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Decked Out

All this Queen Village townhome renovation needed to be complete was a little change of scenery by **JILL WALDBIESER**

The only thing wrong with Christine Johnston and Martin Duffy's recently renovated, classic Queen Village townhome was the view. While the new, 8-foot-tall glass sliding doors in the living room flooded their first floor with light, the transparent additions also highlighted the drab cement-wasteland patio outside. Creative by nature and profession—Duffy runs a graphic design firm; Johnston is a fashion designer and founder of wonderboyclothing.com—the couple joined forces with architect Juliet Whelan of Philadelphia's Jibe Design (jibedesign.net). Together, the trio overhauled the eyesore into an urban garden oasis they'd never want to stop looking at.

The original wood post fence only exaggerated the courtyard's narrow dimensions. Whelan built walls with thick cedar planks, and created a flower bed corner with a diagonal cedar strip. She installed a custom galvanized-steel planter along the top of one wall and designed it to drain into a spigot that feeds the corner bed, so no water is wasted.

Built-in cedar benches, gently uplit so they appear to hover, provide informal seating without crowding the space. Whelan broke up all the horizontal lines with stepped risers, creating cubbyholes for garbage and recycling bins, and providing platforms for container plants. At Duffy's suggestion, the architect fastened the cedar plank walls with vertical rows of stainless-steel screws and washers at 2-foot intervals, a simple visual accent.

The river-rock flooring was inspired by nearby restaurant Hikaru. Whelan says the interlocking 12-by-12-inch sheets of natural stone were an organic fit. "You just want to be barefoot on it," says Duffy. "And it balances out the cedar." Plus, it's virtually maintenance-free. "You just hose it down," says Duffy. Cedar was likewise chosen for its durability, as well as for its zenlike look. "It's very spa-feeling out there," says Johnston.

