



A Living Work of Art

Ten Individual Gardens Were Designed And Built By Grace Design Associates To Surround This Estate Near Santa Barbara

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PHOTOGRAPHY BY HOLLY LEPERE

Alicia Lancashire faced a daunting challenge. More than five hundred people would soon be attending a fundraising event at her newly built estate home. But in place of the ten distinct gardens envisioned, the residence was surrounded by piles of dirt and construction debris. And the clock was ticking.

Enter Grace Design Associates. Company owner and lead designer Margie Grace took Alicia's frantic call, and sped to an emergency meeting to assess the situation.

Above: The vineyard frames a bronze sculptural fountain. Water cascades out of the pitcher and over the table's edge.

Near Right: Long-blooming Iceberg roses.

Far Right: The Goddess of Hospitality, surrounded by white valerian, iceberg roses, and double marguerites, greets visitors to the White Garden.







"When I first saw the site, I knew we faced a formidable task," says Margie Grace. "The Italianate home—on a bluff with a panoramic view of the ocean—was magnificent, but the grounds were a shambles."

A plan of attack was devised. Since the big event was fast approaching, all ten gardens would have to be designed and built simultaneously.

Each night, Margie Grace designed. The following day, her crew worked from dawn to dusk on installation. Every evening, the process began again.

Limited plant choices also presented a

challenge. Only readily available plants, able to weather the Pacific Coast's harsh salt air and dramatic temperature shifts, could be used. Additionally, the property was peppered with crates and pallets of art and antiques collected from around the world, all of which had to be assessed and utilized in the landscape.

"The biggest challenge was finding a way to link each of these themed gardens, while retaining the distinct inspiration behind each one," says Grace. "I used repeating forms, textures and materials to accomplish this goal. Scale and positioning were also critical, so the

landscape would not be visually overwhelming." Ninety days and many thousands of hours later, the gardens were completed, just in time for the big fundraising event.

Off the main entry is a walled "Zen Garden", reached through an antique Asian "humble door." "The White Garden", "Theater Garden", "Queen's Garden" and "Pergola" encircle the back of the home. "The Sunken Garden", "Herb Garden", "Vegetable Garden", Vineyard and Parterre complete the three acre estate.


"The gardens read like a lovely string of pearls," says Alicia Lancashire. "Each one is



Above: The Lancashire estate's south façade is designed to maximize garden and ocean vistas.

Right: The Grand Terrace view includes the elaborately tiled pool, based on a Versace plate design, and a panoramic view of the Pacific Ocean.



uniquely themed, and is a unique expression of nature. Yet together, there is a harmony to the entire landscape. Many people can design on paper, but Margie is one of those rare designers who is able to create a living work of art!" 

Upper Left: The Great Room, looking out on the White Garden.

Upper Right: Alicia Lancashire, holding family pet Coco, and designer Margaret Grace, look on as Ashley, Christopher and Colin Lancashire play chess in the Queen's Garden.

Below: Pergola draped in red Altissimo rose and purple dematis.

Lower Right: A country maiden harvesting vineyard grapes strolls through an adjacent field of French lavender.



