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SUMMER 2010

DESIGNER ADDS  
**DRAMA**  
IN PALO ALTO HOME  
**PAGE 16**

**BREAKING DOWN BARRIERS IN PALO ALTO | PAGE 4**  
**NO MORE BORING BOXES IN MOUNTAIN VIEW | PAGE 8**  
**DRAMATIC PORCH ENHANCES LIFE IN MENLO PARK | PAGE 25**



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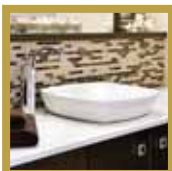
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**4 BREAKING DOWN BARRIERS**  
Curving a wall, adding niches opens up spaces



**8 NO MORE BORING BOXES**  
Opportunistic leak leads to bathroom, kitchen overhauls



**14 INDOOR/OUTDOOR LIVING**  
What goes outside impacts how we live inside

**16 A PROJECT THAT GREW ... AND GREW**  
Designer adds drama to unassuming home

**20 GOING FOR THE GREEN**  
Remodel evolves into eco-friendly project

**25 A HAVEN AND A HUB**  
Dramatic porch enhances life

**28 TIME TO USE LESS WATER**  
Water-efficient landscape ordinance vs. your garden

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# BREAKING DOWN BARRIERS

CURVING A WALL, ADDING NICHE OPENS UP SPACES



**A bearing wall** separating the dining room from the hallway, top, evolved to a furniture-like structure, with niches for artwork. Below, the kitchen was opened to the dining room with both a walkway and a pass-through.



by Carol Blitzer /  
photos by Barbara Boissevain

It wasn't the big tiles with the fat, dark grout that convinced the Johnsons to update their kitchen. Or even the appliance garages — so in vogue in 1987 — that made the kitchen feel closed in.

Or that eating dinner with their family of five meant squeezing into a too-small space.

"Everything was dark. There was a dark feel to the whole house," Jim Johnson says.

Add it all up and, after living in

the home since 2004, it was simply the right time.

But even though the Johnsons agreed on the necessity for the project, their aesthetic issues were nearly unsolvable, according to Marc Percy, a Burlingame-based architect.

Jim Johnson likes modern — think clean lines, leather furniture, big paintings. Kathy's more fond of traditional.

And, although there were other things about the house they didn't like, they strongly preferred a

**The new kitchen** blends traditional elements — from the white Shaker-style cabinets and a farmer's sink — with stainless-steel appliances and glass subway-tile backsplash. Special touches include a refrigerator with a built-in wine cooler, and a marble-covered island with an indoor grill and pop-up exhaust fan.

phased, pay-as-you-go style of construction.

In summer 2008, Percy created a master plan, with the kitchen/family room areas completed by Christmas. Next came an update to the laundry area and bathrooms, followed by a new entry and stairway.

The new kitchen neatly blends the Johnsons' competing aesthetics, with painted white Shaker-style cabinets that are "traditional" yet stripped of detail. Counter tops are a white with gray Statuarieto Venato marble, and the backsplash is gray, glass subway tile. Kathy fought hard to include a deep farm sink.

Jim acquiesced but quickly pointed out that the sink required an unusual, squat garbage disposer and special faucets — and the cabinets had to be built around it.

Space in the kitchen was opened up in a variety of ways, from using nearly opaque cabinet fronts to replacing those appliance garages with an electrical strip subtly run under the cabinets. A pass-through to the dining room breaks up one long wall.

Percy pierced two other boxy walls: Between the kitchen and family room, he opened the space by curving a wall and creating niches for the family's Teng Dynasty figurines. A new wall, also with niches, floats between the hallway and the dining room.

"We took a traditional wall and made it look more like furniture. It has structural quality but looks non-structural," Percy says.

That wall presented a design challenge, since drainpipes ran from the second floor through part of it.

*continued on next page*

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But the heart of the new kitchen is a large marble-covered island with a Gaggenau indoor grill and pop-up exhaust fan. The adjoining deep fryer is still untouched.

"We asked for seating at the island, which I love and the kids love. They can sit and watch while I cook. It changed the way we used the kitchen," Kathy says.

Finishing touches in the kitchen include a Liebherr combination refrigerator, freezer and wine cooler. They already had a Viking stove.

"We bought the Viking on sale. It drove some of the design," Jim says.

"We started by thinking of replacing the appliances," Kathy adds with a smile.

Some small things made a big difference to the Johnsons: Kathy got glass shelves near the sink to house plants, as well as a special spot for flowers on one of the broken-up walls. Her only regret is not building in a wine cubby (so the

dog couldn't make the horizontal bottles roll in the low cabinet).

Today one enters the home through a quasi-modern entry rather than the original stained-glass door. The new metal railing is much more fitting with the living room's Corbusier chairs than the earlier rustic oak ("It looked like it belonged in Tahoe," Jim says.).

With the master plan completed, the Johnsons are moving on the next steps: landscaping the outdoors and ultimately, building cabinets and changing windows around the family-room fireplace.

"That brick has to go,"

Jim says. **h+g**

#### Resources:

*Architect:* Marc Percy Architecture, Burlingame; 650-348-1509; www.percyarchitecture.com

*Building contractor:* Robert Melnychuk, R & W Construction, San Jose; 408-691-3561

*Marble fabricator:* Bianco Marble & Stone, Livermore, 925-449-8686

#### Goal of project/ design challenge:

Open up kitchen, family room, dining room, create seating for family

#### Unexpected problems/ hidden costs:

Drainpipes ran down wall where they wanted to create niches

#### Year house built:

1987

#### Size of home, lot:

3,810 sq ft (including garage) on 0.25 acre

#### Time to complete:

3 months for core project

#### Budget:

About \$140,000 for core project, \$25,000 for additional projects



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# NO MORE BORING BOXES

Opportunistic leak leads to bathroom, kitchen overhauls

by Kathy Schrenk /  
photos by Bernard Andre

**N**o one likes finding out their plumbing has major issues and needs to be ripped out. But after Doug and Teri Young discovered their downstairs half bath was leaking into the crawlspace of their Mountain View home, they decided to use it as a design opportunity.

Since the tiny bathroom shared flooring with their tired kitchen, the couple decided it was time to start over. The kitchen and bathroom were gutted and rebuilt.

Months after those tandem projects were done, Teri noticed a drip as she sat in the family room next to the kitchen while Doug was showering upstairs. Before they knew it, they were designing two new bathrooms.

Doug had never been completely happy with the old kitchen.

"I felt like we just had this wall of boxes," he says of the uniform, white-



**The master bath** replaced a small, cramped space with a deep, oval tub and glass shower, with a honed-marble floor for a less-formal feel. A squarish, slate-colored bowl sink fronts the glass-tile backsplash.

*continued on page 10*



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**Teri Young** focused on the hall bath, taking a more modern approach with dark and light neutral tones, and a square white bowl sink echoing square drawer pulls. She even managed to contain a jewelry cabinet between wall studs, behind the bathroom door.

*continued from page 8*

washed oak cabinets. “It was kind of boring.”

Tile countertops and plain dry-wall didn’t help liven things up. Doug envisioned cabinets of varying height to create visual interest. When they took down the dropped ceiling and discovered they had another foot-and-a-half to work with, the dramatic corner cabinets and tall vent hood for the stove could become a reality.

But with a kitchen that wasn’t huge, and no plans to add square footage, they had to make some compromises. The old kitchen had a double oven, but they decided to skip that little-used luxury for a regular oven plus a convection microwave.

They loved the idea of having an island in the new kitchen, but there simply wasn’t room. They thought about a peninsula, and made a mock-up with a card table and cardboard, and found that they didn’t like walking around it every time they entered the kitchen.

Teri had wanted a desk or office nook where she could sit down and write, but there wasn’t room for that, either. Instead, the designer conceived the idea of two pull-out flat surfaces where Teri can stand and write (with shelves above for stamps and pens) or lay out her cookbooks to select or follow recipes.

They learned that flexibility can be the key to a successful remodel.

“Instead of getting stuck on what you want,” Doug says, “tell the designer ‘here’s what I want to do’

and see what they come up with.”

Teri took the lead when it came to the aesthetics of the kitchen and half bath. She wanted cabinets the color of a favorite jewelry box, so had custom cherry doors dyed to match. She worked with designer Susan Davis of Spectrum Fine

‘Instead of getting stuck on what you want, tell the designer “here’s what I want to do” and see what they come up with.’

— *Doug Young, homeowner*

Homes to establish a subtle theme of flowing water in the backsplash and the clear glass cabinet fronts. The panes in the cabinet doors evoke a rain-streaked window and some clear stone details on the backsplash echo that effect, creating a pleasing continuity with the garden waterfall just outside the kitchen door and bay windows.

When Teri and Doug started on the upstairs bathrooms about 18 months later, they took a “his-and-hers” approach: Doug got to make all the decisions about the master bath while Teri worked on the hall bath.

This made sense for them, Teri says, because she is an early riser and Doug is not. With her own bathroom away from their bed she could get ready for her day without disturbing him.

Doug says the master bathroom felt small, dark and cramped, even though it had a skylight. It had an uninteresting aluminum-frame shower and simple floor tiles.

For the new bathroom he chose a glass shower and a slate-colored, oblong, squarish bowl for the sink. Jemma Clark, the designer from Spectrum for the bathrooms, suggested marble for the floor but in a

*continued on page 12*

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continued from page 10

honed, instead of polished, finish for a modern but less formal feel.

Teri took a starkly modern approach with tiles in dark and light neutral tones. She also decided to punch out a section of wall between two studs behind the bathroom door for a jewelry cabinet. **h+g**

**Resources:**

*Building contractor and designer:* Spectrum Fine Homes, Mountain View, 650-960-2449

**Goal of project:**

Update original kitchen and bathrooms to have a lighter, more modern feel

**Unexpected problems/hidden costs:**

Downstairs bathroom leak caused damage to a major beam below, which had to be replaced

**Year house built:**

1990

**Size of home, lot:**

2,200-sq-ft home on 6,600-sq-ft lot

**Time to complete:**

13 months total

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# INDOOR/OUTDOOR living

What goes outside impacts how we live inside

by Risë Krag

Checking the weather across the globe helps me think about my family and friends in their daily lives. A quick scroll and I know that Copenhagen ranges from chilly to chillier, Kauai is very warm and raining, Bangalore is having torrential rains and lightning, Chapel Hill is steamy with thunder, and our Peninsula is having glorious moderate temperatures with clear skies.

It is no wonder that indoor/outdoor living is central to our lifestyle. Many cafes and restaurants include outdoor service. Businesses and medical centers have outdoor gardens for employees and customers. School curriculum includes outdoor classes and activities.

Our homes often blend the indoors with the outdoors. Visibility of landscaping from large-paned windows or sliding-glass doors highlights the garden outside. For those too busy or unable to venture outside, much of the outdoors can be admired from within. Creating a focal point



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**A fabric-covered** pavilion, open at the sides, creates an outdoor room, where one can enjoy the scents and sights of the landscape as well as shade.

with a sculpture or colorful plant or tree, particularly one that changes with the seasons, is like creating art within the window frame. Placing a bench in the view can entice one outside, or simply be a metaphor for the experience of relaxation.

Transition areas are decks and patios. They are the favorite living spaces because they share the best elements of the garden with the comforts of indoor living. Chairs and tables, lounges, and even rugs and accessories make these spaces special. There are many options of sun-resistant fabrics that can be used on cushions, accent pillows and curtains to contain the spaces during very sunny days or evenings.

Outdoor kitchens have become very popular. Whether a simple barbecue and a table, or a more elaborate entertainment center, many people enjoy spending as much time as they want outside. An outdoor cooking center makes it easier to have meals with family and guests without the constant traffic in and out of the house. The cabinetry needs to be weather resistant to protect appliances and cooking supplies.

A seasonal, fabric-covered pavilion extends the times the outdoors can be enjoyed, out of the sun or light rain. An outdoor heater can provide thermal comfort and expand the enjoyment to evening hours or a cool fall, even some winter days.

Creating separate rooms within the garden is particularly enjoyable. Some years ago I found an antique metal garden pavilion frame that spans 12 feet and has a tall domed top. It is open above and on all sides. I had it placed on a low octagonal base of the same size at one side of the garden.

Between each of the eight arches I planted table grapes. They have grown over the years to cover much of the space. A wagon wheel glass-top table and six to eight chairs complete the small dining "room." For dinner I light candles in the chandelier.

Perhaps the most delightful part of outdoor rooms or transition areas is the scent of plantings. Star jasmine, wisteria, roses, fruit trees and citrus blossoms are a few fragrant choices that are not only aromatic, but attract bumblebees and hummingbirds.

While studying for my LEED AP test last year, I learned that city planning offices could award points for maximizing exterior visibility. There are many health benefits from fresh air and sunshine as well as the inspiration of the outdoor environment. There are many ways to create enjoyable indoor-outdoor living spaces for our daily lives. The recent Pacific Coast Building Conference in San Francisco had several displays that highlighted functional ideas. For example:

- An obelisk-shaped heater by Napoleon Fireplaces that functioned as a light and heat source could grace any area. The company also makes wall-mounted fireplaces and wall-mounted water features. [www.napoleonfireplaces.com](http://www.napoleonfireplaces.com)
- The Denver Company, which makes stainless-steel cabinets for outdoor kitchens, now offers wood tones and fun colors. [www.denver.com](http://www.denver.com)
- Belgard, an interlocking driveway paver company, has expanded its offering to include a stone-covered cook center with waterfalls on each side. [www.belgard.biz](http://www.belgard.biz)

We have the best weather to enjoy our indoor/outdoor spaces all year. Make the most of it! **h+g** *Risë Krag, ASID, associate AIA, IESGG, is founder of RKI Interior Design, a full-service interior-design firm. She can be reached at 650-854-9090 or [www.RKIInteriorDesign.com](http://www.RKIInteriorDesign.com). Design problems can be sent directly to [risekraginc@yahoo.com](mailto:risekraginc@yahoo.com).*



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**Floor-to-ceiling** French doors and limestone tile floor extending to the patio create a strong indoor/outdoor connection under a dramatic, modernistic arch, above. Below, a nine-foot-long solid glass eating counter juts out from the black-granite-topped island, supported by a stainless-steel pole.

**About the cover:** Modern elements in this colorful kitchen include high-gloss cherry cabinets fronted with opaque glass with stainless-steel surrounds.



**The master bathroom, right,** with its undulating stainless-steel ceiling, was inspired by Asian spas, with metal tubes resembling bamboo. The master closet, upper right, appears like an elegant boutique, with its cherry-wood drawers and opaque-glass-topped island.





# A PROJECT THAT GREW ... AND GREW

DESIGNER ADDS DRAMA TO UNASSUMING HOME



by Susan Golovin / photos by Rio Costantini

Linda Walton says that she and her husband bought their Palo Alto foothills two-story home because of the backyard tennis court.

"I knew that the kitchen cabinets would need to be replaced and the bathrooms remodeled," Walton says. She did not envision that her 5-bedroom, 3-bath, unassuming home would morph into a 4-bedroom, 4-bath showcase with a dramatic modernistic arch in the kitchen, a Japanese-inspired master bathroom and a jewel box of a master-bedroom closet until she started working with interior designer Dan Danenberg.

Danenberg says that he was inspired to use bright wall colors — turquoise, orange, yellow, eggplant — throughout the house by the owners' collection of "big sky" Kansas paintings. "I can work in any style, but I prefer contemporary," he says.

What was once a simple U-shaped kitchen with one window is now an airy room with a wall of floor-to-ceiling French doors. The indoor/outdoor connection is accentuated by using the same

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limestone tile floor in the kitchen and adjacent patio. Danenberg designed the black granite-topped island that houses the microwave and dishwasher, and features a nine-foot-long solid glass eating counter, which juts out from the island and is supported by a stainless-steel pole.

The high-gloss Irpinia cherry cabinets were custom made in Canada. Four additional cabinets with opaque glass fronts and stainless-steel surrounds add variety.

“I don’t cook but I like retro,” Walton says, explaining why the orange Turbo Chef oven coexists nicely with the modern Wolf range and stainless-steel appliances.

“The mason cut every tile into five pieces and re-assembled them into the pattern I designed,” Danenberg says, describing the slanted columns for the archway that leads from the kitchen into the



**Black granite tops** the counter in the modern kitchen, with cherry cabinetry, stainless-steel hardware and a Wolf range.

family room. The fired, black stone tile-covered supports are topped by sky-blue stucco arcs that break in the middle. “It’s the illusion of an arch,” said Danenberg.

Upstairs a bathroom was added

and a bedroom eliminated, the latter co-opted by the master closet. Manmade floors nicely approximate the look of the original mahogany ones downstairs.

“Asian spas have shade shelters



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made out of bamboo and tied weeds,” Danenberg says. This is the effect he was trying to recreate with the undulating stainless-steel canopy for the master bath ceiling that he designed and Nevarez Machinery in San Jose fabricated. The details extend to the end of the metal tubes, which resemble the end of a bamboo reed.

The stainless-steel Japanese Furo soaking tub is surrounded by smooth river rocks. The backdrop for it is a black slate, mica-infused, 8-foot by 4-foot, 3/4-inch-wide slab that appears to be floating. A nearby black Kohler hatbox toilet looks like a bench.

Metal-framed mirrors hang on a dramatic fuchsia wall over hammered-nickel sinks set in a white marble counter. The tile floor, the cabinetry and the honed, black tile walls are the same materials used throughout. Indeed, the materials appear like a leitmotif in all the remodeled bathrooms.

Of the master closet, Danenberg says, “I wanted to create the sense of an elegant boutique.” Cherry-wood drawers, shelves and hanging areas provide ample storage. An island is topped with opaque glass inserts that mimic the glass used on the sliding-glass closet doors. German hardware supports the doors from above “so that you don’t have dust and grime interfering with the rollers,” he says.

The remodeled house is a primer on workmanship. The shoe closet in the master bath features a 250-pound metal-embellished sliding door that can be opened with one finger. **h+g**

**Resources:**

*Designer:* Dan Danenberg, Danenberg Design, East Palo Alto, 650-291-0240 [www.danenbergdesign.com](http://www.danenbergdesign.com)  
*Building and landscape contractor:* Ralph Lewis, Ralph Lewis Construction, Portola Valley,

650-996-5572

*Glass counter:* Kersey Glass Works, Hayward, 510-782-7813, [www.KerseyGlass.com](http://www.KerseyGlass.com)

**Goal of project:**

Update and create a modern setting inspired by the owner’s art collection

**Unanticipated issues:**

Project took longer as its scope expanded

**Year house built:**

1974

**Size of home:**

About 3,000 sq ft

**Time to complete:**

About one year

**Budget:**

Expanded as the project grew from a modest kitchen redo to include much of the home



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# Going for the green

Remodel evolves into eco-friendly project



**Bruce Schena** and Cathy Ricke built a modern house, above, on the bones of a 1939 bungalow, using green materials. Below, the kitchen features "Rice Hull" concrete countertops and hot, modern colors.

by Kathy Schrenk / photos by Dasja Dolan

**I**t all started with shredded pants. Bruce Schena and Cathy Ricke didn't begin their home remodel intending to be the greenest house on the block. But as their plan progressed, they made decisions such as using recycled blue jeans for insulation.

Before they knew it they found themselves looking into every possible environmentally friendly option for their house and getting a high rating from Build It Green, a nonprofit that rates structures on a range of environmentally friendly parameters. They even won awards from environmental organizations for making eco-friendliness a priority in all aspects of the remodel.

The couple, with Ricke doing much of the research, started picking out sustainably made countertops, searching out the most efficient heating and lighting systems and looking for formaldehyde-free building materials. Schena even used equipment at his workplace to find the toughest brand of bamboo flooring on the market.

When they first envisioned their remodel, Schena and Ricke were looking to build a modern house on the bones of a 1939 bungalow. They had already

*continued on page 22*





Among the eco-friendly aspects of this home are bamboo floors, sustainably made countertops, recycled blue jeans for insulation, radiant floor-heating and formaldehyde-free building materials.

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**Not all bamboo flooring** is the same, but the owner load-tested samples before choosing the sturdiest.

*continued from page 20*

added about 500 square feet (in the form of a master bedroom at the back) since they bought the place in 1995 but were ready to add on even more space for them and their two adolescent girls.

They loved the aesthetics and processes of Michelle Kaufman Designs, which is known for modular homes built with environmentally friendly materials and practices. The couple saw a model of a Kaufman house at a Sunset Magazine event and worked with Kaufman for six months before concluding that the house they want-

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**Menlo Park architect** Ana Williamson worked with local contractor Drew Maran to create an eco-strategy for this award-winning home.

ed from the company wouldn't fit properly on their lot.

They were disappointed about not getting to use Kaufman, but they soon found Menlo Park architect Ana Williamson and Palo Alto building contractor Drew Maran. Williamson and Maran had already done several houses together, Schena said. Maran, he added, was using green materials and practices 20 years ago. Hiring such a local architect and builder was all part of the eco-strategy.

"We tried where we could to use local vendors and sources," Schena said.

The project resulted in the house being dismantled down to the studs.

From the ground up, there were a lot of decisions for the couple to make, including those bamboo floors. They had seen houses with bamboo floors where the wood showed dents and marks after just a couple years.

While bamboo is a sustainable wood, regrowing quickly, it wouldn't be very environmentally friendly if the floors had to be replaced many times more frequently than hardwood. So Schena collected all the bamboo samples he could find and used load-testing

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equipment he has access to at work to figure out which ones were the sturdiest. This and other decision-making processes were docu-

**'We tried where we could to use local vendors and sources.'**

—Bruce Schena,  
Menlo Park homeowner

mented on his blog, Pope Street Modern ([www.siliconcontraption.com/414pope/blog/](http://www.siliconcontraption.com/414pope/blog/)), which developed a substantial following during the remodel.

For cabinets and countertops in the bathrooms and kitchen, they managed to get the “hot,” mod-

ern colors they wanted while still using local vendors and sustainable materials. A favorite material choice of Schena's is the “Rice Hull” concrete in the kitchen. The rice hull byproduct produced by some power plants is mixed with concrete to make it stronger and less permeable.

They decided to use radiant floor-heating, which got them a lot of “points” for their green rating because it uses so much less energy than the typical forced-air system. In an interesting twist, they decided against solar panels. Schena says the technology is expected to improve dramatically in the next few years, so they decided to wait for a better system than what's available now.

In the end, Schena estimates that they spent about 15 percent more in order to use green practices and materials than they would have otherwise. But it was worth it, he said. And, they had a lot more options for a lot less cost than if they had done the project 10 or even five years ago. **h+g**

#### Resources:

**Architect:** Ana Williamson Architect, Menlo Park, 650-329-0577, [www.awarchitect.com](http://www.awarchitect.com)

**Contractor:** Drew Maran Construction, Palo Alto, 650-323-8541, [www.drewmaran.com](http://www.drewmaran.com)

**Landscape Architect:** Keith Willig, Menlo Park, 650-326-2294, [www.keithwilliglandscape.com](http://www.keithwilliglandscape.com)

#### Goal of project:

Remodel home using green materials and practices while going for a modern, yet warm, look

#### Unexpected problems:

Preferred architect's pre-fab modules wouldn't fit on site

#### Year house built:

1939

#### Size of home, lot:

1,500 sq ft before, now 2,500 sq ft on 8,750-sq-ft lot

#### Time to complete:

13 months



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**A 760-square-foot** outdoor space, top, rounded at each end, runs the length of this Menlo Park home. Left, the cupola soars 21 feet and features a pointed copper cap. Above, the cupola is supported by decorative arching arms.

## A HAVEN and a HUB

**Dramatic porch  
enhances life**

by Susan Golovin /  
photos by Dasja Dolan

“We just call it the porch,” said Roberta Carcione.

She is referring to the 760-square-foot outdoor space, rounded at each end, which runs the length of her Menlo Park home.

With its elegant railings, soaring cupola and detailed pillars that sprout arching

arms, it merits a fancier designation — perhaps “veranda.” But for Roberta and her husband, Joe Jr., and their extended family, including six grandchildren, it is simply the place where the family hangs out together.

The idea of a porch originated when the Carciones purchased the somewhat decrepit house next door.

“We were afraid that another McMansion would go up,” Carcione says, but they couldn’t combine the two lots. What they could do, according to Menlo Park code, was add 20 feet of land from the new purchase to their original site, providing for two conforming lots.

Carcione had always wanted a porch and now she had the space.

Carcione says that she engaged Menlo Park architect Jim Maliksi, whom they had worked with when they remodeled the home. “He understands my taste,” says Carcione, who is on the board of the

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San Mateo County History Museum and who also sold antiques at one time. “I love English and French country. This house can be described as ‘California, Victorian, ranch.’”

The porch features two seating areas. The larger of the two is under the main cupola, which soars to more than 21 feet and sports a pointed copper cap over a round of windows.

“A hexagon shape would have been cheaper, but the architect said that the cupola had to be round in order to be Victorian,” Carcione says. The second cupola at the other end of the porch is not embellished.

The main seating area is furnished with weatherproof wicker furniture that Carcione found online, as well as a weatherproof carpet. The four industrial-sized gas heaters set just below the windows in the cupola are not obtrusive because they are so high. In warm weather a leaf-themed fan helps control the climate.



**The larger seating area**, furnished with weatherproof wicker furniture and carpet, is under the cupola.

“We can be on the porch in the rain,” Carcione says, “but not if it’s windy.”

“The floor is cement because I wanted to be able to hose it down,” she says. A few strategically placed lines of brick set into the floor relieve the industrial look without detracting from the practicality. All of the

pillars are steel, wrapped in redwood.

The access to the porch from the living room is through two arching doors that used to be windows. The wheel-cut glass carving on the door panels is in keeping with Carcione’s love of Victoriana. The decorative, sanded glass eliminates the need for drapes and yet provides privacy and

BUILDING THE DREAM

 A collage of landscape design images showing various outdoor spaces, including patios, gardens, and seating areas. The images are arranged in a grid-like pattern, showcasing different styles of outdoor living environments.

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**Access to the veranda** from the living room is through two arching doors with wheel-cut glass, which were formerly windows.

filtered light.

The Carciones razed the second house and have built two bocce courts on their new property. As for the area from the porch to the new property line, “We’re planting an orchard,” she says.

In the winter the porch is clearly visible from the street.

“People walking by love it,” Carcione says. However, since spring a flowering cherry in the front yard along with other foliage provides a more secluded retreat.

“We considered installing a TV,” she says. “But we were worried about theft — and conversation is so good that I decided, who needs it?” **h+g**

#### Resources:

*Architect:* Jim Maliksi, J Maliksi and Associates Inc., Menlo Park, 650-323-2902

*Building contractor:* RJ Smith, Palo Alto, rjsmithconstruction.com

*Landscape architect:* Susan Edwards Ogle, Menlo Park, 650-327-4237

*Glass fabrication:* Lehmann Glass Studio, Oakland, www.lehmannnglass.com

#### Goal of project:

Add porch to existing home

#### Unexpected problems/ hidden costs:

Lots of construction delays

#### Year house built:

1947

#### Size of home:

Added 760 sq ft to 4,000-sq-ft house

#### Time to complete:

9 months

#### Budget:

\$250,000

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# Time to use less water

## Water-efficient landscape ordinance vs. your garden

photos and text by Astrid Gaiser, APLD

It's here and it's here to stay. Since Jan. 1, 2010, a new Water-Efficient Landscape Ordinance (WELO) is in effect for the state of California.

Depending on the community you live in, the ordinance's wording, regulations and enforcement will be slightly different, but all versions have a common set of goals, which are much applauded by landscape professionals and environmentally conscious homeowners alike:

- Water-efficient landscapes will stretch our limited water supplies: Fifty to 70 percent of our drinking water is used to irrigate our gardens and much of it goes to the thirsty lawns. Reducing the water needs of your garden is the best thing you can do to save water in our year-long drought situation.

- Reduced irrigation runoff: Avoiding irrigation runoff from overspray and misting will reduce the pollution of waterways and lead to less property damage.

- Less green waste: Reducing watering means less green waste. A lot of plants that are very generously watered react with growth spurts that in turn lead to more pruning. Limiting the watering to a reasonable amount saves green waste and — even better — your manual labor. Get your Saturday afternoon back and save money at the same time.

- Increased drought resistance: Water-wise gardens will survive even if we run into serious drought conditions. The lawn will not. A water-wise garden can look as beautiful and lush as any other garden.

- Smaller carbon footprint: A low-maintenance, drought-tolerant, sustainable garden has a much smaller carbon footprint than a garden that needs to bring a lot in (fertilizer, mulch, annuals) or get a lot out (green waste). Stick with perennial native or Mediterranean



**Adding fun** splashes of color, such as the red seat-wall, above, is a quick method of avoiding planting annuals every year. Below, one can reduce water use by reducing lawn size and adding planting areas with drought-tolerant plants and permeable hardscape.

plants, compost your green waste, and use your compost as a mulch to feed and protect your plants.

Most water districts offer additional incentives to convert to a more water-wise landscape. Santa Clara Valley Water District (SCVWD) for example offers landscape-rebate programs ([www.valleywater.org/Programs/LandscapeRebateProgram.aspx](http://www.valleywater.org/Programs/LandscapeRebateProgram.aspx)) to replace irrigation and even entire landscapes: Santa Clara County single- and multifamily homes with gardens of any size and business properties with 5,000 square feet or more of irrigated landscape can receive rebates

for replacing high water-using plants — such as irrigated turf grass — with low water-using plants from their approved plant list and/or permeable hardscape.

With the City of Palo Alto matching SCVWD rebates, single-family homes can receive up to \$3,000 and business properties can be given up to \$30,000. See SCVWD's website for details and eligibility. And always have your landscape pre-approved and pre-inspected before you start construction.

The Water-Efficient Landscape Ordinance helps to achieve the goals laid out above by giving cit-



**A healthy, water-wise, sustainable garden** avoids herbicides, pesticides and water waste.

ies, counties and other agencies tools to understand and predict the water-usage of a property. One of these tools is calculating a water budget.

There are two interesting numbers: The Maximum Applied Water Allowance (how much a landscape of a certain size and in a certain area should be using), and the Estimated Total Water Use (how much you estimate your new landscape will use).

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Other tools are landscape, irrigation, grading and drainage plans as well as a soil test performed by a soil-testing lab to help the homeowner plan and understand the needs of the landscape better.

These requirements for calculations and plans sound scary at first, but many municipalities are considering moving to easier models such as one or two plans and/or a simple checklist that asks the homeowner questions such as:

How much lawn do you have on your property (in percent)?

How much of your planting area is planted with

drought-tolerant plants such as California natives or Mediterranean plants?

Talking to Catherine Elvert from the City of Palo Alto, I learned that Palo Alto is currently enforcing the state's model ordinance. However, since the new mandatory CALGreen standards and landscape ordinance share some requirements for outdoor water efficiency and face similar timelines for adoption, Palo Alto will be incorporating the WELO requirements into their update to the Green Building Code, which will go into effect in January 2011. A new and easier checklist-type of documentation may also be in the near future.

According to the state's model ordinance, new non-residential landscapes with an irrigated area larger than 2,500 square feet, new homeowner-provided residential landscapes with an irrigated area larger than 5,000 square feet, as well as existing landscapes more than 1 acre are subject to the ordinance. The new integrated ordinance in the future may lower these thresholds.

And even though it may not ever be required for your garden, why not build a water-wise, sustainable garden anyway? They are beautiful and you'll save the environment and your time and money (for watering, pruning and mowing) at the same time. **h+g**

*Astrid Gaiser, APLD, is a landscape designer, horticulturist and Certified Green Building Professional. Information: 650-224-2895, Astrid@astridgaiser.com, www.astridgaiser.com.*



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