

LAVENDER

# Seasonal Harmony

A changing light and color display captured in a couple's Healdsburg retreat.

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**GIVEN THE CHANCE**, most of us would enjoy experiencing a free light and color display in our gardens. Yet often, gardens are not planned around the casting of the sun's rays and the magical quality that the changing seasons can bring. These profound shifts of the environment during the year play an important role in the experience of a home and garden space. Homeowners Vicki and Moises Baron are fortunate because on their property, tucked away in vineyard-studded Alexander Valley, they have front-row seats to nature's seasonal show.

The Barons were looking for a Sonoma retreat where they could unwind and enjoy nature. After a few unsuccessful attempts, their real estate agent introduced them to a property not yet on the

■ A generous entry with mature trees, neutral-colored stone walls, and wavy-edged garden beds creates a gracious welcome. Below, the home's A-framed library room maximizes garden views with floor-to-ceiling windows that completely surround a stone fireplace.





market, and they immediately knew they'd found their spot. "We thought it would be a 'turn-key' with a little paint and some landscaping," explains Vicki. But after camping out with a mattress on the floor in the existing house, they realized they wanted to celebrate Sonoma living with more of an indoor-outdoor experience.

Two years of remodeling and landscaping have resulted in a complementary, fluid relationship between the home and its surroundings. In the living spaces, broad porches maximize garden views and embrace natural light. Outdoors, creamy-hued flagstones reflect the painterly swaths of pale pink and tawny blooming ornamental grasses, while low-water, pollinator-friendly perennials respect the land. "The colors, the light, and the layers are the true statement," says Vicki.



■ Left, the Seuss-like puffs of a stalk of Phlomis with its flowers gone to seed complement slender spikes of lavender. Below, the pool and patio have a vineyard view. Clusters of lavender and clumps of pink-hued Pennisetum grasses soften the edges of the stonework.





■ Late in the day, the sun casts a golden glow, highlighting the soft heads of grasses. Trees were located to screen the view of a neighbor's buildings. Vickie says, "We brought in the majority of the olive trees, all of the sycamore trees, and added all of the hardscape. The team had great synergy; everyone weighed in on what became the final product."

The carefully chosen ornamental grasses soften the edges and weave different areas of the outdoor landscape together. "My husband and I especially enjoy walking the winding pathways of the garden, noticing what is different. I appreciate how the plants always stay in harmony with one another even while changing seasonally," Vicki says. *Penisetum*, *Calamagrostis*, and *Muhlenbergia* grasses are unrivaled at collecting and reflecting light. Right now, at the beginning of the warm season, they sway in the slightest of afternoon breezes and glow at dusk, backlit by low sunbeams. As summer advances, the vibrant blooming shrubs and perennials grouped in the mix add to the performance, like the yellow yarrow and phlomis, purple salvia and lavender, and blue nepeta and Russian sage.





## RESOURCES

**Architecture**

Richard Burton  
Santa Rosa

**Interior design**

Robert Wright and Jason York  
McCormick & Wright  
San Diego

**Builder**

Robinwood Construction  
Healdsburg

**Landscape architecture**

Mike Lucas, Emily Podolak,  
and Tori Johnson  
Lucas + Lucas Landscape Architecture  
Healdsburg



■ Above, a soft textural mix of grasses in the foreground contrasts with the structure of the vineyard rows beyond. Grass selections include Pennisetum, Calamagrostis, and Muhlenbergia. Right, Mike Lucas of Lucas + Lucas Landscape Architecture in Healdsburg at dusk in the garden he designed.

The garden is a gentle teacher. “It’s a constant reminder that nothing lasts forever but with love, care, and attention, things can thrive and remain beautiful,” Vicki says. “Our garden allows us to rejuvenate and enjoy the essence of the nature that surrounds us.” Foxes, birds, unfortunately gophers, and all kinds of pollinators call this garden home, adding to the vibrancy. “We have lots of butterflies and bees, and hummingbirds. We are very fond of the quail families that live in and among the grasses as well; we don’t get tired of watching how they protect their young.”

A serene swimming pool area has views of the neighbors’ vineyards. Moises and Vicki unwind there with dog Kevin. And of course, when family comes to visit, everyone heads outside. Jonathan and Michelle, the couple’s two grown children, watch soccer or movies in the pool house and love to soak in the hot tub — especially on clear nights with the stars out.

The home the Barons have created celebrates its ever-changing environment and is filled with lessons, surprises, and movement. “The garden really has become a natural extension of our home,” says Vicki. “It completely surpassed our expectations.” **S**

