

LANDSCAPE ARCHITECT

AND SPECIFIER NEWS

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Narrow Yard Landscape Hillside “Jewel Box Garden”

Landscape Architect by Lucas & Lucas, Healdsburg, California

Above

This backyard project in Healdsburg, Calif., a small community a little over an hour's drive north of San Francisco in Sonoma County, was completed at the end of 2013. Landscape architect Mike Lucas calls it “a true jewel box of a garden” that creates a series of useable spaces in a snug backyard and responds to the Mediterranean architecture. The space features extensive retaining walls, a built-in fireplace, a painted steel pergola that accommodates speakers, heaters, lighting and will eventually have a wisteria cover, a water wall with planted water trough, a bocce court and a discreetly fenced vegetable garden adjacent to the kitchen.

This extensive garden renovation was fueled by the owner's desire for a more user-friendly space in a confined backyard area. The home is in Healdsburg, Calif. (pop. 11,254), 70 miles north northwest of San Francisco in Sonoma County. The home, built by a developer, was cut into the native hillside, leaving a very narrow yard four steps down from the house, with two sets of four-foot high retaining walls. Now, a continuous stem wall along the backside of the house allowed the opportunity to bridge straight out from the existing covered patio. An extensive CMU block retaining wall that aligns with the house creates a series of spaces.

A fireplace anchors the tallest wall and provides a focal point in the main living area. Built-in benches help scale its eight-foot height into a comfortable room. A steel pergola/trellis covers

the space and accommodates speakers, heaters and lighting for dinning and salsa dancing. A light acid finish for the concrete patio makes for a smoother surface to facilitate fancy footwork. The pergola will eventually have a cover of wisteria to offer shade for the patio and bocce court.

A raised lily pool and water wall provides additional seating in the space between, a nice focal point when seen from within and a subtle way to convert the retaining wall into a functional design feature. The quiet dripping from the long slender stone pieces is amplified by the acoustics of the tight space, providing serenity to the space.

Uplights grace the field-dug olive trees that line the hillside. Local basalt boulders used by the original developer to stabilize the slope were re-employed for more informal retaining walls.



Materials List

Wall Stone

'Dakota' provided by Wheeler Zamaroni

Flag Stone

'Dakota' provided by Wheeler Zamaroni

Concrete Color

'Palomino' by L.M. Schofield

Gravel

'Yuma Trinity' by Mix Materials

Design Team

Landscape Architect

Lucas & Lucas (Mike Lucas)

Structural Engineer

Jeff Van Dyke

Soils Engineer

PJC and Associates

General Contractor

Stan Chapman

Landscape Contractor

Mountain Meadow Landscapes (Barney Brady)

Steel Contractor

Noah's Arc Welding (Matt Yager)

Top & Bottom, Right

The linear retaining walls are veneered in Dakota stone, fabricated by Wheeler Zamaroni of Santa Rosa, Calif. The walls transition from a ledged water feature spilling into a lily pond on the patio level, to a border for the bocce court, which is six steps up from the patio. Channels are cut in the underside of the ledges of the water wall to accommodate LEDs.





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