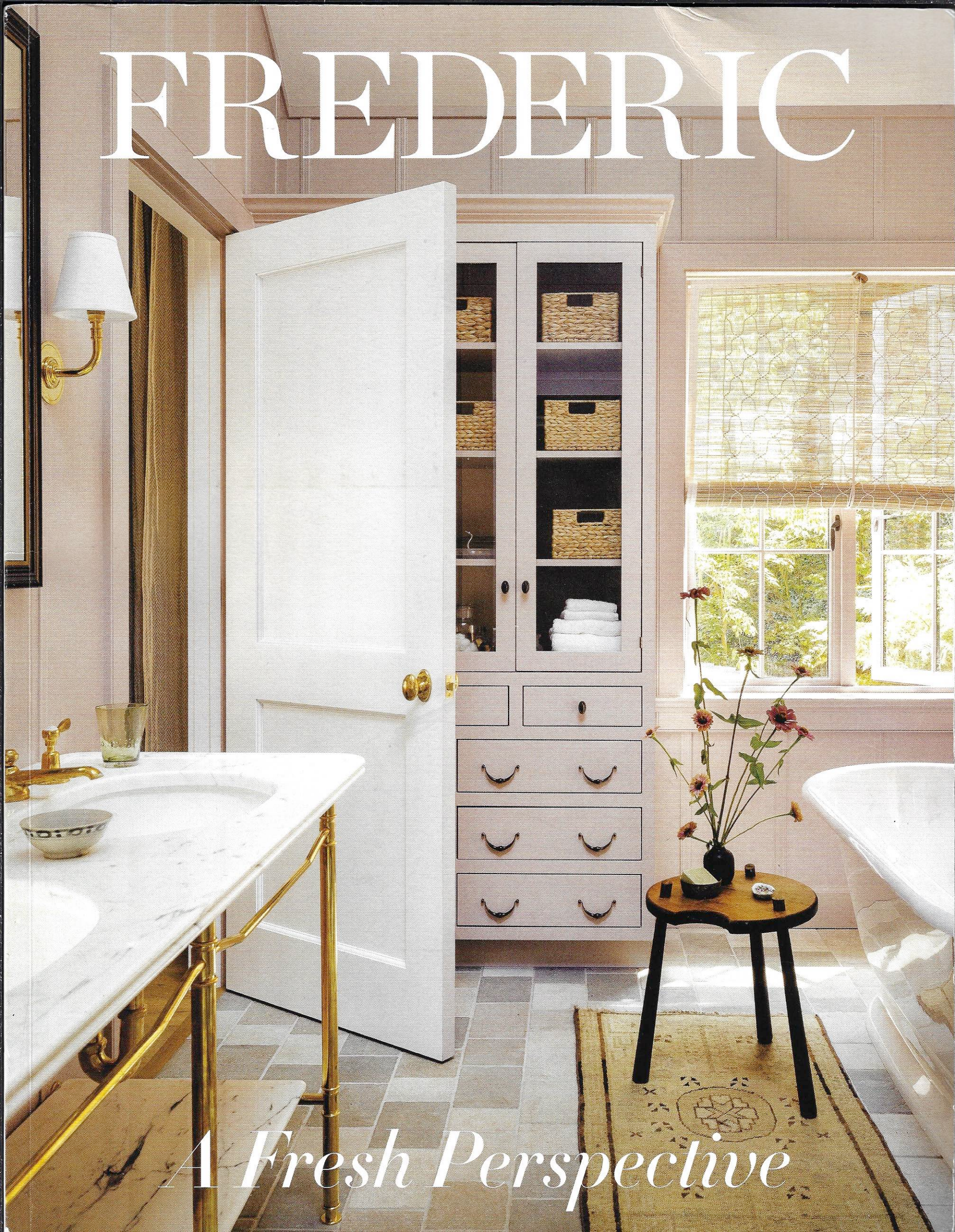


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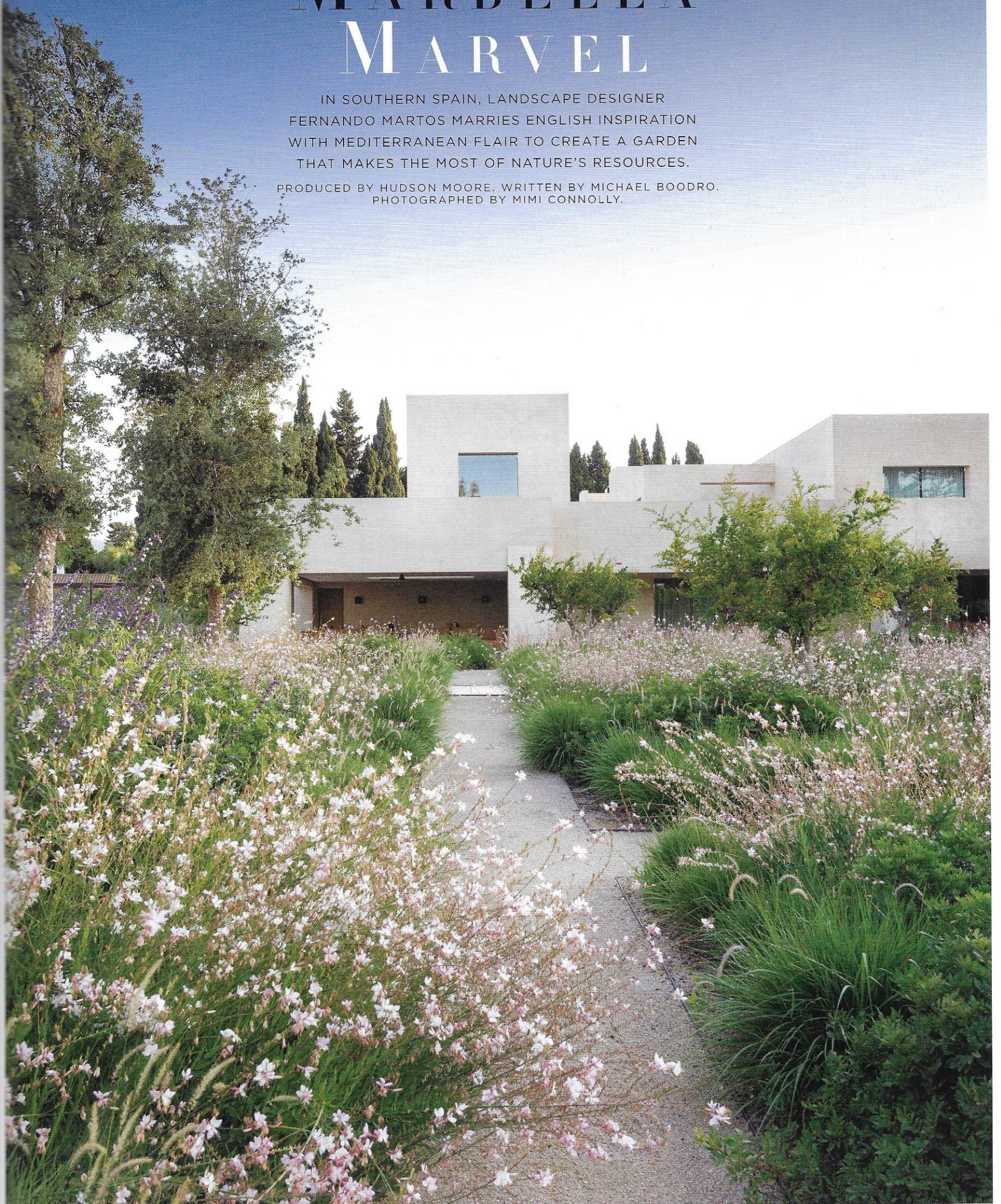
A Fresh Perspective

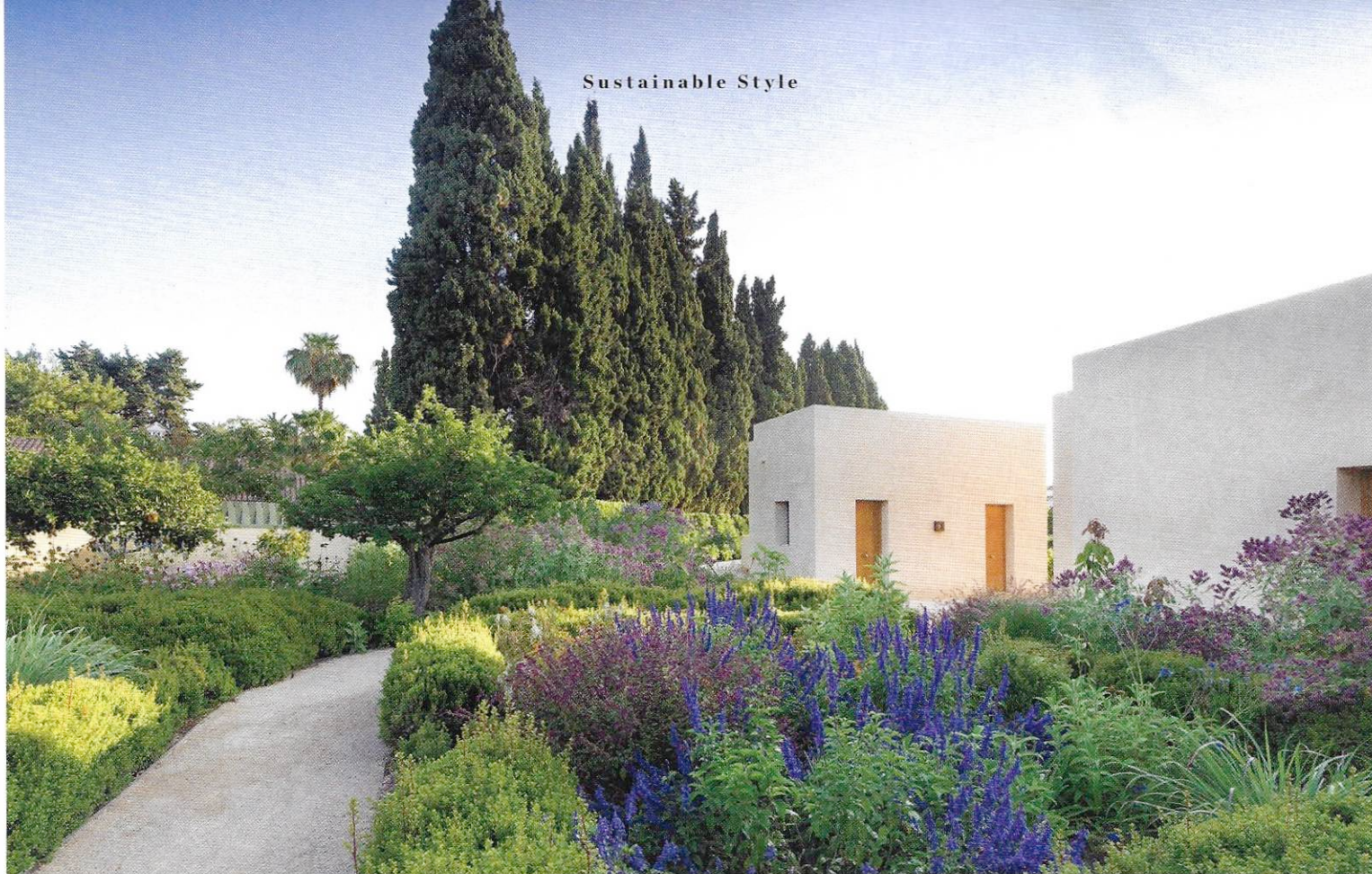
Sustainable Style

MARBELLA MARVEL

IN SOUTHERN SPAIN, LANDSCAPE DESIGNER
FERNANDO MARTOS MARRIES ENGLISH INSPIRATION
WITH MEDITERRANEAN FLAIR TO CREATE A GARDEN
THAT MAKES THE MOST OF NATURE'S RESOURCES.

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PHOTOGRAPHED BY MIMI CONNOLLY.





In Southern Spain, where verdant, sprawling, sprinkler-dotted lawns are de rigueur, the landscape surrounding one newly built modern house stands apart. There is no lawn here—just masses of perennials (salvia, fountain grass, mastic), planted closely together to deter weeds from taking root, intercut by gravel pathways and herbaceous borders. Cork trees—once a fixture of the region but now fewer and farther between—preside overhead alongside palms and cypress.

This unorthodox approach has become a signature of Madrid-based landscape designer Fernando Martos. It started more than two decades ago when, as a recent

graduate, he spent three months working in the 40-acre garden at Newby Hall, a grand estate in North Yorkshire, England. “Back then, gardens in Spain were very formal, and the plants were more limited,” he recalls. “I fell in love with English gardens—the structure, the perennials, the number of plants—and

Plum trees and flowering salvia grow in a garden designed by Fernando Martos in Marbella, Spain. Another area of the garden is “more typical of Southern Spain,” he notes, with its date palms, Mexican fan palms, and cypress trees; Martos chose a mix of looser and more compact perennials to create textural contrast. PREVIOUS PAGE: White gaura flowers and salvia line the path to the house. “The sun is very bright in Spain, so I tend to use soft colors. Deeper shades like red can look too aggressive,” says Martos.



wanted to bring that back with me, but adapted to a Mediterranean climate.”

The landscapes he creates aren’t just beautiful—they’re also consciously sustainable. Unlike those nearby lawns, which require daily watering, this garden needs water just once a week; the height of the plants shields the soil from the sun, reducing evaporation. There’s no need for chemicals, either: Martos intentionally selects pollinator-friendly, pest-resistant varieties and groups them closely so weeds don’t have space to take root.

Thanks to the region’s microclimate, the garden’s tender perennials will maintain their blooms for 10 months out of the year, then return the following season with gusto. Martos, though, is already looking further ahead: “It’s important to me that I’ve created a structure that will survive with time, one that will come back bigger and better every year,” he says. “It’s a continuous process.”

The limestone pool is surrounded by bushes of trailing rosemary and orange jasmine, which blooms in the autumn; in the spring, the lollipop orange trees come to life, ensuring that the garden remains fragrant year-round.