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HOW DO YOU BRING THE OUTDOORS IN? If you’re designer Nigel Parish of Splyce Design, you wrap a house around a stand of bamboo on three sides, creating a contemporary adaptation of the classic courtyard garden.

The bamboo garden is a standout feature in a two-storey new home in the Edgemont neighbourhood that Parish designed. Walled off by glass on two sides and open to the elements at one end, the garden juts halfway into the living space, separating the living room from the kitchen-dining area. Floor-to-ceiling windows allow the homeowners to feel as if the garden is part of their interior decor and to look through its foliage to the rooms beyond. 🏡

GREAT INDOORS

Glass-walled garden both unifies and separates living areas

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BY PHILIP FINE PHOTOGRAPHY: CHRIS ROLLETT STYLING: DIANA BECKER



“There was an opportunity to create separate kitchen-dining and living areas,” says Parish. That “opportunity” was a zoning bylaw that restricted the square footage of living space on the lot where a former house had stood. Rather than building a great room to unite the dining and living functions, he created a separation using a garden. The result is an eye-catching slice of nature. “It was born out of the realities of zoning but it gave us the opportunity to create some interesting use of space,” says Parish.

Homeowners Alix and Anthony Findlay, whose former house on this site was demolished to make way for the new construction, moved in last year. For them, the garden was an original feature that they appreciated in the initial designs. “It’s so cool,” says Alix. “At night we can dim the lights and the bamboo is all lit up.”

Because the house is turned sideways on the lot, the rear of the structure is located on the lot’s side. Large windows give the home an open dollhouse effect on the ground and upper floors.



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The back of the house flanks the bamboo garden on three sides. To accommodate the plants as they grow, Parish carved space out of the upper storey. A glassed-in bridge divides the master bedroom’s walk-in closet and the ensuite bathroom. Here, the tops of the fast-growing bamboo plants are visible through the windows.

In addition to bringing the garden in, Parish gave the family, which had been accustomed to a cramped rancher, a spacious modern home that accommodates their active lives.

The 3,700 square feet of living space is now divided between the basement, and ground and upper floors, which is a far cry from the one-storey, 1,400-square-foot home the family of four used to occupy. ☞

A pale, neutral colour palette in the kitchen keeps the space serene.





The house wraps around a bamboo garden. The floor-to-ceiling windows allow the home's residents to look through the foliage to the rooms beyond. A glassed-in bridge on the second storey connects the master bedroom and walk-in closet.

Alix laughs at the state of their old house, especially its one bathroom. "You couldn't open the door if someone was brushing their teeth," she says. "It was tight."

"We had converted our garage into a bedroom and had no storage."

She and Anthony, who run Level 10 Fitness & Physiotherapy, train professional athletes, some of whom come from out-of-town and are accommodated in the family's home.

The new house, which has four bedrooms (one of them a guest bedroom), three

bathrooms, a powder room, a study and a rec room represents "a really big jump" from the old home, according to Alix.

Parish learned what the sports-oriented family needed, which inspired a layout that includes a mudroom between the garage and the rest of the house. "They can drop their gear and go right into the kitchen," he says. 🏠







The fast-growing bamboo can be seen through the windows of the second-storey bedroom and bathroom.

He played basketball with Anthony 25 years ago in high school and was a grade ahead of Alix, which brought a familiarity to the relationship. He is still active, doing some mountain biking and skiing and says having similar lifestyles may have made things easier. "Having gear myself, I need places for things," he says, adding: "I can appreciate the tons of shoes." He created a shoe nook for the many Findlay family running shoes.

Parish says he's happy with the circulation in the home, in which there are no dead ends. "You can literally do laps around the home."

He says the house was designed around his clients' needs. "I won't go so far as to say that form follows function," he says, but adds he's satisfied with the unique look of the home that sits sideways on this lot, has an open look at the back and boasts a garden that appears to be indoors. ☛