

Q/A

Margie Grace

“GRASSES ARE THE UNSUNG HEROES OF THE GARDEN”



Landscape designer **MARGIE GRACE** of Santa Barbara, California, shares her secrets for beautiful coastal gardens.

What is the most common gardening mistake you see on the coast?

MG: Picking plants that are ill-suited to their site just because you love them. If you love gardenias, think about why you love them. Is it the scent? If so, pick something else that smells lovely but holds up better in salt, sand, sun, and windburn, like jasmine. If what you love is a shiny green leaf, try Carmel creeper.

Which seaside plants do you love?

MG: Coast to coast, there are “wow” grasses such as Canyon Prince wild rye and blue oat grass that are the unsung heroes of the garden—they capture light, provide movement in sea breezes, and last through all seasons.

Tell us your top tip for container gardens by the beach.

MG: Add pebbles or sea glass on top of the soil—it helps hold the plant down in strong coastal winds.

What is your favorite statement piece in a coastal garden?

MG: I like to use something from the natural environment, like one to three boulders set together as though they were a sculpture. Buy boulders from a local stone supplier for an authentic sense of place. —*Madeleine Frank*

TAKE FIVE



1

DIGGING DEVICE

“The quality of Sneeboyer tools is incomparable.”
Transplanting Trowel in Cherry, \$48.50; gardentoolcompany.com



2

PICTURE BOOK

“Debra Prinzing’s garden books are beautifully written and illustrated, and full of great ideas.”
The 50 Mile Bouquet: Seasonal, Local and Sustainable Flowers, \$14; amazon.com



3

SHOWER GEL

“This leaves my skin very soft after a hard day of digging.”
L'Occitane Almond Shower Oil, \$24; usa.loccitane.com



4

RESTAURANT RAVE

“Los Agaves in Santa Barbara has the best fresh Mexican food, bar none!”
los-agaves.com



5

GO-TO PLANT

“Succulents take salt air and put up with wind, so they’re great at the ocean’s edge.”

CLOCKWISE FROM TOP: MARC ROYCE/HAIR AND MAKEUP BY TOMIKO TAFT, EMRAH TURUDU/GETTY IMAGES, COURTESY OF LOS AGAVES, COURTESY OF MANUFACTURERS (3)