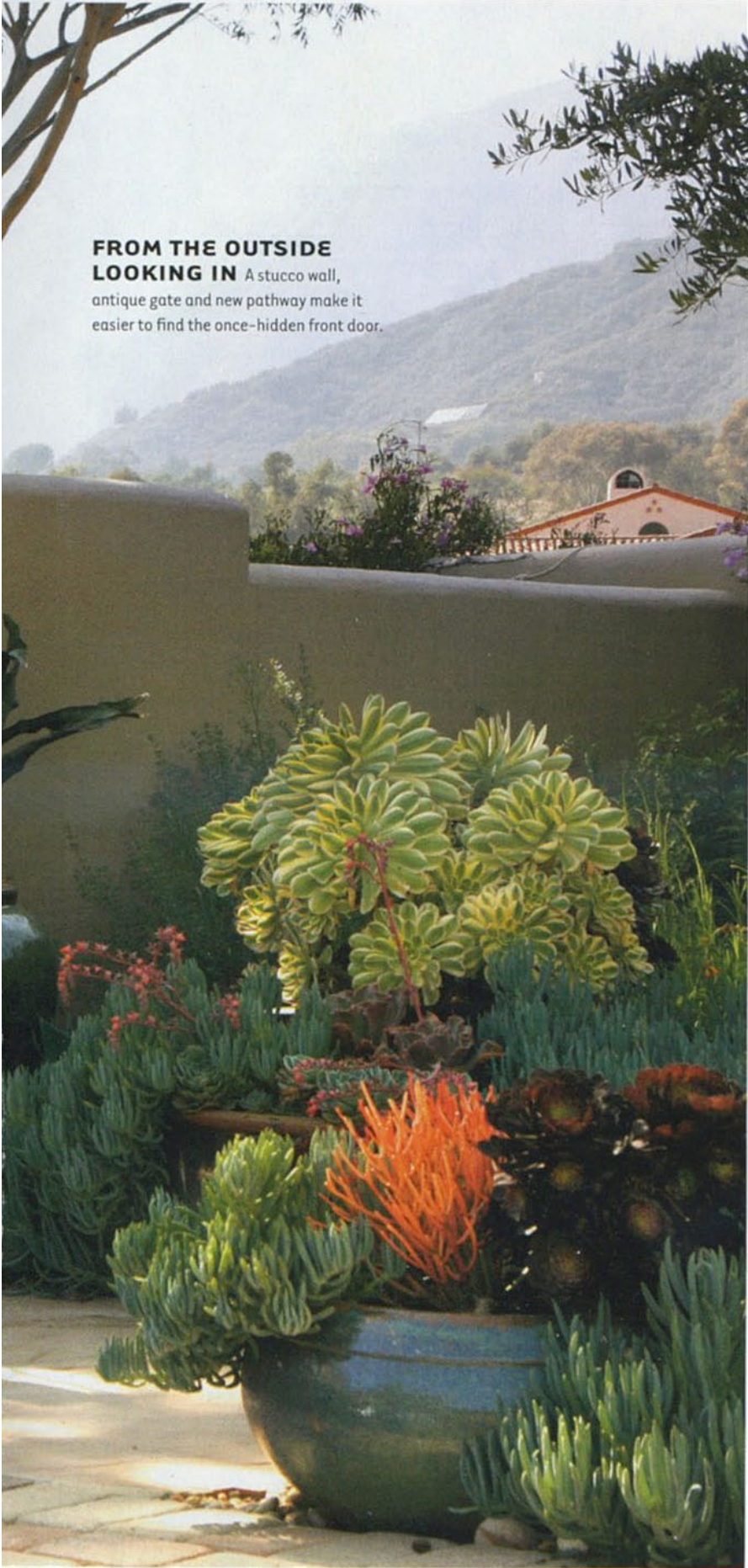


walled ENTRY

Exotic plants and unique antique gates help define spaces

PHOTOS BY HOLLY LEPERE



**FROM THE OUTSIDE
LOOKING IN**

A stucco wall, antique gate and new pathway make it easier to find the once-hidden front door.

Garden location: *Montecito, California* **Areas**

featured: *Front yard and side gardens* **Greatest**

challenges: *Minimal garden space; yard and parking*

not separated; hard to find the front door **Solutions:**

Separated parking and yard—a new garden wall defines

a parking area and a walled garden; a striking antique

gate and new walk make the way to the front door clear;

level terrain was expanded with a retaining wall fronted

by a long bench—this dual-purpose element sets the tone

of the entire outdoor experience to one of relaxation

Homeowners' favorites: *New walks, reading nook,*

fountain **Designer's favorites:** *The combined bench and*

retaining wall—says Margie Grace: "It totally altered the

beauty and functionality of the space"

When Debbie and Frank

Wilson decided to remodel their home in Montecito,

California, all went well—except that the remodel led to a big problem in the former front yard! Much of that yard was turned into a parking lot due to their new garage. And what was left of the old front yard became a jumble of overgrown plants with no real space for enjoyment.

Luckily, the problem was solved, thanks to the assistance of Santa Barbara-based landscape designer Margie Grace. Her design—and the execution of an entirely new front yard—started with a masonry garden wall that would create two clearly defined areas: a walled garden and a parking area.

The entrance to the garden is now through a striking antique gate. A new walkway makes the way to the formerly hidden front door both obvious and an enjoyable walk. Other new and improved elements include a bubbling fountain, oversized containers and lots of lush plantings, which together complete the total garden transformation.



THE LOUNGE CHAIR and ottoman as well as the faux bois console table are from the owners' collection of outdoor furniture.

A focal point is a new retaining wall with a long bench in front that expands the amount of level terrain in the new garden space and offers lots of seating. This dual-purpose element transforms the space from unusable to irresistible. Additionally, it sets the tone of the entire outdoor experience,

which now says: "Come in, relax and stay awhile."

The Wilsons are delighted with their front yard renovation. Frank's favorite spot is the new bench, where he likes to share a bottle of wine with Debbi and a few close friends in the twilight hours. Debbi regards several arty items as special.

SOME OF THE PLANTS in the entry garden include a fruitless olive tree, Peruvian lily (*Alstroemeria* 'Salmon'), coneflower, Penstemon 'Midnight', Salvia 'Waverly', *Salvia uliginosa* (Bog Sage), *Digitalis obscura* (Sunset Foxglove), catmint, lamb's ear, and Serbian Bellflower.





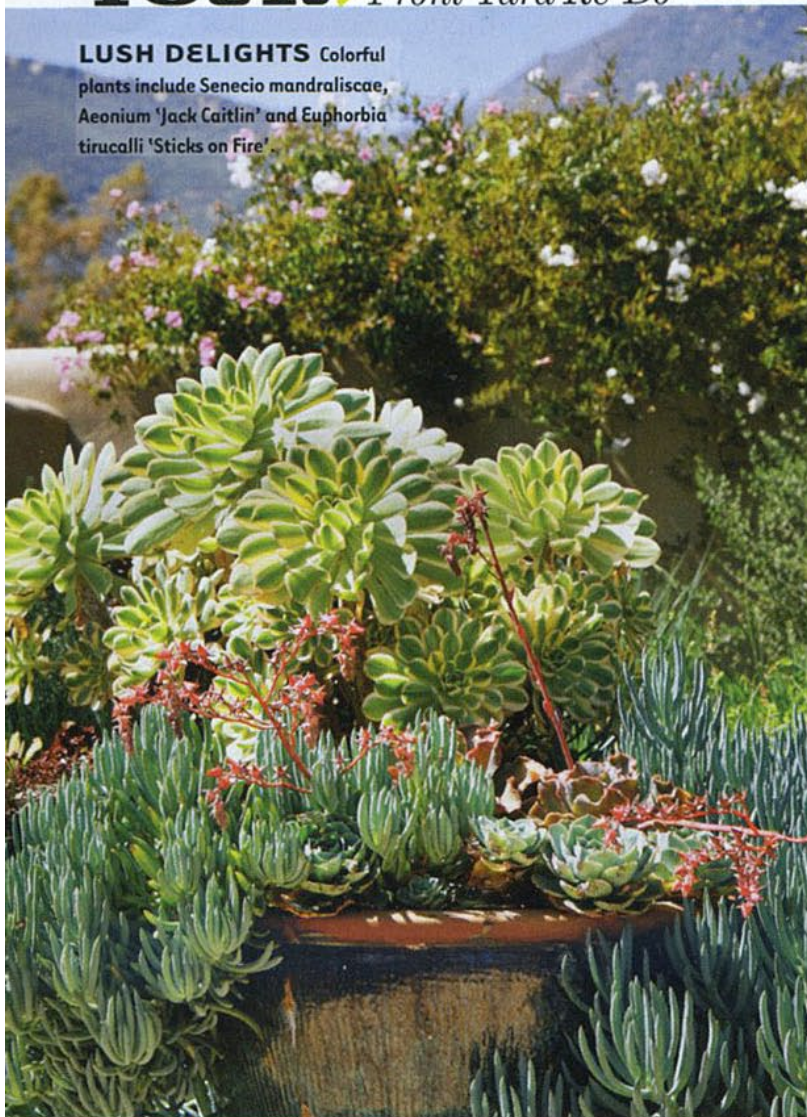
**ROMANCE
ABOUNDS** in this
cozy dining spot just outside
the small guest house at the
bottom of the steps.



REST EASY A curvy stone bench piled high with cushions is great for lounging under the trees.

TOUR ▶ Front Yard Re-Do

LUSH DELIGHTS Colorful plants include *Senecio mandraliscae*, *Aeonium 'Jack Caitlin'* and *Euphorbia tirucalli 'Sticks on Fire'*.



Plantings Everywhere

For example, there is the “living umbrella” made from an old umbrella frame with poultry wire where the cloth once was. Instead of canvas, it is now smothered in evergreen Boston ivy, shading the persimmon-colored lounge set. Another remarkable piece is an old chair, now converted into a planter with *Nemesia*, *calibrachoa*, *lobelia*, lavender and white *bacopa*. The chair has been wrapped in sphagnum moss and reinforced with rebar tying wire. The former seat is filled with potting soil and then plants. Drip tubing comes up the back of the chair leg for easy watering. The result is a colorful, cascading garden that sets a whimsical mood and is a clever spectacle of creativity.

the big idea

Landscape designer Margie Grace shares secrets to making small gardens live large

DON'T BE AFRAID to build a wall even around a small yard. The intimacy of a small walled space (done well!) can't be beat—it's a time-honored tradition.

ADD "FURNITURE" to the perimeter wall to increase the number of people that can comfortably use a small space. Think of the old-fashioned breakfast nook with fixed benches and table, or a boat's cabin with the seating along the hull, etc.

HAVE EACH ELEMENT in the garden serve as many functions as possible. For example, create a multipurpose piece of furniture that can store cushions and serve as extra seating, or be a buffet table for parties and a work surface other times.

PAY ATTENTION to circulation by creating obvious paths from one place to another in the yard.

RECLAIM OR MAKE usable space that is otherwise underused or not used at all. Leave paths open to make that easier.

CONSIDER SOUND AS WELL AS SIGHT. A fountain with a recirculating pump provides sound, plus the dog can drink from it.

NEAT SEAT A salvaged chair is now a remarkable planter with many flowering plants in bloom.



HIGH & MIGHTY A fountain set in a green ceramic pot bubbles into a small circular water basin.



Tall grasses add dimension and texture to a neutral-hued palette.

ASIAN Designed to encourage reflection and meditation, Asian gardens represent all aspects of nature on a miniature scale. A dwarf shrub such as a Japanese maple may be a focal point. Natural sounds can be heard through the rustling of long stem reeds or wind chimes. An actual water feature, or raked gravel or sand to represent a stream, is often present. Accessorize with Buddhist statuary, a stone urn or lantern, a unique rock or all of these.

SOOTHING STYLE An entry garden features an oversize stoneware pot and bubbling fountain, and graceful Asian-inspired grasses.

PHOTO: DESIGN BY SUZANNE ARCA

EASTERN INFLUENCES

A large lantern and a red cut-leaf maple are focal points in this Japanese-inspired garden.

PHOTO: HOLLY LEPERE, GARDEN DESIGN: MARGIE GRACE, GRACEDESIGNASSOCIATES.COM

NATURAL STONE, left, leads to a gravel-covered dining spot. The area has a diameter of about 8 feet, and the path is about 20 inches wide. **A CONTEMPORARY**, this page, front yard owes its distinction to its arid area—grasses make do with minimal water.

PHOTO: HOLLY LEFERE, GARDEN DESIGN: MARGIE GRACE, GRACEDSIGNASSOCIATES.COM



Quiz scores: **Mostly "A"s:** COTTAGE GARDEN. You love abundant flowers, relaxing outdoors and sipping iced tea or lemonade, and you don't mind getting your hands dirty. **Mostly "B"s:** TROPICAL GARDEN. You love lush greenery and enjoy the sun. **Mostly "C"s:** FORMAL GARDEN. You like order and neatness and love the classics. **Mostly "D"s:** INFORMAL GARDEN. A casual atmosphere fits your family life, schedule and taste. You use your outdoor space to entertain and have fun. **Mostly "E"s:** ASIAN GARDEN. You enjoy conceptual ideas and like compact and restful Zen-like surroundings. You like to work often with plants. *No clear favorite? You enjoy many garden types; choose any one and you'll be satisfied.*

Hot or pastel: Which colors make you happy?

- A) A mash-up of all nature's colors
- B) Dark green with orange and red accents
- C) A single pale color against green multi-tones
- D) A mix of bright colors softened by white
- E) Brown and sand tones with a few color splashes

At the art museum: Which masterpiece fascinates you?

- A) A horse-and-hound landscape with verdant foliage
- B) A tiled Mexican ceramic mirror adorned with bright flowers
- C) A John Singer Sargent portrait with a manicured landscape
- D) A French Impressionist water lily garden
- E) A Thai Buddha statue in a reflecting pond

Which of these materials and textures speak to you?

- A) Painted wood, pebble paths, crumbling old stone walls
- B) Jungle patterns and huge veined leaves
- C) Classical statuary and bluestone paving
- D) Wicker furniture and an arbor or trellis
- E) A single rock, Buddhist statues, bamboo

Architectural style: What type of home do you have?

- A) Farmhouse
- B) Art Deco bungalow
- C) American Colonial
- D) Cape Cod
- E) Contemporary

Time outdoors: How much do you spend?

- A) As much as the weather allows
- B) A few hours a week
- C) I enjoy my garden through the window
- D) I love to dine and socialize outside
- E) Cultivating my garden is an obsession for me

Childhood: What was your favorite form of play?

- A) In the sandbox
- B) Playing pirate
- C) Paper dolls and doll houses
- D) Hopscotch and jump rope
- E) Origami

Dream car: What vehicle would you drive?

- A) Mini Cooper
- B) Dune buggy
- C) Bentley with a driver
- D) SUV
- E) Toyota Camry Solara

▼ **Challenge: ENLIVEN A SLOPING ENTRY**

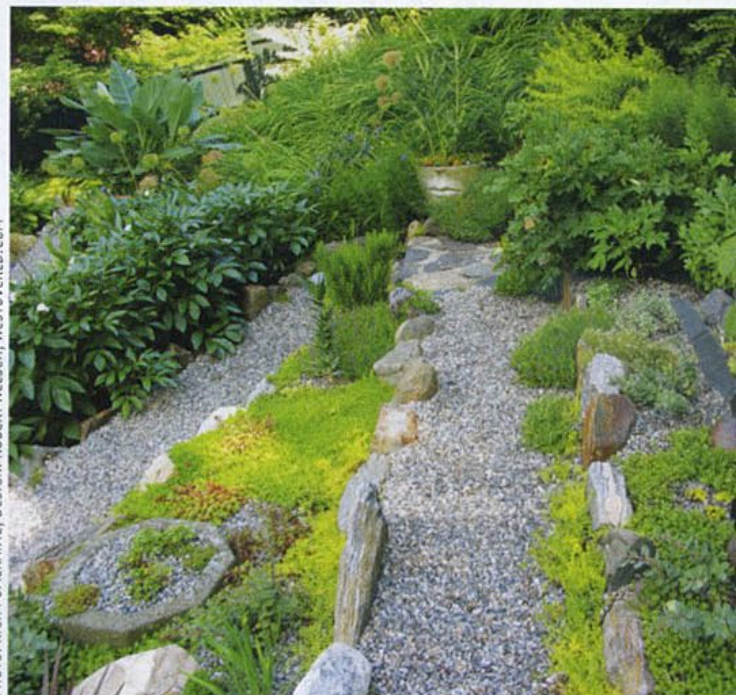
Solution: Add interest to a sloping entry area through tall flowering plants in various hues.



PHOTO: HOLLY LEPERE; DESIGN: MARGIE GRACE, GRACEDSIGNASSOCIATES.COM



PHOTO: RICH POMERANTZ; DESIGN: ROBERT WELSCH, WESTOVERLD.COM



▲ **Challenge: STEEP SLOPE** **Solution:** Terracing tames hilly, sloping areas, while gravel paths separate the various regions. Plants hold the soil of the slope in place.

▲ **Challenge: ADDING COLOR IN SHADY SPOTS** **Solution:** Since it's rare for colorful plants to do well in shade, another option is to make the accessories, such as these blue chairs, a focal point.

PHOTO: RICH POMERANTZ; DESIGN: ROBERT WELSCH, WESTOVERLD.COM