

Metropolitan areas often have limited space for residents who desire to relax away from the bustling activities of city life. Because of this, landscape architects have found steady work enhancing New York City rooftops and terraces with gardens and water features.

The Central Park West

At Central Park West in NYC, two penthouse terraces were designed by Gunn Landscape Architecture and installed by Vert Gardens, to feel like a rural retreat from the city. The clients' goal was to create a rooftop garden that felt like an urban oasis. The centerpiece of the 500-square-foot lower terrace is a cascading water fountain, evoking the feeling of a waterfall in a dense forest. Both beautiful and functional, the water feature's second purpose is to wrap around and conceal the elevator shaft. Gunn custom designed the fountain with a powder-coated aluminum body and steel framing with a weathered gray patina. The fountain was designed to be modular to fit in a narrow service elevator in sections and installed as a complete unit on-site.

The fountain recirculates its water, but is also fed by the terrace's irrigation system to compensate for water loss to evaporation. A small pipe connects the irrigation system to the fountain's planter basin underneath the black body, and then water is pumped up internally through the fountain until it reaches the top, where it then falls back over the black body. At the request of the clients, the fountain was designed to be loud enough as to add ambience and drown out city noises.

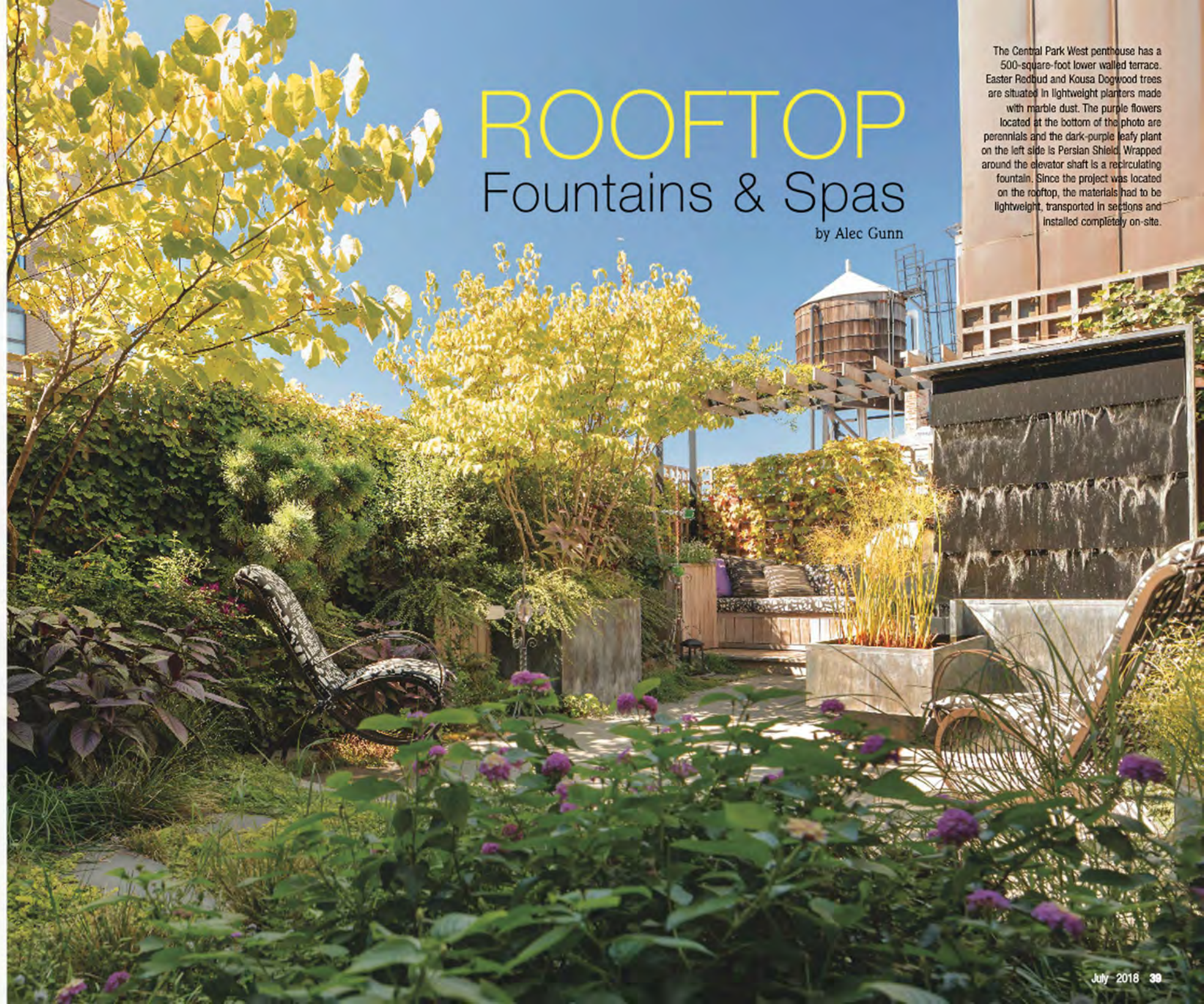
To create the forested landscape, the space is bordered by a trellis covered in Boston Ivy and English Ivy. The trellis is a lush backdrop for weathered zinc planters filled with Japanese Black Pine, Hydrangea anomala subsp. Climbing Hydrangea, and Eastern Redbud. Planted trays cover part of the floor of the terrace, where groundcover, like 'Angelina' Stonecrop and grasses, are interspersed with pavers to create a green roof. The plantings provide privacy and a natural sound barrier so the clients can read and relax in peace. Gunn also incorporated built-in upholstered seating and an outdoor grill for cooking and entertaining.

ROOFTOP

Fountains & Spas

by Alec Gunn

The Central Park West penthouse has a 500-square-foot lower walled terrace. Eastern Redbud and Kousa Dogwood trees are situated in lightweight planters made with marble dust. The purple flowers located at the bottom of the photo are perennials and the dark-purple leafy plant on the left side is Persian Shield. Wrapped around the elevator shaft is a recirculating fountain. Since the project was located on the rooftop, the materials had to be lightweight, transported in sections and installed completely on-site.





Left: Located on the lower terrace of the Central Park West penthouse, the fountain is made of powder-coated aluminum and steel framing with a gray patina. Because the water eventually evaporates, a small pipe feeds the water into the planter basin underneath the rigid black body. The water's fall height is four feet and nine inches. With the water included, the total weight of the fountain is about 450 pounds.

Right: The Tribeca Terrace is a 2,600-square-foot outdoor living space, complete with a custom waterfall and stainless steel spa. The mechanical and plumbing equipment is stored underneath the deck. Front-facing LED 12 voltage lights and arbor-mounted low-voltage downlights brighten the spa at night. The screening and fountain's support also is made of ipe wood. Raised on an ipe deck, the spa can hold 550 gallons of water.



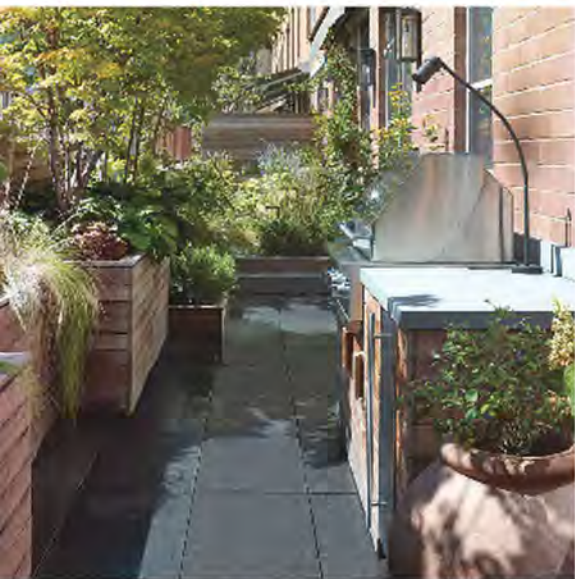
The Tribeca Terrace

This Tribeca roof terrace and garden, comprising 2,600 square feet, contributes abundant outdoor living space to this New York City home. Gunn Landscape Architecture transformed this once raw, barren setting into an enclave of lush plantings and comfortable yet discrete living zones that extend from the interior. The redesign includes a shielded spa with a fountain next to the master bedroom for residents to relax and enjoy themselves.

The stainless steel spa measures 7.25'Lx 6.75'Wx 3.5'H, with a surface area of 38 square foot, a water capacity of 550 gallons, and a total weight of 5,230 pounds. Two front-facing LED 12 voltage lights illuminate the spa in the evenings, complemented by

several arbor-mounted low-voltage downlights that highlight the plantings around the spa. A retractable cover protects the spa when it is out of use and doesn't have water.

A fountain that forms a 'water curtain' over the spa connects to the north end at a 90 degree angle. At 3' wide and 4' tall, the fountain's vertical support is covered by clad ipe wood that matches the screening around the spa, although the screening is more widely spaced to allow better views of the plantings behind it. Evergreen hedges and bamboo with a stone pebble mulch were planted along the periphery of the water feature, which resembles a waterfall that lands into a natural basin, all within the privacy of one's own home.



Left: The south side of the Chelsea terrace is a 543-square-foot outdoor kitchen area featuring a stainless steel gas grill. The kitchen is complete with ipe cabinetry, an icemaker, and Glacier Blue Devonian Sandstone countertops and backsplash.

Right: Included on the terrace is a weathered zinc fountain with ipe wood framing. It is connected to the main irrigation system; a small tube fills the bottom of the fountain with water and then recirculates. The height of the fountain over which the water falls is one foot and seven inches. Set on an automatic timer, a spaghetti tube replenishes the fountain. The trees above are Crepe Myrtle.



The spa was built on a raised ipe deck, with seven steps that lead upwards to the water feature. The plumbing and mechanical equipment for the spa is stored underneath this raised deck, and can be controlled by an electronic panel next to the spa.

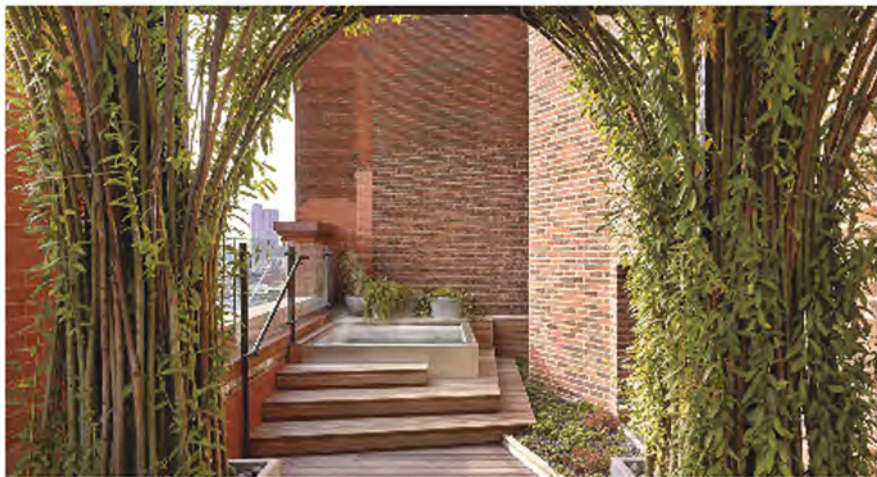
The ipe deck below the step-up deck connects the spa to a green roof with a container garden on another side of the master bedroom. This area responds to the owner's desire for a more natural environment, which, in this case, is accentuated by bouffant grasses planted in round ceramic pots on top of 18" x 30" pavers separate by flat green moss. Hornbeam trees in planters further demarcate the area.

Overall, Gunn maintained a clean-lined and modern approach to the Tribeca outdoor space, while incorporating the client's love of nature within a highly urban context. The expansive terrace wraps around the interiors, which have floor to ceiling windows, and maintains a similar light-colored palette while drawing the eye out to a different scene reshaped with lush greenery and pops of bold color.

The Chelsea Terrace

For the award-winning Chelsea project, Vert Gardens built an urban oasis on the 621-square-foot north and 543-square-foot south terraces on either side of the rooftop penthouse. These discrete outdoor 'living rooms' were designed by Gunn to maximize space and allow flexible options for entertaining, dining, and relaxing. Ideally suited for dining and entertaining, the north terrace supports a rich mix of trees, shrubs, and climbing vines in planters made from ipe, and lightweight pots made from fiberglass.

The south terrace is quiet, with an outdoor kitchen and a weathered zinc fountain. The fountain with ipe wood framing is also made from powder-coated aluminum and contains plantings underneath that blend in with the rest of the terrace's plantings. Connected to the irrigation system, a small tube fills the fountain's bottom with water and then recirculates. The five spouts of the water feature releases the water from a pump. The spaghetti tube replenishes the fountain on an automatic timer.



Left: This custom stainless steel spa can fit four to six people. The plumbing is separate from the terrace's irrigation system and was built to hold a total weight of 5,230 lbs. of water. The piping equipment is underneath the steps of the ipe decking. Located underneath the spa, a drainage mat collects and channels excess water into a drain hole in the terrace's foundation. This is done through the paving on a pedestal system.



Left & Above: A fountain is integrated into the steps leading down into the lounging terrace. It is highlighted by LED strip lights that are underneath the steps. Pavers with a scarpaleto finish cover the floor of the lounge. On a drainage mat and pedestals, these 12" x 24" pavers were coated with a clear sealant. Vert also installed in-ground lights by each plant pot. Through the glass windows, the outdoor space is illuminated by the interior lighting that projects outward onto the terrace.

The Soho Terrace

A custom stainless steel spa is featured on the terrace of the Soho Penthouse. Established on ipe deck structure, the hot tub can fit four to six people inside. The spa has a retractable cover and a control panel to adjust the settings. For safety reasons, a glass railing was added along the ipe deck.

For this project, rather than use a service elevator, Vert hoisted the spa to the penthouse, as it was too large to fit in the elevator. To do this, Vert obtained permits from the NYC Department of Buildings and Department of Transportation to close off nearby streets and raise the spa over the rooftop.

Around the corner from the lounging area is another open space for relaxation and socialization. As requested by the clients, Gunn also designed a fountain that would blend with the surrounding design. A fountain was integrated into the wooden steps leading down into this terrace. To highlight the water feature, LED strips are underneath each step.

Team List

Landscape Architect: Gunn Landscape Architecture
Landscape Contractor: Vert Gardens

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Installation Team:
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ZZZ Carpentry
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Gilsanz Murray Stoffcock, LLP