

A lush garden scene with a stone path leading to a wooden table and chairs. The garden is filled with greenery, including a large tree branch arching over the path and a stone pillar topped with a sphere. The overall atmosphere is serene and elegant.

THE ART OF OUTDOOR LIVING

GARDENS FOR ENTERTAINING FAMILY AND FRIENDS

SCOTT SHRADER

FOREWORD BY JEAN-LOUIS DENIOT

RIZZOLI
NEW YORK

THE OUTDOOR LIFESTYLE

From my point of view, to experience a garden means to live in it. This is why function and comfort matter in the exterior spaces just as much as they do within the house. Of course I want to direct the view to something beautiful. But most of all, once a garden has drawn people out of the house, I want to keep them there. So there has to be comfortable seating. And convenient places to put down a drink. And some element of warmth—a fireplace, fire pit, or heater—so that they do not rush right back inside.

I tend to emphasize the axial views—from the front door through the house, from the living room to the side views, and so on. This visual orientation is logical and comfortable in almost every situation. Usually, I create a central focal point at moments of entry. Often these use fire or water, because those are real attractors. We all gravitate toward water. We also all love to sit by a fire. And depending on the fire source, I can arrange the seating in a wide variety of ways.

In the outdoors, as inside, lighting helps to define space, atmosphere, and mood. For the outdoors to feel warm and inviting, not ominous and black, it needs to be well lit. Tall trees and trellises are wonderful places to hide a variety of light sources. I like the magical effect of the illumination, and also the different illusions that hidden lighting, especially when it is on dimmers, can create. Finding your way through a property where various light sources are illuminated is a happier and more interesting experience than simply following a series of path lights—which can make a path look like a landing strip at LAX.

Typically, people feel most comfortable when they have some form of covering overhead, such as an umbrella, a tree, or a trellis. These outdoor ceilings provide a sense of shelter and shade. They are crucial not only because they create a sense of human scale under the endless sky, but also because they provide a means for hiding lights and space heaters. A formation of trees with outstretched branches can also serve this purpose. So can the overhang

of an eave. Umbrellas and trellises are common and beautiful options. I like to be able to see the sky, so I tend to leave my trellises somewhat open. I build them out of steel, and then I feed the lighting up through components so that the wires are invisible.

Pizza ovens are a main event, a celebration of friends and food. Everyone wants to gather around a pizza oven, just as people tend to congregate in the kitchen when the party's inside. I like to include areas for people to hang out and help, or just talk, right near the area where the prep work takes place. The sink needs to be convenient, as does the refrigerator. This is the spot that I call the "command post." I usually put it behind a stool-height counter, so guests can sit on stools and chat with the host. I also make sure that the sight lines to other areas of the garden are clear, so the host can keep an eye on the other activities nearby.

To plan exterior spaces, I first go through the interior of the house to understand how it functions and flows. Then I plan the different areas from the inside out. I may suggest ways to open up the rooms—removing a wall, putting in French doors—to create more gracious exits into the gardens and to establish focal points that enhance the interiors and also draw people out of doors.

To organize the backyard, I always walk the property to find the best angle or perspective on the house from the farthest away spot. Then I start placing the various functional spaces around that point, establishing my lounge area or built-in banquette seating there to draw people into the garden's far reaches. (If this lounge area is not going to be the yard's focal point I may tuck it off to the side.) Wherever there is seating, I make sure it faces a beautiful view.

If the garden is not comfortable and does not function smoothly, everyone turns around and goes right back into the house. Enjoying time with family, friends, and food in the garden is another level of experience. Why not make it the most we can imagine it to be?

MODERN MOROCCAN

Design concepts can come in a flash when the owners and the architecture speak clearly. Andrea and Carlos Alberini said from the beginning they wanted a family house to welcome their five grown children, relatives, and friends. They wanted larger outdoor spaces to comfortably seat fourteen. The style of the house—modern with Spanish and Moroccan influences and completely open, with each room offering its own garden opportunity—was just as articulate. Imagining the place as an old olive orchard with a house added later felt right immediately. After I learned that the Alberinis' hometown in Argentina happens to be named Olivos, this idea seemed to make even more sense.

Deciding how the exterior spaces should unfold was the challenge. Erin Martin, their interior designer, and I discussed her use of materials—encaustic cement floor tiles, rich fabrics featuring dark tones with white, and Moroccan elements—as well as the furniture layout, the feel she was creating, and the property's formatting. I developed my palette to complement hers. Most important was the hardscape. Given that we were starting with dirt, the various elements of hardscape had to tie the entire property together. This meant using it to establish the symmetry that the Alberinis love—something the exterior lacked. Erin was using black terra-cotta in parts of the house and for the thresholds. I cut that terra-cotta into thin sections and installed it in a herringbone pattern to define the different garden environments. We outlined her materials and mine in the same black terra-cotta, which made the transitions seamless. Planting a grid of one-hundred-year-old olive trees over the entire property helped to establish a living geometry and the symmetry they desired.

Because it was located on a busy Beverly Hills street, the property needed an enclosed, modern parking court. I wanted it to have a touch of history, too. When I heard about a cobbled road that had been unearthed beneath an asphalt parking lot in downtown Los Angeles, I knew the cobblestones would be perfect for the front and central courtyards. (From a

sustainability point of view, it was exciting to find and reclaim something that old from Los Angeles.) Encircled by an olive grove and flanked with symmetrical, graveled parking areas, this entry sets the tone for all that follows.

A second wall to separate the parking court from the entry environment also made sense. This created space in the front for a hello-and-goodbye garden, a planted area where first greetings and final farewells can take place out of doors. Years ago, I had come across some seven-foot-tall columns salvaged from Burrwood, the estate built for Walter Jennings in Cold Spring Harbor, New York, where Frederick Law Olmsted had designed the landscape in 1915 and 1916. Set on a plinth surrounded by boxwood hedging, they perfectly support three arching canopies to create a covered walkway leading to a three-part entry garden centered on a Moroccan-inspired marble water feature. Right outside the house, five-foot-high hedged-off areas seamlessly extend the interiors into the landscape.

The backyard unfolds just as symmetrically. The gallery, dining room, living room, and an office all open directly onto a cobbled central courtyard anchored by a thirteenth-century well converted into a fire element. Here, we introduced the property's one element of hot color and seasonal change, a grid of forest pansy redbud trees that explode with fuchsia blossoms each spring. Once the petals have fallen, dark burgundy leaves unfurl, then transition to green in the summer, and blaze golden in the fall before they drop, waiting for the cycle to begin again.

A cooking area with a large pizza oven also includes an Argentinian grill and a barbecue. This space also incorporates dining for fourteen under a steel trellis enclosed by edible figs and a bar for four. In the heart of the yard, a swimming pool with Moroccan tile provides a cooling counterpoint. We slipped in a glass-walled spa to keep the views open and added an outdoor fireplace on the pool's other side to balance the pizza oven. Symmetry reigns.





PRECEDING PAGES: Framed by a colonnade and paved with custom black terra-cotta tiles, the entry garden makes the path to the Alberinis' front door clear. **ABOVE:** Stephanotis wraps the colonnade's 1920s-era Frederick Law Olmsted columns, which I found years ago at Elizabeth Street Gallery. **OPPOSITE:** The custom black terra-cotta hardscape blends with the interior entry floor.



PRECEDING PAGES: In the spirit of a Mediterranean garden, the water in the rills that delineate the entry garden appears to flow from a central marble fountain. **RIGHT:** This casual sitting area in the front garden is adjacent to the living room. **FOLLOWING PAGES:** All of the interior rooms open onto this central courtyard, which we paved in cobbles from a turn-of-the-twentieth-century street unearthed during a construction project in downtown Los Angeles. When in full spring bloom, the forest pansy redbuds add the property's one note of hot color. **PAGES 88-89:** Axial views and symmetry help to give this residence a feeling of expansive comfort.









RIGHT: Off the family room and kitchen, the exterior dining area, bar, and pizza oven offer an opportunity for outdoor entertaining at its fullest. The pizza oven establishes another strong focal point for the backyard. To reinforce the indoor/outdoor connection, we covered its flanking walls in the same Moroccan tile used in the indoor kitchen. Carefully placed one-hundred-year-old olive trees help to create a sense of symmetry. **FOLLOWING PAGES:** Kumquat trees and French pots from the 1920s add splashes of Mediterranean color to the outdoor fireplace.



THE HACIENDA

When old Hollywood plays into the story of a property, the facts can be juicier than fiction. This two-hundred-acre ranch set high in the hills above Malibu, with Boney Mountain as a backdrop, is a perfect example. William Boyd, aka Hopalong Cassidy, built the hacienda as a getaway spot sometime in the early 1910s. (He came by horse; the building materials, by mule.) By the time Sue and Alex Glasscock purchased the place, it had gone entirely to seed. Just as they remodeled the interior of the hacienda to suit their family lifestyle and entertaining needs, we created an organic exterior architecture of hardscapes and plantings that shape environments for (and connective pathways between) living, dining, and lounging that radiate seamlessly beyond the walls of the house. Almost before we did anything else, we relocated the house's front door so that the cinematic procession of arrival would have a proper moment of reveal into and through a garden. Over time, we have also reconfigured and replastered the pool, built a pool house that doubles as a guesthouse, constructed a wall of stacked stone that, along with hardy native species, lines the driveway, and installed gates to mark the passage into the entry. A private herb garden off the kitchen, plus an orchard and acres of organic gardens add the required grace notes.

With so much surrounding land, the only way to work was in phases. Once we developed a master plan that outlined the priorities, the transformations happened in increments. Areas closest to the house came first, with a focus on carefully planned material transitions—such as those between terra-cotta tiles custom-made in Mexico to match the originals, stone excavated from the site for walls, and shades of wall plaster to match—that tie the interior and exterior together seamlessly. Area by area we placed and tended a palette of native Californian and California-compatible plants and trees into garden environments for

living that unfold through the larger landscape as naturally as possible. The back patio pushed the living room into the open. Just beyond the kitchen door, we planted herb gardens in raised beds built of stone from the site, added a potting area, and created a space shaded by a trellis with cup of gold vines that dresses up nicely for large lunches. Atop a stepped walkway lined with dwarf olives we identified a space perfect for a formal dining environment beneath a trellis ablaze with different colors of bougainvillea. A graded slope on the dining area's farther side descended logically to the pool—plastered a custom shade of taupe pulled from the surrounding hills—a small spa, and the pool house/guesthouse.

Dwarf olives—the go-to for our understory because they require so little water, resist insects, and can take lots of sun—frame many of the outdoor living spaces and line the pathways between them. Cypress, which grows rapidly and is just as tough, adds a green vertical element against the olive's silvery gray-green. Along the stone walls that line the driveway, we planted an allée of young oak trees that should grow into their full might in twenty or thirty years; a low, native ceanothus introduces a hint of blue into the mix of greens and earth tones.

Because the property lives off two wells, thinking sustainably about irrigation and focusing on hardy species were givens from the outset. We also built a small water reclamation plant for sewage treatment, and some of that water is used in place of well water to irrigate.

Digging to plant led to numerous surprises, as the entire spread rests upon the solid rock of the hillside. The overall scale of the spread called for sizable plant material—and lots of it. To date, we have tamed or touched eighty acres in a timeless, ranch-style design meant to endure; the back forty will most likely remain wild, just as nature made them.







OPPOSITE: The reclaimed well is a perfect water bowl for Clara and Pip. Old olive trees form a magical canopy of welcome. **ABOVE:** This *Agave salmiana*'s mother plant lives at the Wallace Neff house; her pups have found homes here and on several other properties. **FOLLOWING PAGES:** With a trellis that replicates the original architecture, the rear garden blends seamlessly with the house.



ABOVE: The ample kitchen has a timeless, modern feeling. **OPPOSITE:** Just beyond the door are raised beds for vegetables and herbs, an area for a casual intimate meal, and a potting area with a sink.





RIGHT: The backdrop for the potting area is built of stone from the site. The sink is a repurposed old stone planter. FOLLOWING PAGES: The raised beds for the kitchen gardens and the network of low walls are all built with stone materials found on the property. We incorporated a seating area into the wall because I never want to miss an opportunity to encourage relaxation and taking in the view.



ABOVE: These side gates open to the gardens and pathway that lead to the swimming area. **OPPOSITE:** A casual dining pavilion off the herb garden centers on the view. **FOLLOWING PAGES:** From goats to chickens to dogs and more, the animal life helps to define the character and function of this two-hundred-acre property.





OPPOSITE: The archway on the upper terrace forms part of the connection that joins the pool area with the main house. Oak, cypress, and dwarf olives create a lush but sustainable environment around the swimming pool. **ABOVE:** Nestled right next to the pool is a private spa.



RIGHT: The ample garden spaces offer many different options for outdoor entertaining. The entry courtyard doubles as a dining area when weather permits. **FOLLOWING PAGES:** The pool house also serves as a guesthouse. What guest could ask for more?

