





Gail Brinn Wilkins is heavily influenced by her European travels.

A European Oasis

PHOTOS BY SCOTT STILES

A few miles away in Myers Park, interior designer Gail Brinn Wilkins, ASID, and her husband, Howard Freese, enjoy a very different kind of backyard, in which neoclassical details reign. No stranger to small towns herself, Gail grew up in Sanford. A college trip to Europe served as her first experience out of that small realm and whetted her appetite for all things European. She later studied at the *Musée des Arts Décoratifs* in Paris and says, "Since then I just haven't been the same."

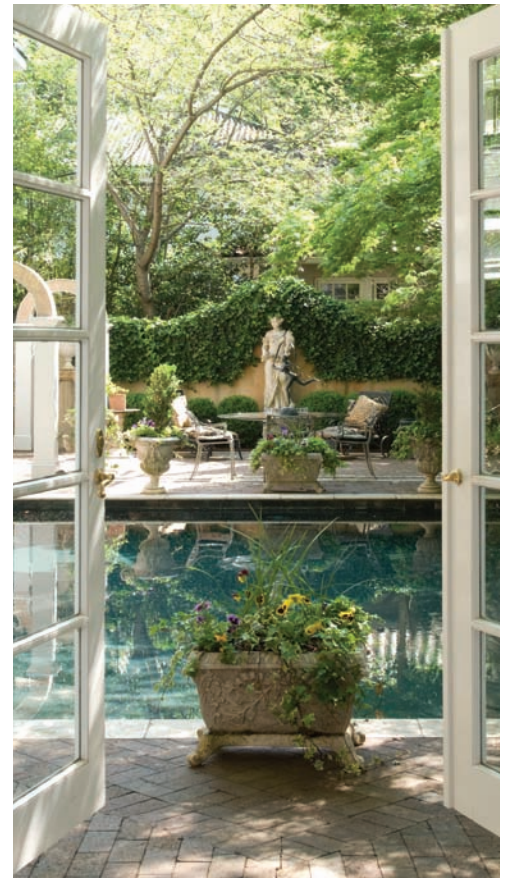
When Wilkins settled in her Queens Road house in 1980, the back courtyard possessed unremarkable brick walls and little distinction. In 1985, she began elongating and extending the walls to create multiple gathering places and architectural

niches. She also began adding a wealth of French and Italian elements, including elegant cartouches, majestic lion heads, and ornamental overdoors and arches. Most recently, Urban Building Group started a major renovation on Wilkins' home, >

"Paris is like a second home. I feel like Marie Antoinette and I were friends."

— Gail Brinn Wilkins

Gail Brinn Wilkins transformed her unremarkable back courtyard into a European-style oasis, replete with elegant cartouches, lion heads and ornamental architectural details.



A collection of regal statues, known as the Four Seasons, overlook the 30-foot pool, while the stucco walls purposely retain the moss and algae accumulated over the years. Combined with a host of neoclassical details, the area creates the look and feel of antiquity.

prompting the restoration of the pool and surrounding area.

"Gail's goal was to have a low-maintenance, European-style courtyard," explains John Morgan, president of UBG. "With the pool, it was now or never in terms of restoring it, because after the renovation it was going to be landlocked. The pool had major drainage issues and plain concrete and wood decking that was rotted. Now the only maintenance is cleaning out the leaves."

The 30-foot pool was re-plastered in black so that it is reminiscent of an enchanting pond. The pool's coping, or trim, is an imported, polished travertine with a hand-crafted bull-nose, and sleek black granite resides beneath the coping. Four lady statues known as the Four Seasons keep watch over each of the pool's four sides.

A diamond pattern within the brick decking incorporates elegant simplicity, and a courtyard to the pool's left boasts inlaid travertine details that echo the design. The stucco walls retain the moss and algae accumulated over the years so as to create the look of antiquity.

The 30-foot pool was re-plastered in black so that it is reminiscent of an enchanting pond.

At the courtyard's other end sits a guesthouse with French doors running its length. Wilkins housed her first design office within this building and wooed her first client here 28 years ago. An umbrella of Japanese Maples and flowering trees prevails, and the graceful stand provides privacy. The only visual evidence of others living nearby is the sloping tiled roof of the next-door neighbor's guesthouse, which extends over the area and adds an unexpected touch of interest.

Other pizzazz comes in the form of embedded details, including Pompeian-inspired pieces, countless sculptures and an antique pot with origins in either ancient Egypt or Rome — Wilkins isn't sure which. She finds her treasures on her frequent jaunts across the United States and to Milan and Paris. "I'm in Paris at least every other year, and sometimes more. I just love it," she says with a smile. "Paris is like a second home. I feel like Marie Antoinette and I were friends." **TCW**

Outdoor Living Rooms
40% Off Everyday!
Show off your sense of style, and your sense of value!



Fine Quality All-Weather Outdoor Furniture
Tropicals® • Postmodern Teak® • Teakology® • And Many Others

Large selection in-stock • Quick-ship special orders
Carolina Place in Pineville
11729 Carolina Place Pkwy.
behind Thomase's Furniture
M-F 10-6, Sat 10-5, Sun 11-5 • 704.542.5900
1.800.432.5995 • oasisapopla.com

Oasis Pools PLUS
Outdoor Living Showplace

Patio Furniture • Pools •
Swimming Pools • Spas •
Chemicals & Accessories

Tile Natural Stone Custom Granite Fabrication • Corian • Zodiaq™

Voted Charlotte's Best
SHOWROOM & INSTALLATION



TILE COLLECTION INC.
11200 Carolina Place Parkway
Pineville, NC 28134
704.541.8453
www.thecollection.com