaf hydrangeas, mountain laurel, and other native plants set a less structured tone, signaling the approach to the woods. Immersion in nature reaches a crescendo when you’re on the 30-foot bridge spanning the creek, made from laurel and locust harvested from the site. Even the lichen on the railing echoes that on the nearby trees, blending in seamlessly.

The bridge leads to the fire pit (gas-lit to prevent sparks from reaching the low tree canopy above), surrounded by a sitting wall with a built-in sound system cleverly camouflaged in the rocks. At night, it’s lit by simulated moonlight from fixtures hidden in the trees above. Salamone says his unobtrusive lighting plan was



The 30-foot bridge spanning the creek is made from laurel and locust harvested from the site. It leads to an outdoor gathering area with a firepit and stone patio.



“When you’re trying capture this much view, energy-efficient windows are important,” says Conner-Murphy of the triple-pane windows. Durable, pet-friendly cork and bamboo flooring is used throughout the house.

designed “so you can see the amazing stonework and the paths, not the lights.” But if you can see the light fixtures, he continues, they should be artistic. Salamone chose unique ones that blend with the environment: two small bronze salamanders that seem to have slithered onto the bridge hide tiny lights under their bellies, while two cast-aluminum herons that bathe in the creek are lit beneath their wings.

Conner-Murphy designed the home to harmonize with nature, not compete with or overshadow it. “It’s really nestled into the hill with a quaint cottage look,” she says, comfortably spacious without appearing “imposing or ostentatious”—something the homeowners wanted to avoid. Conner-Murphy’s design takes full advantage of the view of the creek from the rear of the house. It can be seen from the great room, master bedroom, and the screened-in porch and separate screened-in summer kitchen on the main level, as well as the two guest suites on the lower level.

While so much of the home is geared toward appreciating nature, it’s also focused on using natural resources wisely. The home received a Gold Level HealthyBuilt Home designation and an Outstanding Achievement award at the National Home Builders Association STARS Awards. Sullivan says energy efficiency and

use of sustainable materials aren’t extras on his projects—they’re the baseline. “It’s not just a gimmick for us.” Everything from the grout and adhesives they use to the air filtration system is as natural and energy efficient as possible, and all his homes are Energy Star certified. Contrary to popular belief, using materials with a lighter environmental impact “has very little impact on the budget,” he says, but it does offer the homeowner savings over time.

In the Green home, the triple-pane windows are an example of a design choice that’s also inherently eco-conscious. “When you’re trying capture this much view and bring in natural light, energy-efficient windows are even more important,” says Conner-Murphy. The cork and bamboo flooring throughout the house is not only comfortable, durable, and pet-friendly, but it’s more environmentally friendly. Outdoors, Brown used drought-resistant plants and a water collection system, including the attractive, wind-chime-like “rain chain” outside the master bedroom, which channels water onto a rock below and into a catch basin, making its own soft water music as it works.

Like a well-tuned orchestra, each detail of this mountain hideaway resonates with quality, thoughtfulness, and respect for the pristine environment that surrounds it. ■