

MEET CALIFORNIA'S LEADING DESIGNERS, P.40

GARDEN DESIGN

THE WOW FACTOR

7 New Gardens
That Have "It"

Our Top Ten
Succulents

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the Hamptons

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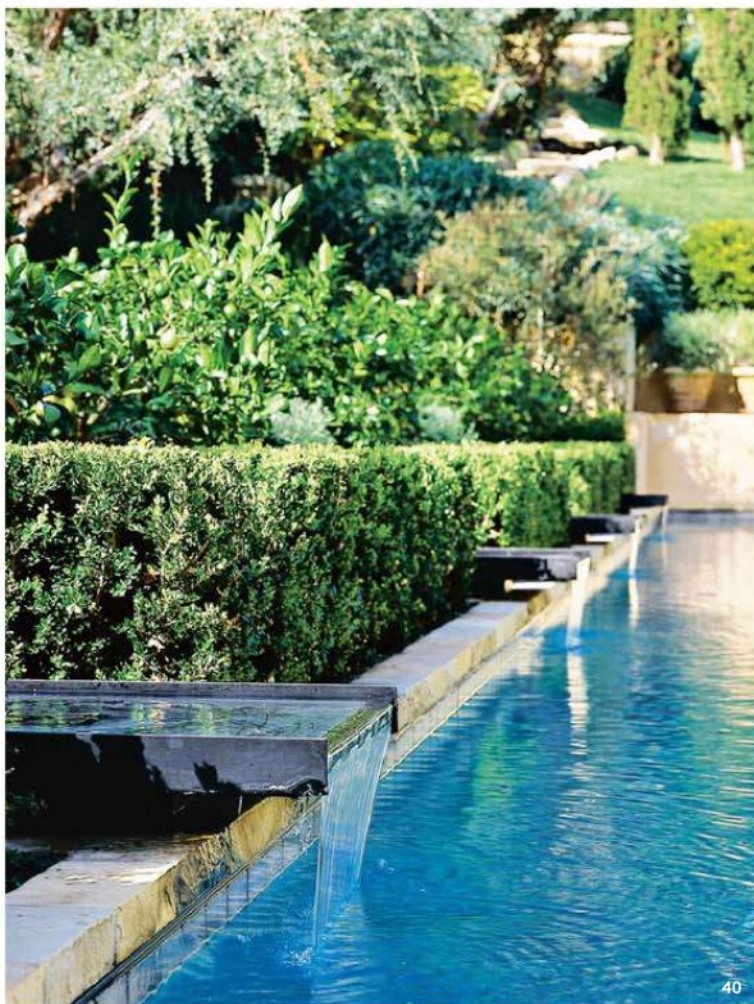
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ON THE COVER

A garden designed by Vladimir Sitta in Sydney, Australia, draws on the Down Under landscape of canyons and creeks for inspiration. Page 84 PHOTOGRAPHY BY JERRY HARPUR



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Bernard Trainor, Mark Rios and Heather Lenkin reveal the spirit of diversity that makes California gardens so very California. Showcasing a range of styles, these gardens share great views, a plant-loving climate and inspiration from around the globe. BY SUSAN HEEGER

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Annachiara Danieli's cedar-shake farmhouse needed a grassy, natural garden to go with it, which is why she called on Washington, D.C.-based landscape architecture firm Oehme, van Sweden & Associates. BY JENNY ANDREWS

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This dramatic garden of succulents and stone in Sydney, Australia, designed by Vladimir Sitta is like living cubist art.

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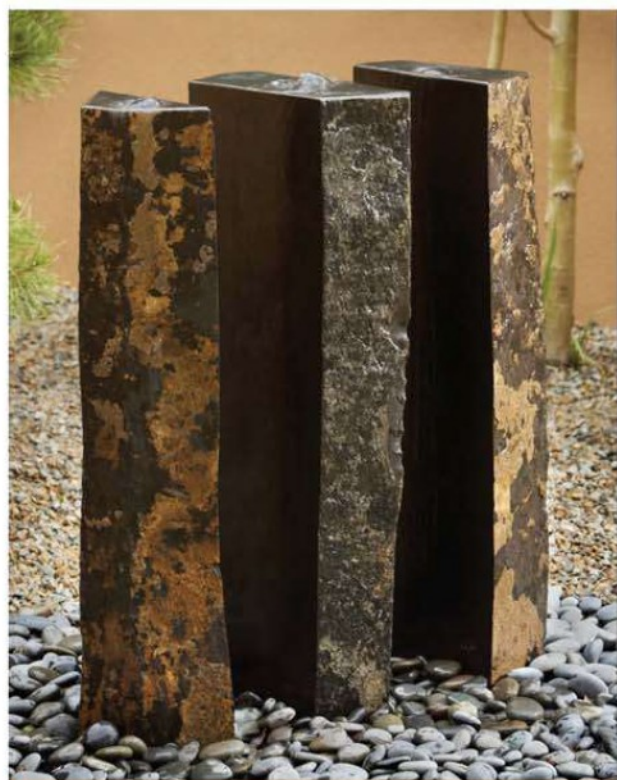
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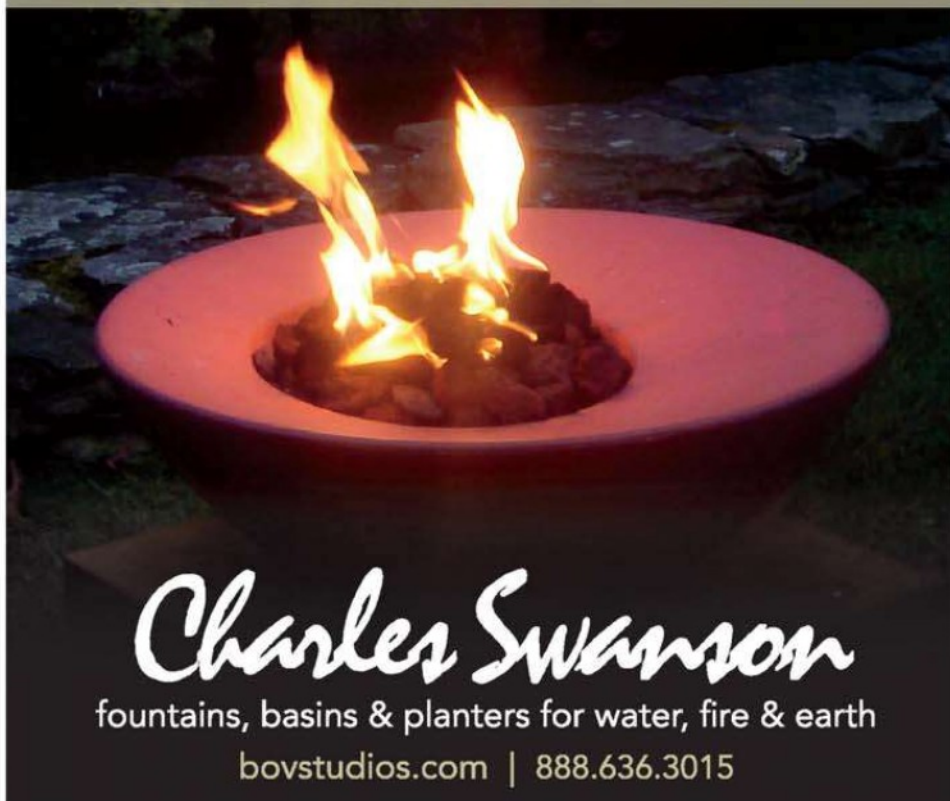
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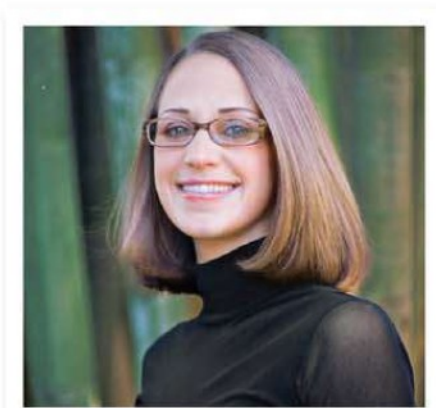
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editor's letter

GOLD RUSH



Consider this issue a mine of great ideas brought to you with love from the big, beautiful state of California, where trends are sparked, design is thriving, and passion for beauty is alive and well. The 20-page feature “Top of Their Game” (p. 40), is a nod to our largest group of readers: California residents.

Looking back at the past five years or so, I suddenly realize that California is my most frequent out-of-town destination, and for good reason. If I want to see countless innovations in landscapes and spend loads of time with people who are really excited about outdoor spaces, where better than California?

When in the Bay Area, I am likely to visit Flora Grubb, whose garden center on Jerrold Avenue in San Francisco is one of the coolest, most fun places to be in the world. Flora's good taste permeates every offering — from plants to objets d'art to containers to garden designs — and I don't mind saying that she has influenced my own taste. If you need a burst of positive garden vibes today, check out her blog: floragrubb.com/florasblog.

Our editor emeritus Bill Marken lives in Los Altos, and as a former editor in chief of *Sunset* magazine as well as *Garden Design*, book author and honorary member of the American Society of Landscape Architects, Bill has not only shaped garden culture in California, but in the U.S. as a

whole. He continues to edit departments for this magazine, currently Landscape and Groundbreaker. This issue, he wrote both.

Down south, one of my favorite inspiring friends — Stephen Block of Inner Gardens — has been a life source for a long time. Sharing his expertise in garden ornament with our readers makes him invaluable to the magazine; selling beautiful wares at his three locations, the newest one on Montana Avenue in Santa Monica, makes him a Los Angeles staple. We simply cannot do without him.

Garden scouting in Los Angeles is a hunt for gold that never turns up empty. Mia Lehrer, Paul Robbins, Melinda Taylor, Art Luna, Judy Kameon, Laura Morton, Anthony Exter, Scott Shrader — just a sampling of the who's who of California landscape design who make for endless garden riches.

In this issue, discover work by top designers Heather Lenkin, Bernard Trainor and Mark Rios, who share their design innovations: California's most perfect exports. Because we all know, what happens in California doesn't stay there — that's the power of trend-making on the West Coast.

Sarah Kinbar

SARAH KINBAR/EDITOR

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JAMIE DURIE 🌿 BOLD OUTDOOR FABRIC 🌿 DESIGNING WITH SUCCULENTS 🌿 NATIONAL PUBLIC GARDENS DAY



"Australian Garden" won gold at the 2008 Chelsea Flower Show and features a plant palette comprised exclusively of Australian natives. Jamie Durie was inspired not only by his homeland's materials, but also by the way in which Aussies use their outdoor space.

the outdoor room Aussie import Jamie Durie blends world travel with sustainable garden design to create gorgeous outdoor rooms for his new HGTV show, which debuted in January.

Durie, 39, is founder of Australia-based PATIO Landscape Architecture and Design, author of six design books and a media darling in his native Australia, where he developed the original concept for *The Outdoor Room With Jamie Durie* in 2008. The new half-hour U.S.

version, which Durie hosts and co-produces, is a fast-paced garden makeover series that follows Durie and two colleagues (horticulturist Beth Edelstein and carpenter/craftsman Stephen Zimpel) as they reimagine and transform lackluster backyards for deserving owners.

Filmed mostly in and around Los Angeles, where Durie recently bought a classic midcentury home in need of its own makeover, *The Outdoor Room* uses sustainable ideas — such as low-water plantings and reclaimed hardscape — to design intimate, livable



Jamie Durie (above left) developed the original concept for *The Outdoor Room* in Australia in 2008. His approach combines sustainability by creating well-lived-in outdoor rooms, as seen at this Melbourne residence (left), with around-the-world design influences, including Egypt (above and opposite).

environments for erstwhile nongardeners. “I wanted to develop a show that cast a wider net, that didn’t just speak to the already converted gardeners of the world,” he explains.

On the show, Durie’s cutaway trips to Bali, Australia, Key West, Sonoma and other dreamy places inform everything from planting schemes and color palettes to furnishings and water features. “By throwing travel into the mix, I’m suddenly enveloping a whole range of viewers who can sit in their armchairs and go around the world with me,” he says.

Durie’s ambition seems to delight his on-camera clients, who end up with gardens valued at \$75,000 to \$100,000, and he admits: “I don’t build simple gardens.” For one nearly vacant lot in Duarte, California (its sole vegetation was a 75-year-old euphorbia), Durie built a matrix of Sydney, Australia-inspired, rammed-earth retaining walls as planters, benches and room dividers. Paired with kangaroo paws, tree ferns and other Australian natives, the solution created a lush-looking, drought-tolerant oasis. And in his darling Australian accent, Durie points out that the garden has *priv-uh-see*, a theme that runs through each of his

designs. “Americans get shocked by this statement, but I say it all the time to my design team: If you can walk around naked in the backyard, you have given clients complete exclusivity,” he says.

On location, the collective excitement “is natural, unscripted and unrehearsed,” says Los Angeles artist Jennifer Gilbert Asher of TerraSculpture. Durie’s producers tapped Asher to participate in an episode featuring a San Francisco-inspired landscape using one of her contemporary sculptures. “The surprise on the faces of his clients when Jamie told them they could choose one of my sculptures for their garden was priceless,” she says.

Durie believes that the outdoor room is the best way to create a sustainable landscape. It’s not an unfamiliar concept in American garden-design circles, but his approach is refreshing and exciting. “You really can convert every room of your house into an outdoor space,” Durie says. Combined with a little of his star sizzle, that’s the takeaway message of *The Outdoor Room*. Watch HGTV’s *The Outdoor Room With Jamie Durie* on Saturdays at 9 p.m. hgtv.com

— DEBRA PRINZING



DURIE'S PROCESS FOR PLANNING AN OUTDOOR ROOM

Whether it's a landscape in Australia, America or Barbados, Jamie Durie follows a similar process. "It's about creating a space that represents your lifestyle and stylistic preferences and also, simply, about being outdoors and letting nature soothe our souls," he says. — DP

- 1. Identify a wish list.** How does each family member envision using and enjoying the landscape?
- 2. Plot the plan in scale.** Sketch out your property, including the house, border, large trees and plantings.
- 3. Follow the sun's course.** "Think about where the sun falls, what kind of shadows your house throws out, and the positive or negative light requirements," he says.
- 4. Note assets and liabilities.** Start by taking 360-degree photographs of the interior and exterior points of view. Consider the soil health.
- 5. Look at the borrowed landscape.** Make a list of features you want to downplay or play up.
- 6. Compartmentalize distinct rooms.** "It doesn't matter how small your backyard is, you can maintain intimacy in the design and get two to three rooms out of it," Durie says.
- 7. Maintain a sense of mystery.** "You don't want to see the whole garden through the kitchen window," he says. "But you do want to connect the rooms to convey a sense of discovery."



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Hot Product LOOP-THE-LOOP

The iconic “loop” chair created by interior designer Frances Elkins (1888-1953) is moving outside. Created by Robert Willson and David Serrano, owners of L.A.-based Downtown, the charming, made in Los Angeles version has a price tag of \$2,200 and comes in more than 200 colors of powder-coated steel. The idea for a modern, patio-friendly edition of the loop chair came from a set decorator who told Willson of similar chairs on the set of *Guess Who's Coming to Dinner* (1967), with Katharine Hepburn and Spencer Tracy. Downtown spent two years working with a custom fabricator to adapt the carved-wood silhouette into durable steel, making sure the proportions accurately reflected the original version. “We added perforated mesh for the seat,” says Willson. “I like this look because the perforations relate to the loops.” downtown20.net — DP



Swatch Watch OPPOSITES ATTRACT

Have a case of designer's block? Head to Miami. Lately the tropical hot spot is credited for inspiring a host of designs, including Nomi Fabrics' new Black and White series — a collection of patterns made from 100 percent Sunbrella solution-dyed acrylic. Says Nomi Franklin about her new work that reveals a shift to one-color minimalism as a result of her latest trip to Miami, “Digging deeper as I made my way through design offices, I began to sense a real preference for chic simplicity that I suspect is the stamp of high style from both South American and European designers who live and work in Miami.” Nomi describes her new Black and White series as “very Miami,” yet recognizes its potential for both classic and contemporary applications across the country. We agree. To the trade. nomiinc.com — MEGAN PADILLA

Nomi Fabrics outdoor line includes Taza (left), a new pattern, and Flora and Labyrinth (center and right) which have expanded with new colorways including black and white.



Garden Décor A HANGING GARDEN THAT SITS UPRIGHT

Leave it to the Finns to put an elegant twist on plant display. Finland's Tonfisk Design is best known for its sleek tableware, but when designers Susanna Hoikkala and Tanja Sipilä came up with the Kiikku planter — a walnut ladder about 4 feet long and just over 6 inches wide that tilts against any wall to hold four black or white vitreous porcelain pots — the company couldn't resist adding it to its lineup. Says Hoikkala, “The essential idea is that one can easily move the entire ladder or just remove one pot [for care].” In Finnish Kiikku means “swing,” and the pots do indeed swing sweetly upright no matter the angle you lean your ladder. Orchids, succulents, herbs — all take on a fresh look in this unexpectedly vertical presentation. Unison is the only U.S. retailer that stocks the Kiikku. Says owner Robert Segal, “In a small area, it saves space; in a larger room, it looks poetic and dramatic.” \$298; unisonhome.com — LISA CREGAN

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On Design STEPHEN SUZMAN



Though he started out in banking and finance, Stephen Suzman always had a passion for gardening, beginning in his childhood in South Africa. So when 26 years ago a friend who happened to be a Berkeley professor of landscape architecture came to tea, looked around Suzman's own San Francisco garden and asked why he didn't do this for a living, Suzman took it to heart. After a bit of retraining he opened his first design firm in 1992, then in 2004 joined with landscape architect Todd R. Cole to form Suzman & Cole Design Associates. He defines the firm's directives as: Follow the client's preferences, be site specific and architecturally appropriate, and above all, be deliberately noniconic." The reaction he's hoping for is "What a lovely space!" not "What a nice Suzman Cole garden." One category of plants he particularly favors is succulents, both for their ease of care and their beauty. — JENNY ANDREWS

Right and Below: At the 2009 San Francisco Decorator Showcase, Stephen Suzman created a rooftop garden that became the *pièce de résistance* of the event. Woven among the grassy textures of sedges and restios were succulents like nearly black *Aeonium* 'Zwartkop', neat rows of *Echeveria* and mixed "sedum green roof tiles."



Q: How long have you been a fan of succulents?

A: I'm from South Africa, and there are literally hundreds and hundreds of them from there. So I've always had a soft spot for plants like *Aloe*, *Aeonium*, *Sedum*, *Sempervivum* and *Echeveria*. We now have a roof garden of succulents at the office that I can see out my window.

Q: How do they fit into your design work?

A: Succulents work exceptionally well for contemporary gardens, but recently I revised an old garden at an old house by taking out the perennials and replacing them with succulents. Also, they suit sustainable design, which is a part of all our work. Clients now are much more amenable to the idea of sustainability, particularly with the specter of water shortages and the desire for low-maintenance gardens. Lately we've been designing a lot of roof gardens, and succulents fit especially well into the green-roof "philosophy" — they're lightweight, they grow quickly, and they don't require much water or care.

Q: And they're also so decorative.

A: Yes, the play of light on them and the

shadows are quite amazing, and all the colors — blues, greens, bronzes, even lavender. Many of them are also very structural. I like to group them to create patterns on the ground. And they're even beautiful without flowers; in fact, sometimes I cut the flowers off.

Q: Wasn't the rooftop garden you created for the recent San Francisco Decorator Showcase really a showcase for succulents?

A: There's been a regular prejudice against succulents in California, especially since the invasive ice plant is so familiar. My goal with that garden was to popularize succulents.

Q: It sounds like you're on a bit of a mission!

A: Indeed. And it's working. The rooftop garden converted people. They came up to me saying things like, "I hated succulents, but you've changed my mind," and "I didn't know succulents could be so fun." It had to do with the element of surprise, which delights more people in a garden than anything else.

SEE SOURCEBOOK FOR MORE INFORMATION, PAGE 76

Way Hot Plants SUCCULENT SMARTS

For drought tolerance, easy maintenance and texture, it's hard to beat succulents. From carpet-forming sedums to the mesmerizing symmetry of aeoniums to architectural tree aloes, the variety of forms, sizes and colors is astonishing. Good drainage is a must, bright sun works best for most, and keep hardiness in mind. But many are perfect for containers, even if just for a season. Here, landscape designer Stephen Suzman shares his list of top 10 succulents. — Jenny Andrews



For full descriptions of these plants, go to GARDENDESIGN.COM/SUCCULENTS



▲ Echeveria

For unusual muted shades, Suzman likes to use *Echeveria* 'Afterglow' (powdery pinkish lavender) and *E.* 'Perle von Nürnberg', shown above (grayish brown with a pinkish mauve tinge). Both form rosettes of overlapping leaves, 1 foot across for 'Afterglow', 5 to 6 inches for 'Perle von Nürnberg'.



▲ Senecio

Suzman likes the groundcover species *Senecio mandraliscae* for its fast growth and distinctive chalky-blue fleshy foliage. A native of South Africa, it grows 12 to 18 inches tall with masses of 3- to 4-inch pencil-like leaves.



▲ Aeonium

For surreal form and striking color, Suzman's top picks are two aeoniums. *Aeonium* 'Sunburst' (above) has leaves striped green and white with hints of copper-red, clustered in tight rosettes at the ends of 18-inch stems, looking like big dahlia flowers. *Aeonium* 'Zwartkop' is so purple it's almost black (zwartkop means "black head"), forming clumps of 3- to 4-foot stems topped with rosettes of foliage. Especially dazzling when combined with its clusters of bright-yellow flowers.



▲ Sedum

Often called pork and beans or jellybean plant, *Sedum x rubrotinctum* (above) is a 6- to 8-inch low-mounding groundcover with fat little leaves that go from bright green to red. Suzman calls it "very easy and reliable." The glowing hues of *Sedum rupestre* 'Angelina' have made it a must-have for containers and perennial borders, with needlelike chartreuse to bright-gold leaves usually tipped with orange.



▲ Agave

For sculpture, agaves are standouts. One of Suzman's favorites is *Agave attenuata* 'Nova', a selection of the tropical fox tail agave with wider and much-bluer leaves than the species, discovered during a Huntington Botanical Garden expedition to Mexico. Hardy in Zones 9 to 11, in cooler regions it can be used in a container as a structural accent.



▲ Aloe

Succulents aren't all low growing, especially these two South African natives. *Aloe plicatilis* (fan aloe, above) is a 4- to 8-foot tree with clusters of finger-like, bluish-gray leaves. *Tree aloe* (*A. barberae*) — which Suzman calls "statuesque, especially when old" — can reach 20 to 30 feet, crowned by graceful mounds of dark-green foliage.

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Cutting Edge

GRAPHIC DESIGN BY NATURE

Fresh flowers, a vase or a chair — floral designer Jennifer McGarigle takes mutual elements and creates graphic patterns as the foundation of her Venice Beach, California-based studio. After studying visual arts at the Los Angeles campus of the Fashion Institute of Design & Merchandising, she started her business in 1993, translating her ideas about fashion into flowers. Setting up her boutique, Floral Art, on Abbot Kinney Boulevard six years ago, a stage where flowers are front and center, McGarigle included a video installation to lure nighttime window shoppers. Projecting images of flowers morphing and changing did more than bring in clientele — it inspired her to design a line of furniture and accessories. Starting with her Floret chair and cube tables, she embedded images of

photographs into the structure of the furniture.

This spring she is launching a line of vessels: clear and white Lucite rectangular vases that utilize the same proprietary photographic process. The Pink Flax Leaf vase embraces an arrangement of orange ranunculus and Iceland poppies. McGarigle's intention is for the vessel to live far beyond the arrangement. She suggests flexible uses ranging from an object d'art on a shelf, a favorite go-to vase for materials as simple as leaves or grasses, or even a storage container for magazines. Says McGarigle, "Within nature we see the most beautiful graphic design." With this vessel she makes it easy for the imagination, the great incubator, to come up with new ideas. floralartla.com — ANASTASIA BOWEN

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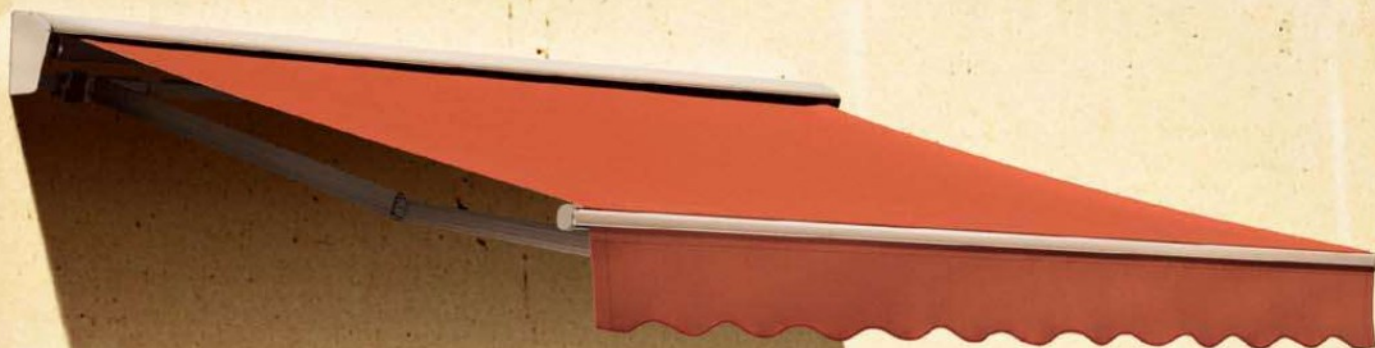
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Summer Classics Store	Huntsville AL	Summer Classics Store	Louisville KY	SunSpot Pool & Patio	Cincinnati OH
Summer Classics Store	Mobile AL	Seasons Four	Lexington MA	Fortin Ironworks	Columbus OH
Summer Classics Store	Pelham AL	Perfection Casual Furniture Galleries	Marshfield MA	Geerlings Garden Gift & Patio	Buckingham PA
All American	Scottsdale AZ	Greenstreet Gardens	Lothian MD	Hill Company	Chestnut Hill PA
Anaheim Patio & Fireside	Irvine CA	Halls Kansas City	Kansas City MO	Hill Company	Worcester PA
Villa Terrazza Patio & Home	Sonoma CA	Outdoor Home	Springfield MO	Morris Sokol Furniture	Charleston SC
Colorado Custom Decks	Colorado Springs CO	Summer Classics Store	St. Louis MO	Augustus & Carolina Outdoor Living	Georgetown SC
Washington Supply Company	Washington Depot CT	B.B. Barns	Asheville NC	Tropic Aire Patio Gallery	W. Columbia SC
New England Patio & Hearth	Wethersfield CT	Summer Classics Store	Charlotte NC	The Patio Shop	Chattanooga TN
Tyndalls Casual Furniture	Laurel DE	Green & McClure Furniture	Graham NC	Summer Classics Store	Nashville TN
Tyndalls Casual Furniture	Lewis DE	Hickory Fireplace & Patio	Hickory NC	Patio 1	Houston TX
Southern Casual	Jacksonville FL	The Summer House	Highlands NC	Summer Classics Store	San Antonio TX
Pinch A Penny	Tallahassee FL	Charlotte Outdoor Creations	Matthews NC	Maison Et Jardin, Ltd.	Great Falls VA
Weinberger's	Augusta GA	Summer Classics Store	Raleigh NC	The Guest Room Furniture	Leesburg VA
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Williams Patio Furniture	Highland Park IL	Garden Cottage	Morristown NJ	Williamsburg Wicker & Patio	Williamsburg VA
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In his poem "The Public Garden," Robert Lowell reflected on the importance of a great city park to locals' lives: This was the place where sorrows were forgotten, the senses engaged and perfect memories made. The United States has more than 500 such places, all to be celebrated on May 7, National Public Gardens Day. Wondering where the nearest public garden is? Use the search feature on publicgardens.org. Below, a listing of current art exhibitions at public gardens around the country offers yet one more tempting reason to visit and support the gardens whose programs and very existence speak to a culture built on beautiful outdoor spaces. — SARAH KINBAR

ARIZONA-SONORA DESERT MUSEUM

Tucson, Arizona
Exhibition: *Art and the Animal*
Through June 27

The Society of Animal Artists presents paintings and sculpture by multiple artists in a range of styles.
520-883-2702; desertmuseum.org

BROOKSIDE GARDENS

Wheaton, Maryland
Exhibition: *From Pollen to Petals in the Visitors' Center*
April 3 to May 22

View a collection of Jennifer Kline Vallina's close-up botanical photographs.
301-962-1400; montgomeryparks.org/brookside

FILOLI

Woodside, California
Exhibition: *Plein Air in the Garden and Beyond*
Through June 6
Visit this exhibit of California artists' work during the Filoli Flower Show, April 13 to May 9.
650-364-8300; filoli.org

FREDERIK MEIJER GARDENS & SCULPTURE PARK

Grand Rapids, Michigan
Exhibition: *Spirit and Form: Michele Oka Doner and the Natural World*
Through May 9
Oka Doner's largest exhibit to date explores her

versatile artistry: sculpture, prints, jewelry and objects inspired by nature.
616-957-1580; meijergardens.org

LONGWOOD GARDENS (PICTURED ABOVE)

Kennett Square, Pennsylvania
Exhibition: *Making Scents: The Art and Passion of Fragrance*

April 10 to Nov. 21

An intersection of flora, fragrance fashion and science transform the conservatory into a museum for the senses.
610-388-1000; longwoodgardens.org

MINNESOTA LANDSCAPE ARBORETUM

Chaska, Minnesota
Exhibition: *Flowers Fantastique in the Reedy Gallery, Oswald Visitor Center*
Through May 31

See paintings of blooms in watercolor and oil by Leah Schwartz, Mary Krell, Kristine Fretheim and more.
952-443-1400; arboretum.umn.edu

WAVE HILL

Bronx, New York
Exhibition: *Propagating Eden: Uses and Techniques of Nature Printing in Botany and Art in the Glyndor Gallery*
April 1 to June 27
Learn how nature prints have influenced botany.
718-549-3200; wavehill.org



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PROPER PRIMROSES

Colorful auriculas are a plant connoisseur's dream

STORY BY TOVAH MARTIN ■ PHOTOGRAPHY BY MARIANNE MAJERUS



Spring is a dicey juncture for plant snobs, what with all the pansies popping and the forsythia blaring. Grow auricula primroses, however, and you've found a safe haven. An entirely different animal than those cutesy polyanthus primroses you see in the supermarket, auriculas have been the epitome of chic since the 16th century. Consider the color spectrum — fiery red, blue, orange, parrot green, olive, dusty gray, jet black, white, cinnamon, mulberry, tawny, ash and dun. Fragrance is also often a factor.

And auricula primroses have lineage, beginning with the yellow-flowering *Primula auricula* found in the European Alps, which interbred with red *P. rubra* to produce *P. x pubescens*. By the 16th century, “florists” were concocting something to perk up late winter for Flemish weavers confined indoors. So auriculas were already flamboyant by the mid-17th century. Names like ‘Mistress Buggs her Fine Purple’ just added to their charm. And the beauty of the fad was that auriculas infiltrated all strata of society. Wealthy growers used special staging (“auricula theatres”), while the common man could don a top hat and visit the local pub with potted plants in hand hoping to win a prize. But gardening is cyclic and auriculas aren’t the easiest plants to grow. Eventually, attention turned to primroses that could be produced inexpensively, in quantity and with less hassle. However, a few collectors (notably Susan Schnare of Andover, New Hampshire, who sells at the Tower Hill Botanic Garden Daffodil & Primrose Shows May 1 and 2) have stubbornly pursued auriculas, importing them from Europe in hopes of seducing other aficionados and redefining the rites of spring.

◀ ‘WALTON’

Although the garden auriculas take the prize for ease of cultivation (relatively speaking), the alpine primroses are not far behind. In 1957, this particular stunner caught the eye of Gordon Douglas — a British nurseryman who was esteemed for his auricula collection. And the beauty of ‘Walton’ lies not only in its handsome flowers, it’s also a willing parent — producing a fine brood of offsets to further the cause.



▲ **'SCORCHER'**

In auricula lingo (and there's a whole vocabulary dedicated to primroses), a "self" has flowers of only one color — in this case devil red that can smolder to fiery orange toward the rim. Its bull's-eye is a circle of pure white "paste" (named for its resemblance to unglazed porcelain). 'Scorcher' (1993) is a "show self," bespeaking its finickiness. Though Lockyer is an auricula devotee, he cautions, "Growing show auriculas is a fine art."

► **'SIRIUS'**

Radiating from its gold center, 'Sirius' has galaxies of tawny and maroon, but it's an alpine — meaning that foliage and flowers are not dusted with "farina" (powdery coating). So, this auricula doesn't require protection from rain.



▲ **'LUCY LOCKET'**

Not everyone has a hankering to court a plant-world princess that requires hair, makeup, etc., to look prime, but the border or garden auriculas put these plants onto a more attainable level. "Lucy Locket' is our best doer," says auricula grower Simon Lockyer.



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▲ 'GLENEAGLES'

Show auriculas have an obvious “wow” factor, especially the parrot-green-edged versions, which first appeared around the early 18th century. They remain showstoppers in exhibitions — although the necessary fussing (protection from water spots, etc.) to achieve prize-worthy status isn't everyone's ideal. 'Gleneagles' (introduced in 1985) is reputedly a good bloomer, but it's a bear to grow — like all the edged, heavily farina-dusted types.



▲ 'PIERS TELFORD'

With its neatly overlapping petals glistening in sunset shades surrounding the glowing gold center, little wonder that this 1991 introduction tends to take home prizes. Not only is it a stunner, but it's attainable — 'Piers Telford' is an alpine auricula and relatively easily grown.

◀ 'WINIFRID'

With roots that plunge down into history, this pre-1887 auricula with wavy, frilly petals around a light central paste explores the innuendoes of the color mustard to their limit. In the auricula world, flat is generally the ideal for blossoms — this being an exception.

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Photo: Eric Figge Photography, Inc.

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▲ **'REGENCY EMPEROR'**

Although 'Regency Emperor' is a relatively new kid on the block (1999), striped auriculas first appeared in the 17th century. However, according to Simon Lockyer of W&S Lockyer in Surrey, United Kingdom (with a collection of more than 3,000 auriculas), striped types were rare until 10 to 15 years ago. The blossoms remain a sticky wicket. "If the rain hits the flowers, they're ruined," Simon says.

◀ **'SIBSEY'**

Packed with petals, carnationlike double auriculas date back to circa 1665 when they were worth roughly four times as much as the singles. But there's nothing dusty about this double, except perhaps the farina on its leaves — 'Sibsey' was introduced just 21 years ago.

NATURE, NURTURE

CARE: Auricula primroses are a challenge, says Susan Schnare, who keeps one of the finest collections in the U.S. The stickiest wicket is heat: They don't like it. Hot, moist growing conditions can be a killer for these high-altitude alpins. Schnare grows her collection in small (usually 4 inch and smaller) clay pots, "footed" for drainage. Auriculas don't like to be rootbound or have superabundant root space. Rather than stepping-up pot size, divide the offsets (any time except midsummer) — auriculas bloom best

when divided. And pot them down; they tend to push their shoulders above the soil surface. When you water, try not to wet the foliage.

ZONES: Cold isn't an issue for garden auriculas — they grow in Alaska and easily tolerate Zone 3 winters. But the fancy types shown on these pages are best coddled in containers.

EXPOSURE: Indirect sun or partial shade is what auriculas traditionally prefer. Indoors during the winter, light can be increased to full, but hot summer sun

tends to cause wilting. And the worst sin is to water at the first sign of wilt — wilting displays their dissatisfaction with the weather, not their thirst.

SOIL: An auricula's tendency is to snuggle into a rich, well-drained soil. What that means for Schnare is amending potting mixtures with compost, kelp meal, worm castings, greensand and grit. But even given ideal conditions, she's the first to admit that coaxing her exhibition-quality "fancies" into bloom is really done with smoke and mirrors.

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A vibrant photograph of a garden. In the foreground, a stone path leads through a bed of green plants and pink flowers. To the right, a large terracotta pot sits on the path. In the background, a family is enjoying the garden: a man and a woman are sitting on a low wall, and another group is standing on the grass, looking at something in their hands. The scene is filled with sunlight and shadows, creating a warm and inviting atmosphere.

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From upholstery to slipcovers, fabrics belong outdoors **STORY BY DAMARIS COLHOUN**



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2. ARTISAN WEAVE

Working in Moroso's design lab in Dakar, Ayse Birsal and Bibi Seck plus Salam Gaye — who leads the Dakar lab — dreamt up the Bayekou chair. Inspired by traditional Senegalese textiles and crafts, the chair has vivid patterns and a soft, fluid shape, clearly referencing the formal qualities of a woven textile. Designed for reclining, rocking and relaxing, each piece is one of a kind. Approximately \$1,300. morosousa.com

3. SLIP INTO COMFORT

The ZOE collection for Verzelloni by the Lievore Altherr Molina studio of Barcelona brings plush indoor comfort outside. ZOE has the pared-down appeal of slipcover furniture, and its "pillow" chambers are filled with expanded polystyrene pearls and then sewn up in twill cotton covers with mold-resistant yarn. The covers are water-repellent and easily removable with a zipper. Approximately \$2,830. suiteny.com



4. A CLASSIC, INSIDE & OUT

With the crisp, austere look of French Moderne style circa 1940, Philippe Hurel's Tyrol chair passes for an indoor design. Designed in collaboration with David Sutherland, this chair has more to it than meets the eye. Made from resilient stained teak, the chair features a marine-grade cushion, it's covered in Dacron and upholstered in 100 percent solution-dyed acrylic fabric from Perennials. Available through showrooms nationwide. sutherlandteak.com



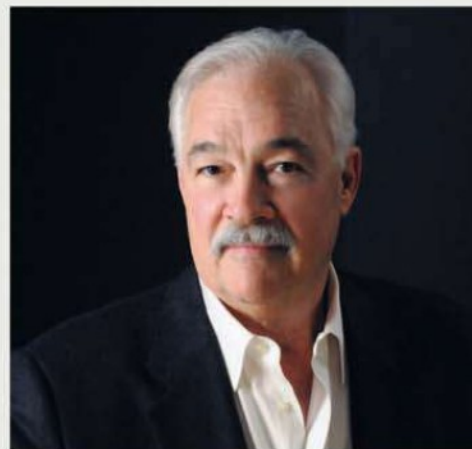
5. ALL-WEATHER SHAG

With bright, hairy strands made of recycled rubber flip-flops, the Miss Rio Ottoman designed by Karin Wittman Wilsman is not breaking news (it was a finalist for several awards in 2004, including the 2003/2004 Ecodesign Award sponsored by Fiesp/Ciesp), but it's still a benchmark, bringing an unexpected shag-carpetlike texture outdoors with humor and wit. \$350. dwr.com



6. LAZING ABOUT

In Fall 2009 at Maison & Objet, B&B Italia relaunched Patricia Urquiola's Lazy collection redesigned as an outdoor line. Lazy has been lauded for two key design elements: its sliding stainless-steel frame, which allows it to shift from armchair to a chaise in one languid movement, and its meshlike fabric that envelopes the frame. Woven from black or white polyester, Urquiola's buoyant textile has a three-dimensional application that is soft, fluid and full. \$3,425. bebitalia.it



DESIGNER PROFILE: DAVID SUTHERLAND

David Sutherland, the Texas-born founder and C.E.O. of David Sutherland and cofounder of Perennials Outdoor Fabrics spoke with us about taking classic French design outdoors, his company's newest all-weather material and the secret behind his durable fabrics, which are strong enough to withstand the relentless, lone-star sun.

Q. What are the biggest challenges you face when designing an outdoor chair that features an "indoor" application of upholstery, like the Tyrol or the Louis Soleil chairs? Are there any unique materials you use that help you affix the fabric to the frame?

A. The biggest challenge is making sure you create something that has longevity for the outdoors, so material is very important. We had to contract with a German supplier to make stainless-steel nails that wouldn't rust. In terms of upholstery, for both Louis Soleil and Tyrol we used exterior foam with a large, honeycomb construction that allows water to drain out quickly. Of course for wood, we use teak, which has natural oils that repel bugs and weathers beautifully outdoors, changing from its original light-brown color to gray.

Q. Tell me about Perennials' newest textile collection, More Amore.

A. We launched Amore on Valentine's Day. It's a very Old World, romantic, Florentine collection, with woven and printed patterns on 100 percent solution-dyed acrylic, which is the most resilient outdoor fiber. Our fabrics have a one- to three-year guarantee, but I know firsthand they will hold up years longer under the hot sun in Texas, where I live.

Q. Can we look forward to any more new outdoor collections or innovations from Sutherland?

A. At WestWeek we introduced our newest material, called Ecoplex — a recycled plastic that looks like weathered teak — and we use it with our metal frames. In terms of maintenance, you can hose the material down as if you were washing a car, so, it's durable, maintenance-free and doesn't fade in the sun. Also, the finish matches teak, a benefit to our customers who already own our teak furniture.

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TESTED BY FIRE — AND TIME

Lessons in great design and fire ecology at the Santa Barbara Botanic Garden

STORY BY BILL MARKEN



It will be a different sort of spring at the Santa Barbara Botanic Garden this year. The iconic, photo-op scene just inside the gates will look much the same — a meadow of glistening California poppies and other wildflowers framed by oaks and with the sandstone peaks of the Santa Ynez Mountains as a backdrop. But throughout the rest of the garden you'll notice the blackened stumps, singed foliage, denuded slopes and other unmistakable signs of the devastating Jesusita fire that blowtorched its way through the garden this past May — also destroying 80 homes and burning 8,733 acres in the area.

Make no mistake, the garden — still beautiful and one of America's great treasures — is well worth a visit (it reopened soon after the fire).

But now the visitor experience also includes a firsthand lesson in the ecology of fire — demonstrating how California's flora is hardwired to respond to periodic burns.

Educating the public about the peculiar nature of California's plant life was among the founding principles of the Santa Barbara Botanic Garden. The garden was officially founded March 16, 1926, deep in a canyon several miles up from the lovingly maintained old Santa Barbara Mission. Ten years later, the visionary founders decided to limit the garden to California native plants. They recognized the state's incredible diversity of nearly 6,000 native plants, and wanted to promote experimentation with natives and display their suitability for home gardens. Even in those water-profligate days, in a 1930

timeline: santa barbara botanic garden

1926

Garden founded on 13 acres in Mission Canyon

1927

More than 2,600 trees and shrubs planted, including the first redwoods as part of “acclimatization studies”

1930

Garden’s annual report praises “drought-resistant plants, which conserve the state’s water supply”

1936

Plants in garden restricted to natives of California and Pacific slope; exotics removed, including obnoxious Bermuda grass planted in meadow

1937

Landscape architect Lockwood de Forest Jr. initiates garden’s first master plan

1938

Nationally known landscape architect Beatrix Farrand joins garden’s board, later advises and designs for garden

1940

First California poppies planted in meadow

1945

Strawberry/wildflower meadow “draws crowds of more than 1,000 people in one day”

1956

Demonstration Garden created to show how to use native plants in home landscapes

1983

Redwood in grove section measures some 118 feet tall

2003

Adding on: Thirteen more acres purchased, bringing garden total to 78

2009

Jesuita fire burns 60 acres

2010

“Fire Flowers,” a display of art inspired by Jesuita Fire, runs through April



Opposite: A meadow of yellow *Limnanthes douglasii*, deer grass and other California wildflowers waits for the morning sun that has already struck a redwood grove in the background and Santa Ynez Mountains in the distance. Despite its natural appearance, nearly all of Santa Barbara Botanic Garden was designed and planted. This meadow area was not damaged by last year’s devastating fire. **Above:** Coast live oaks scorched by the blaze show green sprouts nine months later.

annual report, the Santa Barbara Museum of Natural History, which oversaw the garden, praised “California’s drought-resistant native plants, which conserve the state’s water supply.”

But despite its mission to celebrate, study and demonstrate the use of natives, the Santa Barbara Botanic Garden didn’t shortchange design. Unlike most botanic gardens of the day, it was not planned as a display space for individual specimens. Regional plants were grouped by ecological communities: meadow, desert, chaparral and such. But design — and designers — ruled. Top names were called in, especially in the late 1920s, the ’30s and ’40s: Beatrix Farrand, from the East Coast, with her strong formal sensibility, and Lockwood de Forest Jr., who lived and worked in Santa Barbara, with his feeling for naturalism — their powerhouse collaboration establishing much of the garden’s direction and look. Individual plants were subordinate to spatial and aesthetic considerations. Making the most of the site, local stone was used and scenery framed, borrowing magnificent views of distant mountains and the Pacific Ocean. Instead of a zoo-like plant collection, the result is more like a walk into wild California as it used to be — even though it is entirely designed.

Fire has struck the canyon before, particularly in 1964 when more than 1,500 sizeable trees in the garden burned. But in this part of Santa Barbara, as in much of the state of California where suburbs interface with wild space, burns have been suppressed, and the

vegetation grew dense and tinder dry and flammable. When I visited the garden in midwinter earlier this year, it was hard to picture that day last May with flames higher than telephone poles, when 60 of the garden's 78 acres were at least partly burned, along with almost all of the garden's vehicles, tools and lath houses. When I was there, the winter sky was a clear blue, and monarch butterflies fluttered around gaudy yellow-flowered *Encelia californica* — a native shrub that had resprouted from burned stumps. Purple lupines bloomed along the trail where they hadn't been seen for years, shaded out by dense brush; the garden's head of horticulture, and vice-president of programs and collections Andrew Wyatt, said that the seed might have lain dormant for 20 or 30 years, waiting for fire to create favorable conditions for the seedlings to sprout and thrive.

Along the creekside canyon trail that winds through the garden, California bay trees had burned all the way to the ground but already were resprouting up to 8 feet tall. Live oaks showed brown foliage, but they too were sprouting fresh green new growth 18 inches long or more.

On a hillside on the Porter Trail, very few *Ceanothus* (California lilac) were to be seen. Most had burned to the ground and will not resprout. Instead, their *modus operandi* is to regenerate by seeds that germinate from high temperatures — fire is their friend. With the thick tangle of shrubs that once lined the trail now burned down, awesome views from the hilltop have opened. You feel like you can touch Santa Cruz Island some 20 miles offshore, and you see what the designers had in mind when they planned the garden to borrow views from nature.

The garden's redwood section started as one of the garden's horticultural experiments: Could the giants of the coastal fog belt grow 200 miles south of their range in a dry hot canyon? They could, and the cool, cathedrallike quality of the redwood grove became a visitor favorite. The redwoods demonstrated their famous resistance to fire. Although many were singed, only one, located in the garden's main meadow, burned to the ground and now is sprouting dozens of new branches like a huge fern.

Throughout the garden, mostly what you see coming back from burned stumps and from seeds are plants that were originally native to the site: lemonade berry (*Rhus integrifolia*), redberry buckthorn (*Rhamnus crocea*), bay and others. Native western poison oak seems to grow twice as fast as everything else, and visitors should watch for it. Not coming back so easily are the thousands of native plants that had been collected elsewhere and planted in the garden. It will take years of propagating to replace them.

Dr. Edward Schneider, president and CEO of the botanic garden, recognizes other challenges as well. The fire interrupted the two-decade process of developing and putting into place a master plan — which has met with some local resistance over the updating of buildings and other changes. The Cultural Landscape Foundation (tclf.org) considers the garden an "at-risk landscape" because of plans for its historic core. Go to tclf.org/landslides/santa-barbara-botanic-garden to learn more.

As the garden's planners and the whole area wrestle with how to design for future fire safety, the garden will indeed look different. But Dr. Schneider is focusing on the fire's "unexpected blessings" — the views that have opened, and the chance to share with visitors new educational exhibits and demonstrations of defensible space landscaping. Education along with research and great design continue to be vital parts of the garden's mission. ■

SEE SOURCEBOOK FOR MORE INFORMATION, PAGE 76



DESIGNER PROFILES:

BEATRIX FARRAND & LOCKWOOD DE FOREST

The beauty of the Santa Barbara Botanic Garden seems so natural that it comes as a surprise that it was all designed, planned and created by a talented combination of designers, scientists and horticulturists. Throughout the garden's 84 years, a number of designers have made their mark, including two of America's foremost landscape architects of the early and mid-20th century: Lockwood de Forest Jr. and Beatrix Farrand.

The son of a plein air painter, de Forest came West to go to prep school in the Santa Barbara area, studied landscape architecture at Harvard and Berkeley, and in 1920 opened an office in Santa Barbara. Here he did most of his work — including involvement with magnificent Santa Barbara and Montecito estates such as Val Verde and Casa del Herrero. Early on, he contributed to the basic landscape plan for the Santa Barbara Botanic Garden, and then in 1938 he began a dynamic partnership with Farrand on the garden that lasted for more than a decade.

Santa Barbara in the 1930s — with a population only in the 30,000 range, but hardly a horticultural backwater — had a gardening community well connected enough to draw the interest of East Coaster Farrand. She was perhaps the leading female landscape architect of her day, already known for her stately design of Dumbarton Oaks in Washington, D.C.

De Forest's approach was naturalistic and flowing. Farrand's style was more formal and neoclassical, with strong lines and axes relating to structures. They both gravitated toward native plants; Farrand liked to use their colors impressionistically to complement the formality of her structures and landscape plans. Their most notable Santa Barbara collaboration was on the main meadow, which they transformed to all native wildflowers and strawberries — the results were "ravishing," according to Farrand.

The collaboration was productive and smooth for the most part, but botanist Mary Carroll points out in her excellent history of the garden in the Winter 2004/Spring 2005 *Noticias* (journal of the Santa Barbara Historical Society) that "trouble ensued" — mostly over a design of the garden's entrance — while de Forest was away in World War II. De Forest died in 1949 at age 53, and Farrand retired from the garden in 1950. But their design imprint on the garden is still plain to see.

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living green

HOME SWEET OFFICE

A courtyard garden in Venice, California, by Gabor + Allen connects work and play

STORY BY ALLISON ARIEFF ■ PHOTOGRAPHY BY DAVID YOUNG-WOLFF



Stephen Gabor always brings his work home with him. But don't feel bad for Stephen: Office and residence are just a courtyard apart, separated by the most recent result of his labors — a gorgeous garden bursting with cannas and foxtail ferns, and the calming ambient noise of a koi pond.

Trained as an architect at cutting-edge SCI-ARC (Southern California Institute of Architecture) in Los Angeles (as was business partner Patrick Allen), Gabor purchased this property in Venice, California, back in 2004, which he shares with his wife and their young daughter. In an act of near blasphemy for car-addicted Los Angeles, he opted to tear down the home's two-car garage and convert it into an office for his newly formed design-build and landscape practice, Gabor + Allen. The yard located between home and office does double duty as family space and a showcase for prospective clients. It's also, literally, fertile ground for the partners' design ideas: Gabor and Allen enthusiastically refer to it as their laboratory.

Gabor knew he wanted a flexible space for alfresco dining, an outdoor living room with a fire pit, and a water element. He also hoped to find a way to better connect the home's master bedroom to the garden (a goal achieved through the design of a unique space-saving system, incorporating one half-French/one half-pocket door) as well as a smart way to direct visitors from the street to the office.

California garden mythology might suggest

Left: Silver lady ferns, a black-stemmed form of taro and hybrid coral-flowered cannas line a path of exposed aggregate concrete steppingstones that leads from Stephen Gabor's home, past a tranquil pool, to his office, which he shares with Patrick Allen of design-build firm Gabor + Allen.



stately palms or verdant lawns, but the truth is that most of those quintessential palms aren't indigenous, and the era of the high-maintenance blanket of grass has passed. "The modern California garden is a conglomerate," says Gabor, a claim he proves in his own — a vibrant mix of colors, textures, cultures, species and shapes, not to mention edibles.

Since he was designing for himself, Gabor was able to sidestep some of the typical client constraints, but whether he and Allen are working for clients or for themselves, he explains that "it's not our way or the highway. Architects have a reputation for being inflexible, but we have no trouble interspersing our modern aesthetic with a Tudor house. You don't have to commit to just a cactus garden or just a rose garden." And the firm's work illustrates just how well an eclectic blend of styles and philosophies can merge.

Gabor's personal project not only expands the definition of the California garden, it also offers a primer into much of the current thinking on green landscapes. Most of Gabor + Allen's clients are on the west side of Los Angeles, particularly Santa Monica and Venice, where sustainable, drought-tolerant landscaping is no longer just an eco-trend. Santa Monica in particular has adopted increasingly rigorous restrictions on water usage and plant selection. The city has a no-water-waste ordinance that prohibits runoff and overspray onto impermeable hardscapes, and to approve any new construction, the city reviews and then requires an on-site inspection of plants,



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Clockwise from left: The dining table, made by Gabor from old wooden fencing planks, does double duty for working lunches and family gatherings. Bold clumps of *Colocasia esculenta* 'Fontanesii' (black taro) help divide the small garden into separate spaces. In the outdoor living room, Gabor + Allen's distinctive fire table made from natural stone emerges from a groundcover of *Sedum anglicum*.

irrigation systems and grading. But far from deterring the pair's creativity, Gabor and Allen are both of the belief that these initially challenging constraints end up enriching their projects.

Perhaps the most dramatic change to come from these new stringent requirements is the move away from the aforementioned luscious lawn, a choice that, as Gabor explains, "has been such an integral part of the everyday landscape. Very few clients have ever stopped to think twice about alternatives, but as soon as Patrick and I introduce the wide variety of options along with the pros and cons, their interest increases and they begin to reconsider. And now that the state is emphasizing current water shortages and implementing new billing rates, clients are expressing more flexibility. They have come to recognize the additional space the lack of lawn will create, increasing the livability of their backyard."

In place of the expected — and water- and fertilizer-guzzling — blanket of grass, Gabor + Allen typically proposes more-permeable hardscape, for example concrete, integrating it with plants to satisfy the "organic need," incorporating planters to define a space and laying pavers to create a path. "People don't realize the potential of concrete," explains Gabor, "its different finishes and uses. But we're able to show what clients can get for \$8 to \$12 a square foot versus the more typical \$20 to \$25 for flagstone."

Concrete divides Gabor's own space into different quadrants, while grass strips determine the circulation from street to garage and garage to house. Fanned-finish concrete extends from the office; steppingstones were made of a rougher-texture exposed aggregate concrete. Benches and planters were also formed from the oft under-appreciated material.

Hardscape of course, helps to reduce water use, perhaps the most pressing challenge for gardeners. Gabor opted for the unexpected option of hand watering, arguing that he is able to water certain parts of his garden less frequently and can saturate the soil in other parts. There are also plans to incorporate rain barrels, one of several storm-water management systems increasingly being encouraged through local and state incentives, grants and educational programs.

Another move toward a more sustainable garden can be seen in the integration of edibles. "Robert Smaus, the former garden editor for the *Los Angeles Times*, once wrote that every garden in southern California should have a lemon tree," says Gabor. "We love to incorporate citrus." Though Gabor is less interested in creating a designated vegetable garden than in interspersing edibles throughout the garden, whether herbs like thyme, chives and oregano, or vegetables like tomatoes, peas and green beans. And for clients with kids and for his own family, Gabor likes to plant strawberries near footpaths to provide flowers, abundant fruit and easy picking.

Such kid-friendly ideas figure prominently into Gabor + Allen's designs. "Children have been a major player in the work we do," explains Allen. "The space we design is never just for adults; we'll always include areas of discovery for children, some little surprise to stumble upon. Kids love it." And arguably, they lead to some of the most "green" interventions; instilling an early appreciation for the landscape — and the planet — is key to a greener future. 🌱

Right: In the front garden (which used to be a lawn), curvilinear planting beds frame the perimeter of the permeable hardscaped patio with a bright palette of lime green, yellows and oranges. The chairs were a Santa Monica Airport flea market find, reupholstered with new coral Sunbrella fabric cushions. Plants include *Acorus gramineus* 'Ogon' (Japanese sweet flag), *Agave desmetiana* and *Farfugium japonicum* 'Aureomaculatum' (leopard plant).

DITCH YOUR LAWN

MOWING WOES

Want to exchange your lawn for a more sustainable alternative? First, make sure you can: Many cities and towns have lawn-mowing ordinances to deter people from failing to maintain their green space. Violators often face stiff fines. But as water shortages and increases in water price are here to stay, this will start to change. Let this empower you to take up the issue with your homeowners association or local government.

CITY WATER

Changes are afoot nationwide: In Southern California, where water shortages are becoming a way of life, decisive action has been taken by the Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors to require waterwise irrigation and exclusive drought-tolerant plantings. Even if your city or town lacks this rigorous program, consider following its mandate for the good of the planet.

GRASS IS PAST

Educate yourself. A new 2nd edition of Fritz Haeg's *Edible Estates: Attack on the Front Lawn* (fritzaeg.com/garden/initiatives/edibleestates/main.html) has been published by Metropolis Books (Spring 2010). Be inspired by the eight edible gardens featured in the book as well as the *Good Food Revolution* manifesto from Growing Power's Will Allen. Look for opportunities like garden expert Nan Sterman's "Bye Bye Grass!" class (plantsoup.com), which teaches attendees how to get rid of their grass and what to plant instead.





Top of Their Game

With its inland deserts, tawny mountains and meandering coast, California is a lively stage for the imagination, sparking a wealth of interpretations. It's no surprise that when three top landscape designers take it on, from north to south, the results are as wide-ranging as the Golden State itself.

STORY BY SUSAN HEEGER

PHOTOGRAPHY BY JASON LISKE, DOMINIQUE VORILLON,
JENNIFER CHEUNG & STEVEN NILSSON

The rolling Coast Range with its oaks and redwoods and the subtle, smoky peak of Mount Tamalpais (Mount Tam) creates the backdrop for Bernard Trainor's Marin County, California, landscape for a San Francisco couple. The 75-foot-long swimmer's pool sits mirrorlike in a native-grass meadow.



For some areas immediately surrounding the couple's contemporary house (by San Francisco firm Kotas/Pantaleoni Architects), Trainor designed intimate patios that offer seclusion within the larger setting. Outside the master bedroom, one such patio features a water rill edged with native needlegrass (*Nassella cernua* and *N. pulchra*) and concrete pavers interplanted with creeping thyme. The century-old California bay tree at left existed on the site. **Opposite:** From another angle, the house appears to rise purely from the wild meadow.





Bernard Trainor

Bernard Trainor + Associates, Pacific Grove

For Australia-born designer Bernard Trainor, the ramble of wild California is more than just the circumstantial backdrop for this Marin County landscape. The undulations of the Coast Range, the sweeps of scrub grass and oaks, the vast, ever-changing sky: These are elements his built landscape draws from and points to, its lines and curves an invitation to the broader spectacle of startling beauty.

Powerful yet almost self-effacing, this project represents a further step outside the hedge for Trainor, who arrived in California via England 15 years ago to direct a Palo Alto design firm and soon afterward to start his own. In Australia, Trainor was frustrated by the common practice of imposing thirsty, English-style landscapes on a naturally arid land. In England, he worked as a gardener for internationally known designer Beth Chatto, a proponent of the regionally appropriate, right-plant-right-place philosophy. Chatto's views bolstered his own, encouraging him, once he settled in California, to embrace its native flora, and to design gardens that look and feel at home there.

While many of his early gardens responded more directly to the challenges of small lots and included abstractions of the natural world, Trainor has recently moved toward landscapes that visually become an integral part of nature and the bigger, wilder picture, especially on large properties like this one.



Though subtle, his designs aren't shy. On his initial visit six years ago to this 20-acre Marin site, he knew, he says, that "I'd have to add something strong — on a large scale. Small gestures would get lost here." But, Trainor says of the homeowners, a professional couple from San Francisco: "They love the setting. They wanted nothing to interfere with it, nothing 'gardeny.'" At the same time, amid the overall plan, he had to craft spaces comfortable for people, balancing the majestic with the intimate.

Gathering around a clean-lined, stucco-and-glass house designed by San Francisco architecture firm Kotas/Pantaleoni, Trainor's outdoor-living spots showcase his modern eye and near-reverence for the grandeur of his adopted state. They include a courtyard with reflecting pool off the master bedroom, a lounging space between the house and its guesthouse, and a swimming pool that lies mirrorlike before the property's most dramatic view — of iconic Mount Tamalpais. There's no discernable, formal grid; nothing lines up along an axis or separates the "designed" from untouched portions of the site. Instead, the house seems to emerge from meadows of native grasses, yarrow, lupines and California poppies that roll out in rippling carpets in all directions.

True to his method, Trainor's starting point here was "intense observation" of the site's topography




and views, local plant habitats, climate and surrounding farms and regional building materials. The architecture of the house figured prominently too, its lines extending into the landscape, its glass walls framing outdoor scenes. Plant-wise, his goal was grassland restoration, replacing invasive grasses with the area's main native, needlegrass (*Nassella pulchra*, *N. cernua* and *N. lepida*), then seeding in wildflowers and hand-planting the textural accents of taller grasses and climate-adapted exotics like Mediterranean rosemary and South African restios.

Though quiet at first glance, the resulting picture is surprisingly changeable, transforming itself as storm winds rip through, green fields turn summer-gold and fog creeps in from the coast, forming silver lakes in folded hills. "This is the closest I've come," Trainor observes, "to stripping landscape to its essentials."



Above: Working with the sloping contours of the 20-acre site, Trainor took to heart his clients' wish to avoid disrupting views with anything "gardeny." Instead, he planted an approximation of what once grew here naturally, a mix of California needlegrass, deer grass (*Muhlenbergia rigens*), California poppy, lupine and coast live oak (*Quercus agrifolia*). **Right:** A simple retaining wall of Montana stone provides a counterpoint to the mountain vista and shelters a round terrace — planted with creeping thyme and now used for outdoor dining — from the wind.



Trainor's exuberant meadow surges right up to the edge of another dining and lounging spot, this one with views of neighboring fields and stands of evergreens. **Opposite, below:** Sculptural sprays of reedlike South African restios (*Thamnochortus insignis*) throw shadows on walls curving around the property's motor court.



DESIGNER PROFILE: TRAINOR ON TRAINOR

Raised on Australia's Mornington Peninsula, some 60 miles south of Melbourne, Bernard Trainor holds a design diploma from the English Gardening School at the Chelsea Physic Garden in London. Since 1995 he has practiced in Northern California, where his Pacific Grove office of six does largely residential work from Big Sur through the San Francisco Bay Area to Mendocino.

INFLUENCES "English environmental artist Andy Goldsworthy, English garden designer and writer Beth Chatto, and Australian architect Glenn Murcutt, who said, 'I see simplicity not so much as a disregard for complexity but as the clarification of the significant.'"

OBSERVATIONS "To understand the fabric of California's regional landscapes, we must first allow our eyes and our minds to perceive the historical processes that shaped the land over time. Some of the best 'design' occurred through necessity — in a California mission or on a ranch, for instance. This honest ingenuity is beautiful to me."

PREOCCUPATIONS "The local vernacular and the opportunities to ground my work in a unique context. The built landscape is the conduit, and the light, wind or topography is the real awe-inspiring force that comes in for a visit and starts to play."

INSPIRATIONS "Places where ocean meets land. Hiking in wild landscapes. Discovering new plants in local habitats and then using them in my way rather than trying to replicate nature."





Mark Rios

Rios Clementi Hale Studios, Los Angeles

Los Angeles architect and landscape architect Mark Rios describes himself as “a Modernist to the core,” yet when he and his partner, Guy Ringler, who has more-traditional taste, bought a second home near Santa Barbara, they compromised on a 30-year-old, tile-roofed Mediterranean.

Rios, regarded as one of the leaders of L.A.’s midcentury-design revival, faced a complicated challenge. Famous for graphic, über-sleek landscapes and cityscapes (he and his firm, Rios Clementi Hale Studios, have conceived giant, abstract chess pieces for an urban park, and crisp-edged pebble streams and glowing water walls for residential gardens), he had the job here of crafting a calm weekend retreat worlds apart from the 1950s L.A. home he shares with Ringler, an endocrinologist.

Starting in 2002, Rios approached the property in his habitual way, looking for strong, existing elements to build on and looking past others that seemed extraneous or wrong. At first, despite its spaciousness, the lot lacked coherence; more than a landscape, it featured mismatched pictures — here an olive tree, there a salvia or agapanthus beside a lonely Italian cypress. The exception — a rosemary-hedged entry court — had been designed by Santa Barbara landscape architect Sydney Baumgartner, known for elegant interpretations of diverse European garden styles.

This courtyard was Rios’ starting point for a modern Mediterranean garden that blends historic design with his own more up-to-date aesthetic. As homage to Baumgartner, he preserved her set piece, then radically stripped down everything else, simplifying, opening up and connecting outdoor spaces to suggest strolling routes with destinations along the way. “There’s a spatial freedom to Modernism,” he explains, “an

A terrace off the living room of the weekend house Mark Rios shares with partner Guy Ringler near Santa Barbara is perfumed by wisteria in the spring. A wall mirror adds a fanciful dimension. Opposite: When Rios began work on the property's one-acre garden, he preserved this small formal entry court to pay homage to its prominent local designer, landscape architect Sydney Baumgartner. Its sheared rosemary hedges, gravel path, enclosing walls and statue backed by a blue-green cloud of lavender are well suited to the Mediterranean style of the house.



open-plan approach that clarifies how you move through and experience a place. By reducing and repeating the plant selection — another Modernist hallmark — I tried to make the garden feel more deliberate and more serene.”

At the same time, Rios worked off the architecture of the house to create strong visual axes that lead the eye through the landscape and develop a harmonizing palette of materials. Olive trees, boxwood and Italian cypress, so suited to Mediterranean homes, topped his edited plant list, which also includes lemon trees and *Westringia*. Stone and gravel — which appear widely in his work for the sensory consciousness it adds — line his paths and courts. Green lawns, made possible by a spring-fed well, add cooling notes unthinkable in his more typical, drier designs.

In a similar vein of past-meets-present for sensual effect, Rios introduced flowing water throughout — to catch reflections, make music or hold the darting forms of fish. Water isn’t just scenery here, it’s interactive: Stone bridges invite you across a pond and swimming pool, and the sound of fountains leads you to investigate its source. Rios observes that what gives the 75-foot-long pool the classic grace of a water channel from an old French or Italian garden is its minimal 6-inch stone frame (most pool coping is twice as wide). What gives it its modern edge, he notes, are four traylike steel spills along one side, which enliven views from windows across the water.

Nearby, a new, spare, stretched-canvas pavilion (more like a quick sketch than the solid, tile-roofed shelter you might expect) offers shade for garden loungers, while the lush lawn invites walkers on a route between a koi pond and tropical garden to an olive grove, iris border and quiet Japanese glen. “Each of these moments,” Rios says, “is like a painting in a white room, a detailed bit of texture in a sublimely simple space.”

Below, left to right: Above the swimming pool, stone steps seem to float uphill through a sea of grass toward a bench beneath two stately Italian cypresses. An outdoor dining room features a simple Armani/Casa table and chairs; a wisteria-themed Paul Ferrante chandelier echoes the climbing vine nearby. **Opposite:** Rios wrapped a new breakfast room with a U-shaped koi pond, providing a stone bridge across it to the garden.









Left: Like a placid water channel alongside the house, the 75-foot-long swimming pool is narrowly edged with local Santa Barbara stone. On the left, where layered plantings include clipped boxwood, lemon trees and New Zealand tea trees, four steel trays spill water into the pool, creating views for windows opposite. The small building on the hill houses the property's water tank.

DESIGNER PROFILE: RIOS ON RIOS



A native of Orange County, California, where he grew up in a 1960s ranch house with a professionally designed garden, Mark Rios earned masters degrees in architecture and landscape architecture from Harvard. The founding principal of Rios Clementi Hale Studios, he has worked in Los Angeles since 1985 and runs a multidisciplinary office of 50 that designs residential and commercial buildings, landscapes and interiors, exhibitions and products, half in California and the rest elsewhere around the country.

INFLUENCES "Los Angeles, with its tradition of experimentalism. New York landscape designer Deborah Nevins — her work is so supremely edited, so clear in its intentions."

OBSERVATIONS "I see spatial experience as a continuous thing, a series of layers and degrees, moving inside and outside within the same system. Landscape, because it's an amazing, choreographed, living event you can travel through and relish, and has a tremendous potential to evoke emotion."

PREOCCUPATIONS "I get bored quickly, and I'm constantly trying to question, think, push myself. If there's a plant I really hate, I might force myself to use it, asking, 'What could I do with this that would be interesting?'"

INSPIRATIONS "The tradition of borrowed landscape, which uses elements like trees from a garden's background to create the illusion of a larger space. The evocative qualities of a landscape that has existed for some time and the challenge of focusing on its essence through a few great, existing things while making it bolder, stronger, newer."



Heather Lenkin

Lenkin Design, Pasadena

Despite its mountain views and the California wildflowers on its slopes, there's an otherworldliness to this Pasadena hilltop, designed by landscape architect Heather Lenkin. The Hindu elephant god Ganesh looms benignly beside the drive, while teak doors, carved in 19th-century India, mark the entrance to the house, and stone pagodas light the walks. The house itself, an airy 1950s Modern, is like a looking glass on infinity, its clear walls framing a visual flight across a sheet of water that seems to soar off a cliff — into a dream dimension bound by sky, ridge and emerald valley.

But quiet moments arise too; subtle counterpoints to the stunning views weave in along chamomile-edged paths: *Liquidambar* trees, whispering 'Teague's Blue' bamboo and the Zen calm of a Japanese-style stroll garden.

Lenkin — a widely traveled Illinois native who is also an architect and interior designer — has less a signature style than a guiding belief in balanced, integrated living. For her, a house must be firmly rooted in a landscape which, in turn, will connect people to nature in profound and sometimes subliminal ways.



Heather Lenkin's plan for the hilltop garden on this long narrow site (which included the new ipe wood deck) began with the glass-walled, midcentury house and its views past existing Japanese black pines to the San Gabriel Mountains. **Opposite:** Nandina, bamboo and sweet potato vines spill from colorful glazed pots that line a walkway. The homeowners are a widely traveled couple with a taste for Asian style.

The hedged parterres she has designed for European-style houses, the flower borders she has created for cottages, the river-rock walls and waterfalls she has built for California Craftsmen, always include sheltered and open views, and often paths that end in secret nooks, amid scents released by stepping on or brushing past foliage.

Here, where 360-degree panoramas sweep from the San Gabriel Valley to downtown Los Angeles, she transformed three of the six-and-a-half hilltop acres into several gardens and a pool, Jacuzzi, fire pit and outdoor kitchen tucked behind an antique balcony from an Indian palace. From her first visit, she was struck by the power of the site and its potential to incorporate secluded retreats, big views and outdoor entertaining. She was intrigued too by the Asian artifacts the owners had collected during world trips and suggested showing them off in the garden. "Part of conceiving a landscape," she says, "is going beyond what people tell me and observing what they love."

Equally key was her study of the site's existing features, among them venerable Japanese black pines, which complement the faintly Asian house and flank the prime spot for an infinity-edge pool, along the sight line from the



Left: The Hindu elephant god Ganesh strikes a protective note beside the driveway, under a 200-year-old coast live oak. At its feet, white marble and split flagstone encircle carpets of variegated oregano and golden sedum. **Above:** To complement her new infinity-edge pool, Lenkin conceived a series of entertainment terraces that offer dining, dancing and lounging spots. The fire-pit cushions are upholstered in the same rich orange of the furnishings inside the pavilion.



glass-walled living room to the mountains.

Given the home's transparency, interior-design details often served as landscape cues: Wood and stone floors inspired Lenkin's choices for ipe decks and stone walks. Indoor upholstery colors (especially red-orange) dictated outdoor cushions and perimeter walls. Globe lights shine like moons in both the garden and the house.

The landscape also connects visually with the natural California scenery and is environmentally responsive to the conditions. Dry and wind-whipped — a target for wildfires and foraging deer — the foothill setting required Lenkin to surround the house with drought-tolerant, fire-retardant plants such as *Dudleya*, *Agapanthus* and *Myoporum parvifolium*, and deer-resistant picks like santolina, iris and sage. She enclosed wind-prone spots with screening walls but also played up the dynamism of borders with sword-leaved greens (New Zealand flax, kangaroo paws) that toss in the breeze. On the slopes below the house — a “no-maintenance” zone — she seeded wildflowers and other California natives (including penstemon, monkeyflower, lupine and white sage), which are as much at home as the people who live above. ■ SEE SOURCEBOOK FOR MORE INFORMATION, PAGE 76



Above: To disguise the narrowness of the lot, Lenkin angled the path alongside the pool and flanked it with swaths of soft, scented chamomile. Iconic boulders anchor the landscape and connect with surrounding hills.

Opposite: Ten-foot-tall, 19th-century doors from India show the way to the property's biggest view. To mark the passage between two *Liquidambar* trees, Lenkin designed a concrete pad in the shape of a lotus blossom and surrounded it with Indian cooking pots. The groundcover is blue fescue, *Festuca glauca* 'Elijah Blue'.



DESIGNER PROFILE: LENKIN ON LENKIN

Hailing from River Forest, Illinois, a Chicago suburb known for its many Frank Lloyd Wright houses, Heather Lenkin has degrees in landscape architecture and architecture from the University of Arizona. Her firm of four designers focuses primarily on residential landscape work throughout Southern California.

INFLUENCES “The eclectic approach of Frank Lloyd Wright, who saw design as a unified whole that included paintings, textiles and furniture, as well as houses. My grandfather, a landscape painter, and my grandmother, who loved gardens. Chicago’s beautiful old trees.”

OBSERVATIONS “In California, there’s an influence from the Far East that you don’t see elsewhere. The Japanese especially have given us a sensitivity to integrating the built and natural environments. Since L.A. is a ‘watered desert,’ this involves being educated about native plants.”

PREOCCUPATIONS “I love a lot of different design styles as expressions of history, sociology, geography and tradition. As designers, we’re also breaking down and answering questions, solving problems on a site. While tradition might lead you to the same solution every time, I try to be more experimental, to keep my mind as open as possible when I’m working.”

INSPIRATIONS “Every new project: I get to take on a new site with its own characteristics, and help the owners see the possibilities in the landscape for realizing their goals and aspirations. Garden design is an extraordinary way to relate to people and give them a stronger connection to nature, which is so important to our well-being.”



hamptons HAVEN

A bountiful, four-season Oehme, van Sweden
garden on Long Island breathes new life
into an 18th-century farmstead

STORY BY JENNY ANDREWS ■ PHOTOGRAPHY BY JASON DEWEY





To honor the vernacular of field and forest at this location near East Hampton, Eric Graft of Oehme, van Sweden used generous swaths of grasses like *Pennisetum alopecuroides*, and low-maintenance perennials such as *Rudbeckia nitida* 'Herbstsonne' (opposite). A farmhouse in its previous life, parts of the home date back to 1770.



an ugly frame does grave injustice to a work of art. And an overgrown, unwelcoming garden is no fitting frame for a home, especially one with the character of Annachiara Danieli's cedar-shake, Hamptons-vernacular farmhouse, the oldest parts of which date back to 1770. For Danieli, the garden was even more salient than the house (as she says, "I prefer to buy a plant than a chair"), which is why she put her trust in landscape-architecture firm Oehme, van Sweden & Associates to respect the past while bringing the site gracefully into the 21st century.

A champion of sustainable swaths of grasses and perennials — an elegant stylization of meadow and woodland — Washington, D.C.-based Oehme, van Sweden has become well known over the course of its 33-year history for lending sophistication to naturalized plantings. And for this classic OvS project, principal Eric Groft brought a painterly touch to the tenets of less lawn, four seasons of interest and environmental sensitivity. As he says, "We start by addressing sustainability and the client's needs, then focus on the aesthetics."

When he began work on the nearly two-acre Danieli property in 2007, the front yard consisted of an in-your-face driveway and a broken-down brick sidewalk lined with suffering lavender and overgrown cedars. In the backyard, an off-kilter 1970s kidney-shaped pool (which Danieli refers to as a "bathtub") and pool house were overwhelmed by out-of-bounds shrubs and trees. As Danieli recounts: "Before, the garden was like a jungle, everything was closed. Eric understood it had to be opened up. I wanted something very natural."

One of Groft's first considerations was to create a smooth segue between the property and the surrounding rural landscape of fields and woods, pointing out, "There's no replacement for appropriateness to site." A significant plus for Danieli when she bought the house was a scenic easement and protected marshland just across the road, with a view beyond to Accabonac Harbor. As Danieli describes the setting, "It's calm and quiet, and the light is beautiful."



Opposite: While the garden is conducive to quiet contemplation, it is also designed as a place for entertaining friends and family. Here two of the homeowner's children prepare the table for an outdoor fête. **Below:** The dinner party, which includes Groft (in blue) and his client (in yellow), also feasts other senses amidst a lush circle of *Agastache*, *Hakonechloa*, *Chasmanthium* and *Tricyrtis*. **Left:** A cozy nook under a grape arbor, made from recycled locust trees, bark still intact.







To separate the house and its surrounds from the back third of the property and the swimming pool, Graft stretched a long, low, see-through fence that is less about boundary-making than beckoning exploration beyond. It also supports plantings of blackberries and raspberries.

Springs Fireplace Road, where fires once alerted local residents that ship supplies were ready for pick up, is adjacent to the front yard. Groft wanted to screen out the road's traffic without blocking the borrowed landscape. The ideal solution was an OvS signature: ornamental grasses. Says Groft, "The grasses were perfect — they're denser on the bottom to hide the road, but you can see through the tops, which draws your eye up to the water and sky." They're also disliked by the ever-present deer population.

Another main goal was to unify the property within its boundaries, beginning with "traffic flow" and one of Groft's pet peeves, "suppressing the impact of the car," while also "maximizing the pedestrian experience." For this Groft moved the garage farther from the house and disguised it with an arbor that hosts a "veil of vines." A new primary path — made of rustic steppingstones interplanted with thyme and Irish moss — from the driveway to the front door ends at a porch ample enough to greet guests or relax on a bench, but not so large that it alters the façade of the house.

But a stroll doesn't have to stop at the porch. A grape-arbor focal point pulls visitors along a ribbon of lawn that continues to wrap around the house, arriving at terraces in the back and emptying into a greensward shaded by the wide-spreading branches of an old elm. Whenever possible, Groft left mature trees like this in place to serve as anchors and to make the landscape



DESIGNER PROFILE: ERIC GROFT



Coming to Oehme, van Sweden & Associates in 1986, with a master's in landscape architecture from the University of Virginia, **Eric Groft was the first associate to join the firm**, founded in 1977 by Wolfgang Oehme and James van Sweden. Drawn by the OvS reputation not only for residential-garden design but also for horticulture, says Groft, "At UVA they didn't teach us what a perennial was, and when I saw Wolfgang's work around Baltimore, I was on a quest to learn more." Groft also holds a bachelor's degree in geography and environmental science from Shippensburg University, which continues to influence him, with the vernacular of each site front and center in his creative process. **"I like to say 'know your site' and listen to what the location, neighborhood and region tell you. I make sure everyone in the office knows what watershed we are working in to heighten their environmental awareness."** Having worked on so many projects that he admits to losing count, Groft considers himself a jack-of-all-trades, enjoying all phases of the process, from the first site meeting to the last plant going into the ground, and even to consulting on ongoing maintenance. His advice to anyone entering the field: **"Landscape architects need to get out of the studio and see things — gardens, buildings, cities, national parks — and most important, have fun. If we aren't having fun, we shouldn't be doing it."**





The 60-foot pool is lined with dark tiles to amp up reflections, and its wide steps invite poolside confabs.

By surrounding it with graceful grasses and perennials that creep over the coping, Groft gave it an unobtrusive, pond-in-a-meadow feel. **Opposite:** At the far corner of the lot, the revamped poolhouse is tucked behind a meadow of Joe-Pye weed, *Panicum virgatum* 'Northwind' and mountain mint.



look more established, also including a flowering dogwood and holly that give definition to the front garden, and black locusts on the north property line that blend into the woods beyond.

Along the route a point-counterpoint of perennials offers waves of varying heights, textures and colors, subtly changing with the seasons, all stitched together by billowy grasses and sedges. These “big layers,” as Groft calls them, are designed to be consistent with the scale of the surrounding views, so for plant quantities he eschewed twos and threes in favor of 50, 100 or even 500 of a single species. As Groft points out, this mass approach also “rests the eye and cuts down on maintenance.”

The living palette (see sidebar on facing page) is at the core of what Groft calls the “thread of consistency,” and the Danieli plant list is essentially a who’s who of tried-and-true OvS staples — for perennials, *Agastache*, *Pycnanthemum*, *Senecio*, *Asarum*, *Nepeta* and *Geranium*; for grasses, *Pennisetum*, *Panicum* and *Calamagrostis*. But OvS also continues to test plants for addition to its stable, and newcomers in the Danieli landscape include *Hakonechloa macra* ‘Aureola’, *Tricyrtis japonica* and *Carex muskingumensis*.

Nestled amidst this mix of green, gold and purple is the dining patio behind the house, close enough to the kitchen for easy access, but far enough to be its own outdoor room. While Danieli loves her time alone in the garden, she also enjoys entertaining, and during the summer, family and friends gather there often. A native of Udine, Italy, Danieli brings home-country traditions to the table and insisted that Groft include edibles in the garden — figs, rhubarb, tomatoes, asparagus and basil. But rather than create a separate vegetable plot, Groft incorporated fruits and vegetables into the garden.

For example, blackberries and raspberries found a home on a long fence separating the house environs from the pool area. Though a safety requirement, the fence was also used to break up

Opposite: Groft and homeowner Annachiara Danieli were sympatico in their goals for the landscape — simple, natural and appropriate to the site. Groft even made use of glacial boulders unearthed during construction, placing them as features in the garden and creating a circle for conversation around the fire pit (in foreground).

the property aesthetically, but Groft made it scrimlike to allow a view through. Though initially Danieli resisted the notion of a swimming pool, her children insisted and now she's glad to have it. One reason being Groft's design — which includes wide steps for people to sit and talk with their feet in the water, dark tiles to enhance reflections and embracing plantings that give the 60-foot pool a pond-in-a-meadow feel.

Tucked away in the far corner the revised pool house, now a guesthouse, repeats the gray siding of the home and serves almost as a folly. A mow-what-grows path loops past it, separating a dense meadow of *Pycnanthemum muticum*, *Baptisia australis*, *Euphorbia palustris*, *Eupatorium purpureum* ssp. *maculatum* 'Gateway', *Rudbeckia nitida* 'Herbstsonne' and grasses from a hand-sown Eastern Long Island seed mix that merges seamlessly into a neighboring paddock.

A long arbor "nails down the pool," as Groft says, and provides a sense of entry, its rusticity bridging the centuries. Though planted with a variety of vines and meant for shade, the structure is "high and light, rather than low and dark." Sited to face west, it's the ideal spot to lazily let the afternoon slip by, the setting sun giving grassy seedheads a fiery glow. A nearby fire pit, ringed with glacial boulders unearthed on site, can take convivial conversation and star gazing far into the evening. Says Danieli of the finished product: "The garden is simple, but you can see the vision and the design. Before I never went into the garden; now I am part of it." 🍷

SEE SOURCEBOOK FOR MORE INFORMATION, PAGE 76

OEHME, VAN SWEDEN'S LIVING PALETTE

A pre-eminent aspect of the OvS approach to landscape design, dubbed the New American Garden style, is the firm's arsenal of plants. A mix of perennials, ornamental and native grasses, sedges and shrubs, the choices are based on beauty, durability, multiseason interest and ease of care. Herewith is a very small sampling, with commentary by OvS principal Eric Groft.



FOUNTAIN GRASS

Named for its graceful clumps of narrow foliage and nodding bottlebrush-like flowers, *Pennisetum alopecuroides* is "a true four-season grass that brings the feeling of the waterfront right into the garden. It catches the wind and nods its foxtail flowerheads into pools seemingly for a drink."



MOUNTAIN FLEECE

Adding a "nice red spark" to the garden from July through October, *Persicaria amplexicaulis* 'Firetail' forms a bushy mound of handsome foliage with distinctive markings, topped by brightly colored "tails" of tiny crimson flowers.



ANISE HYSSOP

A long bloomer, from midsummer through September, 2- to 3-foot *Agastache* 'Black Adder' "has the always-pleasant lavender-purple color that goes so well 'out East.'" A magnet for butterflies and other nectar-seeking insects, the foliage and flowers also release a minty fragrance when brushed against.



MOUNTAIN MINT

Producing thick clumps of stems from underground stolons, *Pycnanthemum muticum* "creates a massed volume in the garden, and its silver-gray foliage and almost-white flowers contrast with the grasses." A tough plant, it takes to wet or dry conditions, sun to part shade.



SWEET AUTUMN CLEMATIS

With its ample sprays of small, fragrant white blossoms and lustrous dark-green foliage, *Clematis terniflora* (also called virgin's bower) is "a beautiful cascading vine that grows fast and blooms in August when all the Hamptonites are in their gardens." If it gets out of bounds, it can take a hard pruning and will easily rebound.



SWITCHGRASS

A cultivar of a native switchgrass that is perfect for wet conditions and full sun, *Panicum virgatum* 'Warrior' has airy heads of reddish flowers in late summer and is relatively short for switchgrass — less than 4 feet tall. It makes an ideal see-through plant for screening without blocking the view.



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WARREN T. BYRD JR.

A teacher and designer who knows his place on the planet

STORY BY BILL MARKEN



Left: At one with nature, the Nelson Byrd Woltz-designed Virginia garden's geometric pool, paving and minimal plantings, mostly of natives, merge seamlessly with the natural landscape of rolling hills, agrarian fields and distant Blue Ridge Mountains. **Below:** Virginia-native Warren Byrd bases his work on "understanding the local ecology."



Warren Byrd went to school at Virginia Tech and the University of Virginia, taught for 26 years at UVA and established an influential landscape architecture practice in Charlottesville — all within a few hundred miles of where he grew up. Thinking locally and designing locally might come naturally to him, yet at the same time his influence and work stretches around the globe. He believes that landscape architects "should be at the forefront of sustainability," and that's where he has been — designing landscapes that break new ground in their eco-sensitivity and spreading the word about the importance of sustainable garden design.

Byrd credits his father (an agronomy major) with instilling in him

an early appreciation of growing things. Working in nurseries as a young man added hands-on, in-the-field knowledge. He majored first in environmental conservation, then switched to horticulture and, armed with an understanding of the science and growing of plants, he realized he wanted to create and design, and went on to receive a master's degree in landscape architecture.

Byrd's next step was into academia, joining the UVA faculty in 1979. He taught a popular course on plants and the environment with an emphasis on natives, and later became chair of the landscape architecture department. Although the word "sustainability" wasn't going to enter the lexicon until later in his teaching career, he says: "From the start to my last days of teaching in 2005, I always stressed



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the importance of knowing your place, of knowing your region, of understanding the local ecology, and how and why plant communities and natural systems evolved and occurred. Students of design need to search for patterns and structure in nature — both for formal design strategies as well as natural systems-inspired design influences.”

When in school in the 1970s — the dawn of environmental awareness as we know it today — Byrd was struck by the connection between nature and design. He was impressed with the works of Wendell Berry, the agrarian poet/novelist and environmental activist, and acknowledges how Berry’s thinking carried over into Byrd’s own landscape designs: “Berry’s writing is grounded in the notion that one’s work ought to be rooted in and responsive to one’s place.”

He credits other major influences, including Jens Jensen, the prairie-inspired Midwestern landscape architect of the first half of the 20th century. Byrd says: “Jensen inspired me with his lyrical, actually a bit overwrought, writings, especially in *Siftings*, about the beauty of natural plant communities and compositions. And like Frank Lloyd Wright, he attempted to interpret the qualities of a region through plant characteristics, such as horizontality of branching and habit, and through effectively scaled mass plantings.”

Another inspiration from that same era was Florence Bell Robinson and her 1940 book *Planting Design*, with its sections on “ecological factors” along with more-conventional sections on “design factors” and actual design problems that stress an ecological understanding of garden sites.

In 1985 Byrd and his wife, Susan Nelson, teamed up to form a design firm, joined in 1997 by Thomas Woltz, who became a partner of Nelson Byrd Woltz Landscape Architects in 2004. Byrd praises Woltz for his “articulate passion for sustainability” and credits him with taking the firm into large-scale environmental challenges around the world.

Another key collaborator has been the architect William McDonough, co-author of *Cradle to Cradle: Remaking the Way We Make Things*, a seminal book on designing for sustainability, and a UVA dean (of the School of Architecture) during the early 1990s. McDonough and Byrd



Above: The Dell at UVA transforms a derelict site into a model of sustainability — and beauty. This pond, edged by native plants, is designed to retain storm water and attract wildlife as well as recreational users.

teamed up on a residence in Virginia’s Tidewater area that won an Honor Award from the American Society of Landscape Architects in 2004. *Garden Design* magazine reported that the “ecologically friendly garden in Virginia sets the groundwork for a new approach to landscapes of enduring beauty.” With a goal of rehabilitating the tidal cove setting rather than contributing further to its degradation, Byrd’s design included nearly everything in the sustainable-design play-book: recycled rainwater, eco-friendly lap pool, green roof, wetland restored with native grasses, and more of the latest thinking in the field.

For someone who talks so much about “local,” Byrd ventures very far afield with his design projects — a giant panda preserve in China, a Nike headquarters in the Netherlands and a vineyard in Sonoma, California. Woltz’s plan for a 3,000-acre farm in New Zealand addresses what he and Byrd call “conservation agriculture” — farming planned to be productive and sustainable while conserving wildlife, native plants, water and soil. Their plan for the badly overgrazed land restores wetlands and native rainforest. It is long range by necessity of nature: The first stage of tree planting reforestation will take 40 years alone for the ecosystem to begin to rebalance.



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As Byrd wins converts to sustainability with speeches around the country, he is now particularly zealous about the subject of storm water. He points out the problem is far worse than commonly thought — even affecting large, apparently bulletproof bodies of water such as the Mississippi River and Chesapeake Bay (one of the most biologically productive estuaries in the world). He says: “The combination of overdevelopment and poor agricultural practices has severely compromised the quality of the water that we end up sending downriver. Plus, the standard practice of filling in low-lying lands and piping storm water away leads both to impoverishing the groundwater, and dramatically eroding stream banks and riverbanks. These

poor practices combined diminish water quality and quantity, and impact wildlife, fisheries and human habitat.” His solutions? Improve agricultural practices to minimize runoff of sediment, pesticides, herbicides and fertilizers. Slow, infiltrate and treat urban/suburban development runoff through various rain garden, bioswale and retention means. Minimize nonporous pavements where possible. Minimize lawn and irrigation. Byrd adds: “Virtually all of our projects now address storm water. We employed green roofs, rain gardens and bioswales in Citygarden in St. Louis and in a number of projects at the University of Virginia. [The Dell at UVA, an 11-acre site originally acquired by Thomas Jefferson, was transformed from neglected and derelict, with a buried stream, to an eco-botanic garden centered on a pond.] Most of our residential projects minimize lawn in favor of native groundcovers and meadows.”

As Byrd speaks out on sustainability, a recurring theme is the value of native plants — his lifelong love. He says, “We use primarily native plants to express regionality — a sense of place — and to cut down on maintenance.” Highest on his list of favorites are *Nyssa sylvatica*, “brilliant fall color, used to be underappreciated”; *Sassafras albidum*, “also brilliant in fall, distinctive habit and leaf”; and *Amelanchier*, “beautiful year-round,



Above: Within walking distance of St. Louis' Gateway Arch, Citygarden is a three-acre, two-block sculpture park in the heart of downtown. It reflects the cultural and natural history of the city and the nearby Mississippi River.

wonderfully edible berries.” Byrd admits that he might overuse some of his favorites, especially very reliable Virginia natives such as *Itea virginica*, *Magnolia virginiana*, *Juniperus virginiana*, various viburnums, *Acer rubrum* and “too many great oaks to list.” His palette also includes some very well-adapted non-natives: Siberian iris, peonies, boxwood, *Osmanthus* and camellias.

Native plants, landscape restoration and reforestation, along with all the elements of what Woltz calls “landscape design as a tool for remediation of the earth,” play a part in an inspiring project that Nelson Byrd Woltz and the National Park Service are creating now. This is the national memorial to Flight 93 at the 9/11 crash site in southwestern Pennsylvania, and the mission is two-fold: to help heal the scars of the terrorist act and earlier environmental damage caused by mining. Eventually most of the mining lands will be restored to a combination of native meadows, wildflower fields and reforested edges. The plans also propose some wetland restoration and bioswales/rain gardens. Byrd says, “From the start our design team has seen this as a healing landscape, so we believe that restoring the land is very much a fundamental part of this sacred site’s mission.”

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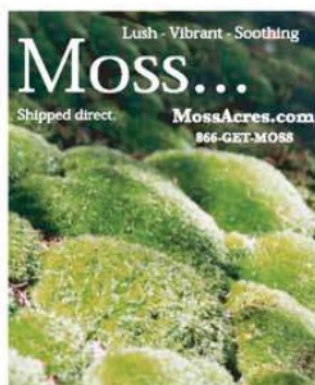
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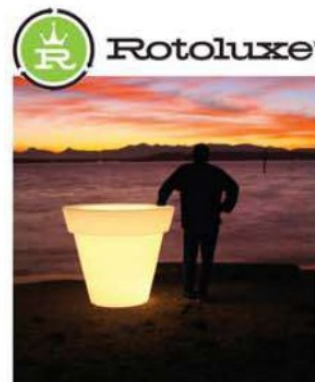
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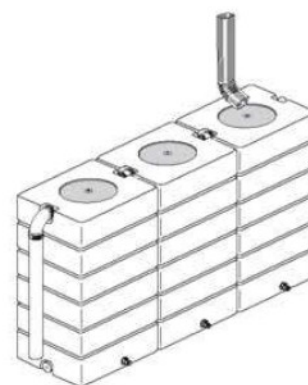


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LIVING ART

Evocative of Australia's deep gorges, canyons and creeks, this Sydney garden by Vladimir Sitta of Terragram is like a gigantic mural, its various aspects seen from different parts of the house **BY MEGAN PADILLA**

ORGANIC SCULPTURE

Though completed in 2004, the garden of this Luigi Roselli-designed house continues to develop, influenced by visits from Sitta. For instance, the dragon tree (*Dracaena drago*) shown here didn't survive its cross-Sydney journey that included a canopy clip and a deadly case of overwatering. Sitta envisioned making prosthetics — something like stainless-steel dragon claws — for its lost limbs. Eventually, the dragon tree was replaced with a screw pine (*Pandanus pedunculatus*) that Sitta found at an exhibition.

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