

THE NEW COASTAL LANDSCAPE

Story and photos by
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FOR A LANDSCAPE DESIGNER WHO LIVED IN ATLANTA OVER 250 MILES FROM THE NEAREST COAST, JEFF KLINGEL HAS AN INNATE PROCLIVITY FOR LIFE AT THE BEACH.

After more than a decade of focus on seaside landscapes in the Chesapeake Bay region, his design style gives area residents a distinctive and relevant way to enjoy their windswept environment with the ease and comfort associated with seaside living.

Klingel is quick to point out that one need not have waterfront property to embrace a coastal design style. In fact, many of his clients don't. Though some properties have salt spray, tidal flooding and storm surge to contend with, many of Klingel's landscapes are designed to embrace and express the relaxed style of coastal living that is implicit even miles from the sea. In either case, maritime weather patterns, sandy soils, existing topography (or lack thereof) and the sensitivity of this unique environment influence the design process at every stage.

One of Klingel's greatest challenges is orchestrating a seamless transition from the cultivated landscape to the sensitive and sometimes hostile environment found along the mid-Atlantic coast. Fortunately, the coastal plant palette is diverse and distinctive. Klingel chooses plants based on his own design

→ The lush plantings that surround this outdoor shower make rinsing off after a day at the beach a relaxing and refreshing experience.





Hydrangea macrophylla and *Hosta* spp. are coastal favorites that nicely soften the stucco and cut-stone used in this courtyard.

aesthetic, their performance given the cultural conditions and suitability to the homeowner and their lifestyle. “Plants should do more than just ‘hold up.’ They should reflect some of the characteristics of the natural landscape. By emulating nature to some extent, we guarantee authenticity and strengthen our sense of place.” After touring several of his projects, however, it is clear that Klingel’s reverence for nature is tempered by his creative interpretation of the home and its surroundings. This restrained yet innovative approach to design is a trademark of his work.

Klingel is careful in his selection of materials for driveways, bed edging, sidewalks and other features. “I prefer cobblestone, brick and ashlar, which freely admit their man-made identities and are at home among the plants and architecture of the coast. Even inventive use of concrete embraces the coastal aesthetic more creatively and comfortably than the use of materials not naturally found here.”

➤ Ornamental grasses, such as ‘Karl Foerster’ feather reed grass (*Calamagrostis acutiflora* ‘Karl Foerster’), ‘Blue Dune’ blue lyme grass (*Leymus arenarius* ‘Blue Dune’) and the native American beachgrass (*Ammophila breviligulata*) create a seamless transition from the home to the dune environment.

➤ ‘Evergold’ Japanese sedge (*Carex hachijoensis* ‘Evergold’), dwarf palmetto (*Sabal minor*) and the coffee-colored leather-leaf sedge (*Carex buchanae*) provide texture and interesting foliage colors that successfully marry the landscape to the unique architecture of this home.

➤ Careful plant selection was paramount in addressing salt spray, wind and erosion problems in the landscape at this bayside bluff. ‘Blue Dune’ blue lyme grass (*Leymus arenarius* ‘Blue Dune’) and dwarf yaupon holly (*Ilex vomitoria* ‘Nana’) are two very durable choices.





↑ Whether the home is waterfront or not, massed perennials can create a relaxed and casual feel. 'Becky' Shasta daisy (*Leucanthemum x maximum* 'Becky'), Russian sage (*Perovskia atriplicifolia*), daylilies (*Hemerocallis* spp.) and *Coreopsis* spp. take center stage in this coastal-inspired front yard.

← The sharp, clean lines of this sidewalk and rainwater catchment contrast nicely with the free-form habit of Mexican feather grass (*Nassella tenuissima*) and pineapple lily (*Eucomis comosa* 'Sparkling Burgundy').

↙ A massed planting of pink muhly grass (*Muhlenbergia capillaris*) alongside a cobble-edged driveway makes a stunning show in the early morning dew. Even in late autumn, this ornamental grass shows off beautifully.

↓ The transition from driveway to coastal forest is comfortable and effective with the use of 'Prostratus' rosemary (*Rosmarinus officinalis* 'Prostratus'), *Eleagnus x ebbengei* and 'Natchez' crapemyrtle (*Lagerstroemia indica x fauriei* 'Natchez'). The square planter in the middle of the driveway was included to provide additional interest and style.





← Trees, shrubs and grasses work double-time in the landscape by controlling runoff and reducing erosion. Protecting the health of the Chesapeake Bay and its tributaries is a major goal of successful landscape design in the mid-Atlantic region.

✦ From within the home, one can still enjoy the coastal breeze as the blooms of 'Karl Foerster' feather reed grass (*Calamagrostis acutiflora* 'Karl Foerster') sway in the wind. Ornamental grasses are great for providing motion in the landscape.

Well-defined and deliberate lines are another characteristic of his seaside gardens and landscapes. "A lot of the plants I like are free-form and flowing, so maintaining strong bed lines and deliberate hardscape structure is important in achieving depth and definition." Though his landscapes are naturalistic in a sense, there is never a doubt as to his design intentions. Thoughtful use of ornamental and native grasses, carefully placed trees and billowing perennial borders harmonize beautifully amid clean lines and deliberate features. "It gives you the distinct feeling that man was here, but Mother Nature led him."

The knowledge that the coastal ecosystem is a fragile resource worth protecting informs his work on a regular basis. "The native flora and fauna are defining features of our lifestyle that we can't live without. Protecting coastal resources and water quality is a major goal of successful landscape design in this area." In this shared environment, conserving water, limiting the use of synthetic fertilizers and solving erosion and run-off problems are challenges that Klingel embraces daily.

Sun, salt, sand and wind make landscaping by the sea a challenge for many, but for Jeff Klingel, they present a great opportunity to develop and celebrate the new coastal landscape. ♡

Laurie Klingel lives and gardens on the Eastern Shore of Virginia. She owns Applesseed Nurseries Inc. with her husband and is the gardener at historic Eyre Hall.

