

THE RIGHT CONNECTIONS

HOME, GARDEN AND HARDSCAPE
TEAM UP IN A WATER-WISE DESIGN

BY EVA DITLER
PHOTOGRAPHY BY MARTIN MANN

HERE'S A LOT GOING ON in a Rancho Santa Fe landscape designed by Harry Thompson of Torrey Pines Landscape Co. The plants and hardscape seamlessly blend with the rustic beauty of the Spanish hacienda that sits on the 2 1/2-acre lot, providing a free-flowing look. At first introduction, though, a hedge and lawn add a touch of formality.

"For privacy and separation from the street, we kept the hedge in front," Harry says. "Then there's a rambling country look as you make your way to the entrance. As you get farther away from the street, plantings become more intense."

Decorative bricks and flagstone pavers in an array of alternating patterns lead the way to the handcrafted front door. Their colors highlight the architecture by picking up the tints in the home's tiled roof, stucco and wood trim. On one side of the walkway, brilliant red kangaroo paw spills over sea blue dudleya in greeting. On the other side, rosette leaves of aeonium peek out from rounded boulders.

When the front door opens, the view takes you all the way through to the backyard pool and beyond to the plantings on the slope above the pool and to the citrus orchard on the garden's third tier. To keep an uninterrupted flow, walkway designs in front and back mirror each other.

"The hardscape has to tie everything together, and how you lead the eye through the landscape with the hardscape is key," Harry says. "As you get farther away from the house, flagstone pathways, low-growing groundcovers and aggregate areas get looser, more casual. When you come through the back door to the pool, the landscape fans out."

Homeowners Bill and Jill Keitel wanted the exterior of their home to look as relaxed as the inside. To that end, they requested that the landscaping be mostly native plants.

"We felt that native plants would give it a natural look," Bill says. "We also told Harry we wanted the plants to be low water use."

Drought-tolerant succulents fit the bill, but it took a little prodding on Harry's part to convince Bill and Jill that aloe, aeonium, euphorbia,

Succulents adorn the property with a variety of shapes, colors and textures. A blooming *Agave attenuata* rises high above red kangaroo paw to take center stage near the entrance.



A waterfall (above) adds relaxing sound in the back yard. Brick remnants and cobbled stone lend a vintage look to the pool's backdrop wall (right), while ornamental grasses and feathery queen palms soften the hardscape. Bougainvillea, *Aloe Ferox* and *Anigozanthos 'Big Red'* bring in color.

sedum, echeveria and other succulent varieties would provide the garden with captivating forms, interesting textures and vivid colors.

"I had no idea how much we would like succulents," Bill says. "We appreciate how they change from winter to summer. During the dead of winter, some of the prettiest parts of our garden are the succulents."

"They bloom in vibrant orange, bright yellow and deep purple," Jill adds. "I never knew how colorful they could be."

In summer, lavender and watermelon red crape myrtles, lilac butterfly bush, soft pink lavatera and blue hibiscus take over. With more than 100 plants in the landscape, no matter what the season, something blooms.

"We used the theme of the same succulent plants in front and back, but introduced sego lilies and added a tiny bit of tropical plants, like papyrus, as you get nearer to the pool," Harry says. "There were some big existing palms, including Mediterranean fan palms, *Phoenix canariensis* and some queen palms, which we dug up using giant forklifts and replanted in more appropriate places. We also preserved existing eucalyptus and Brazilian peppers."

The mature plants, the reclaimed wood on the house and the use of rustic materials lend the feeling that the home and landscape have



The view to the gardens and pool from the back of the house has an "unexpected, understated appeal that draws you out there," says landscape designer Harry Thompson. "You just want to curl up on one of the lounge chairs."



been here for decades. Even the pool wall was given a treatment to make it look old.

“The wall behind the pool was Jill’s idea,” Bill says. “She remembered that on a trip to Italy we had seen hundreds-of-years-old buildings in the little villages we went to. The buildings had been patched and repatched over the years with boulders and bricks, and you could see cracks in them.”

Deciding that would go well with their scheme of “everything new is old again,” they showed Harry photos and asked if the pool wall could be made to look that way.

“Harry and his guys over at Torrey Pines Landscape were doing work that was very architecturally clean, and this was a discom-bobulated look,” Bill says. “But they had a lot of fun with it, and it turned out great.”

Just above the pool, on the second tier toward the west, a small lawn area provides a volleyball practice court for the couple’s youngest daughter, who is in high school. Just below that, near the guesthouse, is the coop she and Jill decorated for their chickens: an Americana and two black Australorps.

“It’s so pleasant sitting out in the back yard with my newspaper; the chickens going in circles, pecking the ground; and the kids practicing volleyball,” Bill says. “But my favorite thing is the view of all three tiers of the garden from the house.”

“What I enjoy most is just walking from the house to the orchard and seeing the hummingbirds and hearing the bees,” Jill says. “They are prolific here, and it makes me happy that we are giving them a place.” ❖



Above: *Euphorbia tirucalli* (‘Sticks on Fire’), yellow kangaroo paw and *Aloe arborescens* contrast beautifully with *Aeonium arborescens* ‘Zwartkop’ and sculptural *Agave attenuata*.

Top right: The front courtyard off the kitchen alcove is a favorite spot to relax with a morning cup of coffee.

Bottom right: A slope can be a dramatic asset to landscaping when a mixture of plant materials is used for eye-catching variations. At the top of the steps on the third tier (beyond view in this photo) are a citrus grove and small vegetable garden.

