



CYPRESS

Complements Outdoor Living on Shelter Island

When Manhattan architect Cary Tamarkin, of Tamarkin Co. Architecture and Development, set out to build his dream beach house on Shelter Island, N.Y., he considered every detail, including the views of the Shelter Island

Sound and the melodic swish of the waves. "My goal was to make a simple, yet intricately designed house that took full advantage of the wonderful site," Tamarkin said. "And of course, I wanted to design the coolest house on Shelter Island." His effort, enhanced by the site's cooling breezes and breathtaking sunsets, resulted in a cypress showcase.

Inspired by the elegant sensibility of Japanese post-and-beam construction, Tamarkin wanted the house to be built from wood, with a cabin-like quality. "Wood lends itself to expressing the structure, which agrees with my passion for muscular buildings," he said. "Since this is a waterfront site, I decided to use cypress for its natural rot-resistant characteristics. Timeless architects I admire, such as Paul Rudolph, Marcel Breuer, and Frank Lloyd Wright, used cypress a lot. Its combination of strength, beauty, and rot-resistance are unmatched."

From the road, the home appears to hover over its beachfront landscape. A guest suite and laundry room anchor the ground level, purposefully minimizing the structure's footprint and impact on the land. The second level cantilevers out 13 feet on all sides, gracefully expanding the main living space. A covered breezeway serves as the foyer with dining, cooking, and living spaces positioned on one side, and the master suite, children's bedrooms, and a media room on the other. But the home's most frequently used area is the awe-inspiring porch.



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Top: Solid cypress columns and 36-foot-long cypress beams support the 2,800-square-foot structure.

Bottom: Tamarkin's unique design includes two cypress-lined outdoor showers.



Solid cypress columns and 36-foot-long cypress beams, crafted by a former ship builder, support the 2,800-square-foot structure. The interior and exterior of the home are completely wrapped in vertical tongue-and-groove cypress, topped off with cypress ceilings and soffits. Tamarkin's unique design includes two cypress-lined outdoor showers and the magnificent 1,120-square-foot cypress porch. "It's all about outdoor living," he noted. And natural beauty.

Tamarkin chose not to apply any sealers or stains to the cypress, but rather leave the wood—both interior and exterior—in its natural state. His decision was validated by one of his cypress providers who said, "I don't think there is anything you can do to this wood to make it last any longer or look any more beautiful." So for Tamarkin, "No finishes whatsoever. It is all turning a beautiful silvery grey."

Although Tamarkin did not strive for LEED certification, he believes all great architecture incorporates intelligent, sustainable design. The home is well-insulated and properly oriented towards the sun. In addition, transom windows above each door allow for natural breezes—plus the soothing sound of the waves.

While wood substitutes and imported goods become increasingly popular, Tamarkin chose to outfit his own weekend home and "favorite place on the planet" almost entirely out of cypress. "As architects, we need to consider what goes into making and transporting the materials we use, as well as their end-of-life scenarios," he said. "I try not to be trendy, but rather build in a classic, yet modern vernacular, and wood is among the most classic, natural and warmest materials. Wood is timeless."

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