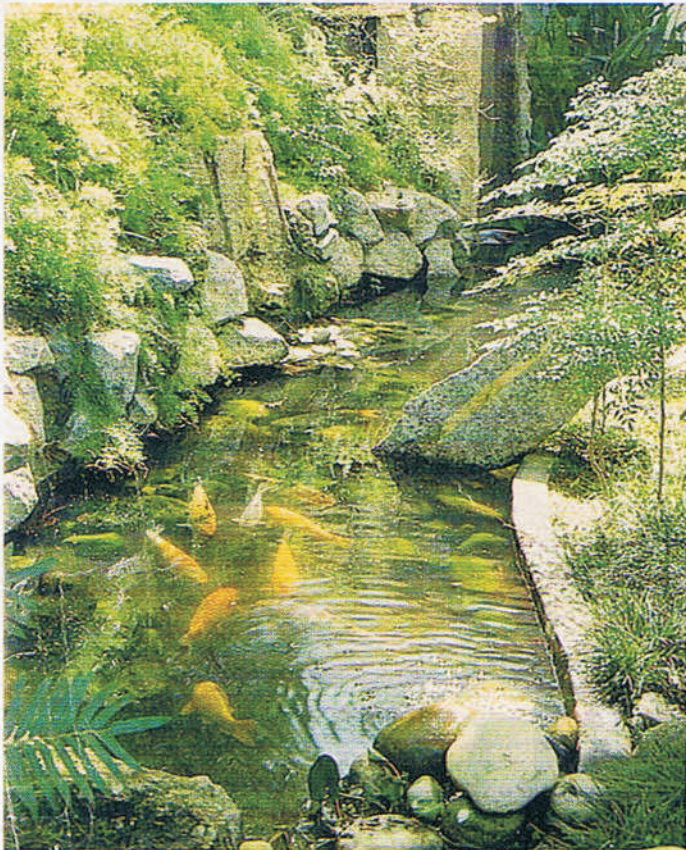


Granite is Great

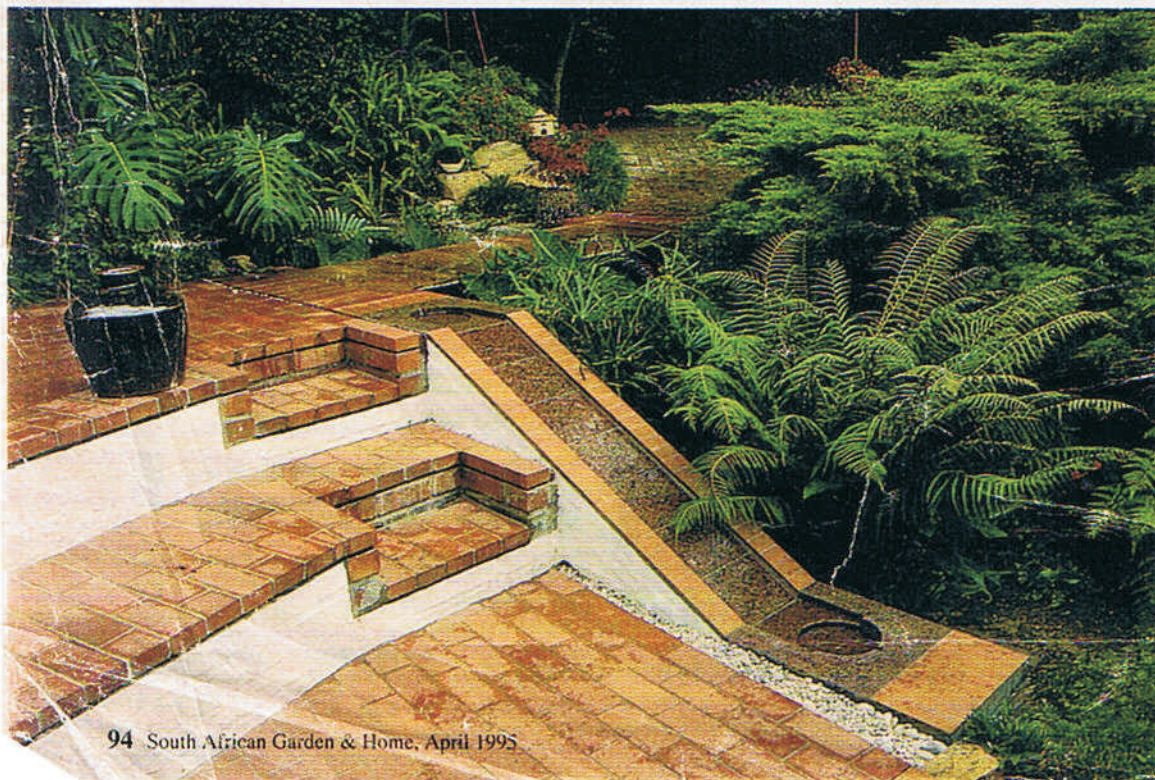
J.A. Clift, a family-run business in Paarl, has begun making granite garden ornaments and furniture

TEXT AND PHOTOGRAPHS BY MARIANNE ALEXANDER



THE IDEA of approaching a monumental mason to make garden ornaments and accessories never crossed my mind until I saw a very neat granite drain cover on a friend's paved patio. On expressing my admiration for this attractive, perforated square, which was a perfect match for the newly laid reddish bricks, I was told, as if it was something that happened every day, that it had been made by the granite contractor and monumentalist company, J.A. Clift of Paarl.

Intrigued by the idea, I visited the headquarters of this renowned family business at the foot of the Paarl Mountain. There I met William Christopher Clift, great-grandson of the founder, James Andrew Clift, a stonemason from Mousehole in Cornwall. I learnt from William that James Clift came to this country in the 1890s and, having walked from Durban to Johannesburg, obtained his first job in South Africa pinioning the steel head gears to stone blocks on the gold mines. His main claim to fame is, however, Rhodes Memorial, for it was he who – after working as a stonemason on the Higgovale granite quarry on the slopes of Table Mountain – was awarded the subcontract for cutting and erecting all the granite blocks and columns for this well-known edifice.



TOP LEFT Well-weathered granite, raw rocks and recently quarried blocks have been used together in this informal water feature. LEFT Diamond saws now make it possible to cut or slice through granite at greatly reduced thicknesses and produce sheets of granite which can be used for cladding. Here thin slabs of polished granite have been used for a small, architect-designed water feature which has been built into a patio.