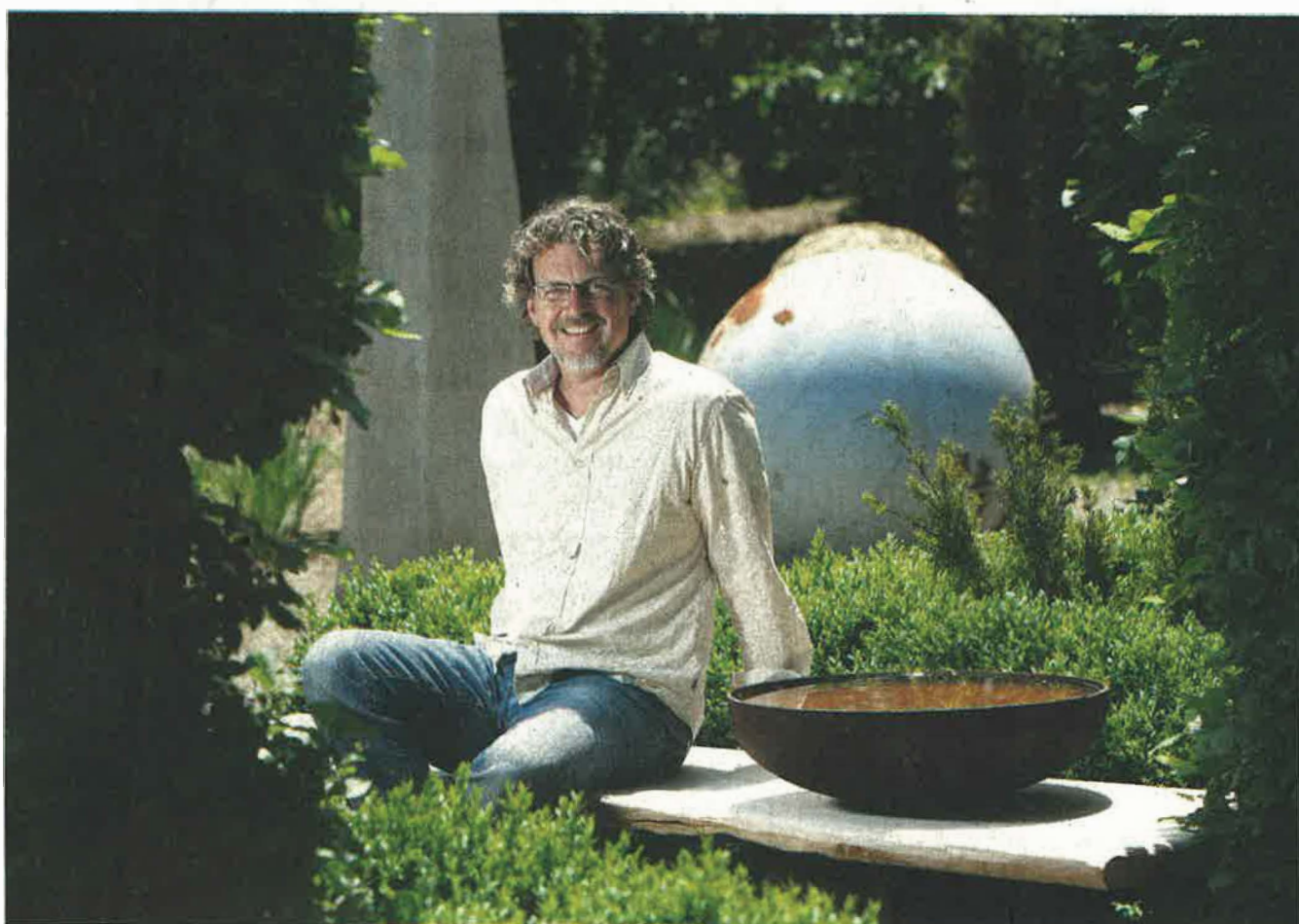


AT HOME

SATURDAY, MAY 26, 2012 • SECTION D

"When you bring in a water feature, you don't hear the noises outside and the birds and the butterflies love it."

JANI WEAVER, GardenWeaver designs



Photos by BETH SCHLANKER / The Press Democrat

Landscape architect Michael Lucas sits next to a birdbath made from a section of an old propane tank at his demonstration sculpture garden in Healdsburg. Inventive gardeners are figuring out ways to bring water into their yards at minimal cost.

Water Yards

Anyone can bring the sounds of water into their landscape with small, stylish fountains and vessels

By MEG MCCONAHEY.

THE PRESS DEMOCRAT

Whether bubbling, rushing, showering, falling or just shimmering in serene stillness, the most relaxing and soothing of sights and sounds is water.

It's a comforting primal element, like fire, that we crave in our living space. Every Japanese serenity garden has water. Roman wall paintings show pictures of gardens cooled with spouting water. Simple fountains or lavabos were placed in the cloisters of medieval monasteries, seen as metaphoric gardens of Eden.

A fortunate few have the sound of surf or a rain-swollen creek beyond their windows. But



A concrete cistern created by artist Quinn Scheibal in his demonstration sculpture garden in Healdsburg.

most of us aren't blessed with nature's music, nor can we afford to hire a landscaper to install a faux waterfall or dig a pond in our suburban yards.

Inventive gardeners are figuring out ways to bring water into their yards at minimal cost, from small ceramic bubblers and fountains to charming bird baths and simple water vessels that require no pump or installation.

"As people are doing more of their living outside, they're finding ways to incorporate the sound of water," said Jani Weaver of GardenWeaver designs. "Water is a white noise that can block traffic. When you bring in a water feature, you don't hear the noises outside and the birds and the but-

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A Vicentina wall fountain, far left, and a small Tondo fountain, left, from Absolute Statuary in Sebastopol.

WATER: Add the soothing sound of water to garden

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terflies love it. For habitat it's really good to have water out in your garden."

A water feature can also serve as a focal point in a garden design, no matter how small.

Healdsburg landscape architect Michael Lucas has done tiered fountains and elegantly simple reflecting pools and water gardens for clients. But he's also incorporated more modest water elements, like simple vessels of standing water and pots that become fountains when outfitted with a pump.

"I like the reflective quality and the cooling presence of water, particularly when it's moving. So having a pump is nice," said Lucas. "Water brings life into a garden. It's the heart of the garden."

Lucas has made standing, still-water vessels out of the heads of old propane tanks, which one might find in a salvage yard. You're limited only by your imagination when it comes to creating your own tiny little ponds and birdbaths.

"You could even use a ceramic bowl, cast-iron tubs. The sky's the limit. Anything that holds water," he said.

Since standing water can become stale and dirty and potentially breed mosquitoes, Lucas regularly changes the water, using the old water to irrigate plants in the garden so it's not wasted.

Large, corrugated-metal agricultural troughs are increasingly finding their way into North Bay gardens, not only as planters but as standing pools.

Dan Lozano reclaimed two discarded cast-iron, claw-foot bathtubs and turned them into water features behind his small house near Santa Rosa Junior College. For safety, he put wire over the top, painted them and added small, inexpensive pumps, available at home im-



Bamboo spout with bowl.

SOURCES

Lucas and Lucas Landscape Architecture: 709 Healdsburg Ave., Healdsburg, 431-2790; lucas-lucas.com.

Absolute Statuary and Fountains: 2227 Gravenstein Highway S., Sebastopol, 823-5039.

Absolutehomeandgarden.com.

GardenWeaver Design: 829-3432,

jani@gardenweaver.com.

Emerisa Gardens: 555 Irwin Lane, Santa Rosa, 525-9644, emerisa.com.

provement stores. Water plants like reeds and water lilies turn it into a pond — without the digging, liner and heavy maintenance.

He's also made tiny fountains in pots and even one in a salvaged Mexican ceramic sink.

"They're fun because they attract dragonflies and even the doves come down to drink," said Lozano, who adds teeny mosquito fish to ward off those blood-sucking pests that can ruin parties and spread disease.

David Galpin built an eye-

catching fountain in his Santa Rosa yard with three elephant-ear plant leaves encased in cement. His mother Lois Galpin, a master gardener, was making the leaves as decorative accents for her own garden in Okla-

homa. David had the inspiration to rig them up into an easy water feature that drops water down the leaves like steps and drains it into a pot before it's pumped back up and recirculated down again.

Galpin said the inexpensive fountain softens his outdoor space and blunts the sound of passing cars.

"It gives you a refreshing feeling. It's like I'm just sitting by a steam on a warm summer day," said Galpin.

Weaver cautioned that when choosing a water feature, make sure it fits the design of your garden and that it is the right scale.

In a small space or patio, choose something with a smaller pump that gives a pleasing gurgling sound. Too much water and you'll drown out conversation as if you're in the middle of a rainstorm.

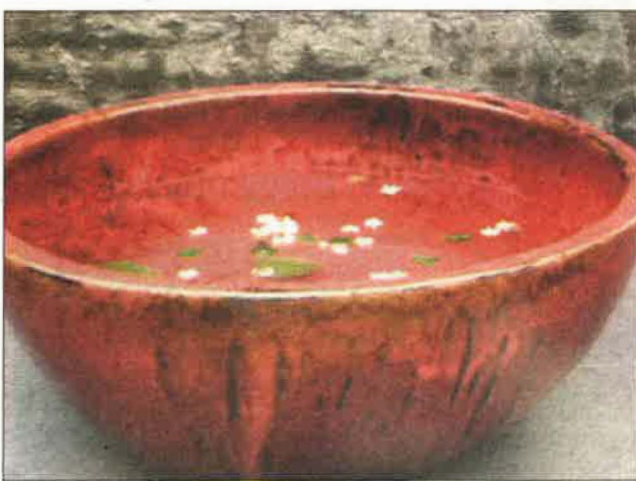
Weaver also oversees the nursery at Emerisa Gardens in Santa Rosa, which carries bird-baths (\$120) and fountains (\$250) made of brightly painted Mexican Talavera pottery, nice for a tropical garden or one that is bright, informal and whimsical.

Absolute Statuary in Sebastopol sells hanging wall fountains that start at just \$100. They will also help you put together your own bubbler, said owner Lynda Rufenacht. Select a ceramic pot and they'll install the right-sized pump and tubing. For less than \$100, you can have a custom vessel fountain that can be an ideal little element on your deck or patio.



DAVID GALPIN / Absolute Statuary

Small water features can be as elaborate as this fountain, above, made by David Galpin and his mother Lois of Santa Rosa, or as simple as this colorful bowl, below.



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