



A fireplace made of recycled bricks is the centerpiece that divides the outdoor living and dining areas of the backyard of Scott and Kirsten Hamling's east Denver home. The house itself, built in 1902 in historic Montclair, is only four blocks from Scott Hamling's childhood home.

# Truly great outdoors

Family buys dream house, creates dreamy backyard

By Karen Mitchell/Special to the Rocky ■ Photos by Ellen Jaskol/Rocky Mountain News

Who says you can't go home again? Denver native and real estate appraiser Scott Hamling came full circle when he bought a 1902 storybook American farmhouse.

It's a classic dream house; a two-story, brick and shingled affair with an inviting porch wrapped around it like a sash. In front, where a driveway cuts through hefty lilac bushes, the house is framed by gardens flowing along flagstone walkways.

In back, a spectacular space designed by landscape architect Wendy Booth, Ivy Street Design Group Inc., Denver, recently netted an Award of Excellence from the Associated Landscape Contractors of Colorado. (To view all winning projects go to [alcc.com](http://alcc.com).)

The space serves dual purposes. It provides the perfect setting for the large-scale entertaining that Scott Hamling and his wife, Traction Communications owner Kirsten Hamling, love to do. And it creates a backdrop for family time with their three daughters: Maddie, 16; McKenna, 7; and Ryann, 4.

Outdoor dining and living rooms, separated by a massive fireplace, define the entertainment areas. The living room is furnished with teak pieces from Barlow Tyrie. The showpiece is an enormous concrete dining table that can seat a dozen or more, or be used as a buffet table, with a stainless steel trough running through it for candles, ice, wine or beer.

The 3,000-square-foot farmhouse, situated on a corner lot of about 17,000



Candles float in a concrete table's steel trough that can also hold ice, wine or beer.

square feet, is located in historic Montclair, developed by Baron Walter von Richthofen and regarded as Denver's first suburban neighborhood.

Scott grew up only four blocks from the farmhouse, which previously belonged to Steve and Susie Helbig, close friends of his parents, Mark and JoAnn Hamling.

"I have a lot of memories of playing in the farmhouse yard and running around here with other kids," he says.

After college in Arizona and California, Scott returned to Montclair with his wife, a California native, and settled in to raise a family.

"In 2000, we were looking for a bigger house when the Helbigs called to give us the first shot at the farmhouse, which had become too big for them," Scott says. "We jumped at it."

The Hamlings updated the farmhouse to their tastes, adding new slab granite counters and appliances to the kitchen, and painting the dining room, original to the house, a dramatic red.

"During a Denver Historic Home Tour, for which we opened our house, a family came by to see it," Scott says. "They were from out of town but had lived here before the Helbigs owned it, and they shared stories of growing up in the house."

When the Hamlings moved into the farmhouse, they wanted to redesign the underutilized backyard to suit their active lifestyle. Friend and longtime landscape contractor Paul Tighe recommended Booth.

Under her design, Tighe built the complete landscape, fireplace, concrete table (with the trough from Broomfield Sheet Metal), brick patio and pavers, and handled electrical installation.

"Scott and Kirsten wanted this to be a great place to entertain and to live in as

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A backyard fountain provides water for a dog at the Hamling home. The outdoor space provides two entertainment areas.

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 a family," says Booth, who teaches landscape design at Front Range Community College. "They were open to ideas which made it fun. As in any remodel we had to work around some trees, and an existing deck, and a budget that was not unlimited, although generous."

Almost all garden design traditions come from landscapes in which the default condition is "tree-covered," she says.

"Here in the West, it's an open prairie, so adapting those traditions is a fun challenge. The Hamling house has such a traditional Midwestern feel that there was no question that the landscape had to feel traditional, too."

Booth designed a south-facing living room patio and a dining room patio to the north of it, separated by a two-sided fireplace. Paths through a perennial garden lead to an intimate seating area with a fish pond.

The overriding design element is complete symmetry, on an axis with the fireplace. The yard is screened on two sides with trees, affording privacy.

"Historic brick was used for the fireplace, and we installed tumbled clay pavers with a Colorado rose flagstone border," Booth says.

The ALCC award was particularly meaningful because it recognizes excellence and innovation in a very competitive industry, she says.

"Winning for the Hamling residence was a good opportunity to celebrate a team effort as client, architect and contractor because it takes a team," she says.

The Hamlings, Booth said, have done a great job maintaining the garden.

"They have the dedication it takes to know that a garden is a living work of art," she says. "They have infused their garden with personality and warmth."



▲ A two-sided fireplace separates and links the dining and living areas.



An inviting and spacious front porch wraps the Hamling family's brick and shingled home in east Denver. The house built in 1902, top right,

maintains its charm. Right, the family — clockwise from top: Kirsten, Maddie, McKenna, Ryann and Scott — poses on the porch.



PHOTOS BY ELLEN JASKOL/ROCKY MOUNTAIN NEWS



"Historic brick was used for the fireplace, and we installed tumbled clay pavers with a Colorado rose flagstone border."

Wendy Booth, landscape architect

◀ Paths through perennials lead to a seating area and fish pond.



**Picture-perfect landscape plans**  
**Ivy Street Design Group owner/landscape architect Wendy Booth offers her top tips for anyone considering working with a landscape architect:**  
 ■ Consider visiting a few of the landscape architects' project sites. Pictures speak a thousand words, but they aren't the same as being in a 3-D space.

■ Bring ideas to the table. Again, pictures speak volumes. On the other hand, be open to any ideas the landscape architect may present that you haven't considered.  
 ■ Feel personally comfortable with the landscape architect. You'll be working closely together, creating the landscape or garden that is both functional and the stuff of your dreams. Being friends and communicating openly makes everything easier.

■ Feel confident with the landscape architect professionally. Check licensure and insurance. He or she should be familiar with regionally appropriate construction products, processes and contractors as well as the best local practices in irrigation and horticulture.  
 ■ Do talk about money. Design fees are typically a drop in the bucket compared with installation costs. The costs for hard-landscape projects — walls, patios, water and fire

features — can be compared to building-construction pricing. Planting and irrigation budgets can be more modest, depending on the scope of the project.