

# for the love of a garden

AUTHOR MAXINE PAETRO SHARES THE STIRRING TALE OF HOW SHE TRANSFORMED A BARREN PLOT INTO THE ROMANTIC GARDENS AT BROCCOLI HALL.

It was in the coldest, bleakest part of winter 1984 when I saw the little Cape Cod house clinging to a bulldozed slope—and fell in love.

Logically, honestly, it didn't make sense.

The 50-year-old house was a disaster. The paint was scaling, the chimneys were crumbling, the roof and the mechanicals were hopeless, and what I saw as a romantic *Wind in the Willows* Through the Looking Glass retreat, was in fact, a rough fixer-upper, rooted in rock-hard soil.

No problem.

I squinted in the sun and saw that it would travel from the eastern hill behind the house, along the southern border of the little acre-and-a-half plot before setting in a long, glowing sigh across the valley to the west.

I was sure I was right. With sunshine all day long, I could have roses. The little spring in the foreground could become a pond, the giant spruce trees would add elegance and winter color, and, with some new topsoil, this home could anchor my dream garden.

I ran quickly through the house with my eyes closed, signed the contract, and named my little estate Broccoli Hall. Every spare moment and penny went into gardening books and bricks and whips of fruit trees and barrels of flowering bulbs.

The early work is in full maturity now. The courtyard and the former dirt-floor garage-turned-guesthouse is at the center of it all—sunny, brick-paved, and herb-filled. It leads to the cottage garden where lilies, hollyhocks, and phlox are kept in line by a boxwood frame and an apple-tree tunnel leads to a teak love-knot bench. The woodland garden is laced with bluebells, trillium, and white daffodils in spring. And then there is the constant garden, where the pond mirrors the tall spruce in winter and, in June, reflects the long border bursting with peonies and roses.

Nearly 25 years after planting the crabapple trees, in love again, I carried a rose and peony bouquet and promised to love and cherish my husband as we were married in the gardens of Broccoli Hall.

**OPPOSITE** The apple tunnel began as six whips trained on hoops. Now it's a cool, dappled corridor through the cottage garden that's beautiful in bloom, architectural in snow. Siblings Babe (*foreground*) and Nellie (*sitting on the love knot bench*) are two of the six cats who rule Broccoli Hall, the gardens of Maxine Paetro (*shown above left*) in Amenia, New York.



WRITTEN BY MAXINE PAETRO  
PHOTOGRAPHED BY JENNIFER MAY  
AND RICHARD FELBER







“LOVE WHAT GROWS WELL  
IN YOUR GARDEN.” —MAXINE PAETRO

**OPPOSITE** Winter-hardy boxwood frames the beds and restrains the rowdy gang of phlox and hollyhocks in the cottage garden. **BELOW** After 20 years, the name of this peony has gone missing, but she is a show stopper in June. **BOTTOM** Dusky Challenger, a tall bearded iris, is a wonderful companion to roses and peonies.



**LEFT** Maxine is often asked: Do you do all the work yourself? No, she says. She first worked with garden designer Tim Steinhoff and is now helped by Heather Thomson in caring for the Broccoli Hall gardens. **ABOVE LEFT** Rustic stairs lead away from a secret woodland garden, aka The Teddy Bears' Picnic, and up the back side of the pond.







“THERE’S ALWAYS A CHANGING VIEW AS THE POND  
 TURNS ITS FOUR-SEASON EYE TO THE SKY.” —MAXINE PAETRO



**OPPOSITE** Maggie Cottage began life as a dirt-floor garage with a sign reading “Beware of Dog.” It’s now a guesthouse and writing studio in the center of the courtyard. **RIGHT** The pond is home to Japanese koi, bullfrogs, and the native, self-sown *Iris pseudacorus*. **ABOVE** Shade-loving Virginia bluebells look gorgeous with ferns, *Trillium grandiflora*, the color chartreuse, and daffodils. **ABOVE MIDDLE** Only a naive gardener could have conceived of a 300-foot-long rose border alongside a hay field. Despite the weeds, the thorns, and the Japanese beetles, it is quite a thing to see on the ides of June. **ABOVE RIGHT** Globe thistle mingles with garden phlox. 🌿

FOR INFORMATION ON GARDEN TOURS AND MORE, TURN TO SOURCES BEGINNING ON PAGE 120. FOR ADDITIONAL PHOTOS OF THE GARDENS AT BROCCOLI HALL, VISIT [COUNTRYHOME.COM](http://COUNTRYHOME.COM).

