Unthirsty!
AEONIUM AND FRIENDS
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IDEA GARDEN

BEAUTY AND THE BEACH

With a low-maintenance design that takes its cues from the coast, this garden was made for relaxation.

Photographs by THOMAS J. STORY

IDEA GARDEN

Make it useful and beautiful—that was owner Dana Saxten's request of landscape designer Ryan Prange *(fallingwaterlandscape.com)* for the garden around her home in Encinitas, California. Prange's solution: Create outdoor rooms all over the lot, then fill in with unthirsty plants inspired by nearby coastal flora. "I didn't want to hit the beach theme over the head," Prange says, "but the design evokes that feeling."

The front yard

With its laid-back seating area and lush greenery, this yard is as much a place to hang out as it is a welcoming path to the front door. The garden is "low-maintenance, yet it always looks tidy," says Saxten.

WALKWAY

Before the remodel, there was no path to the front of the house—just a driveway along one side. Now, wide, inviting steps lead to the front door with stops along the way: at the firepit and a cozy gathering spot on the porch. Mexican pebbles fill the spaces between the sand-finish natural gray concrete pavers, creating a permeable surface.

PLANTINGS

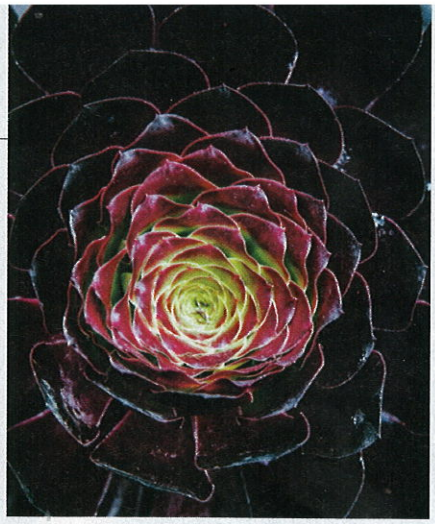
Greenery fringes the paving, softening the overall look. The plants (agaves, grasses, and yellow-flowered yarrow) are all drought-tolerant and much easier to care for than the yard's former patchy lawn. All plants are on a timer-operated drip-irrigation system *(netafimusa.com)*, with tubing laid atop the soil and covered with bark mulch.

WALL & FIREPIT

Shells embellish the firepit of buff-colored Mexican beach cobbles and boulders set in mortar. Sand topped with pieces of shell fills the gas-fed firepit. "It brings the beach to the house and gives the garden a sense of place," says Prange.

By KATHLEEN N. BRENZEL

"My favorite Sundays are here with family, relaxing by the 'pool-cuzzi' and ending the day with a barbecue."
—HOMEOWNER DANA SAXTEN



The backyard

This private outdoor retreat is small but mighty, with distinct spaces for dining, lounging, and soaking.

DINING AREA

Tucked into a patio corner near the house, the dining area feels enclosed, thanks to a billowy tea tree (*Leptospermum petersonii*), above left.

PLANTINGS

A chocolate-hued *Aeonium arboreum* 'Atropurpureum' (top) shows off its green center in a planting near the house. *Echeveria imbricata* (above) nestles against a boulder with yellow yarrow and Berkeley sedge in a small planting bed. The large flower (left) is an artichoke, grown as an ornamental.

DECK

A rock wall fringed with Berkeley sedge separates the lower paved patio from the raised redwood deck and hot tub. The level change makes the small backyard appear larger. Columnar Hollywood junipers (*Juniperus torulosa*) cluster to the left of the deck, while a hedge of pineapple guavas (*Feijoa sellowiana*) grows against the back fence (made of cedar but stained to look like redwood). At night, strings of bistro lights emit a soft glow, like starlight, above the hot tub.

The side yards

Prange made sure that no outdoor space is wasted. A wraparound deck connects the front to the side doors.

PALM ALLÉE

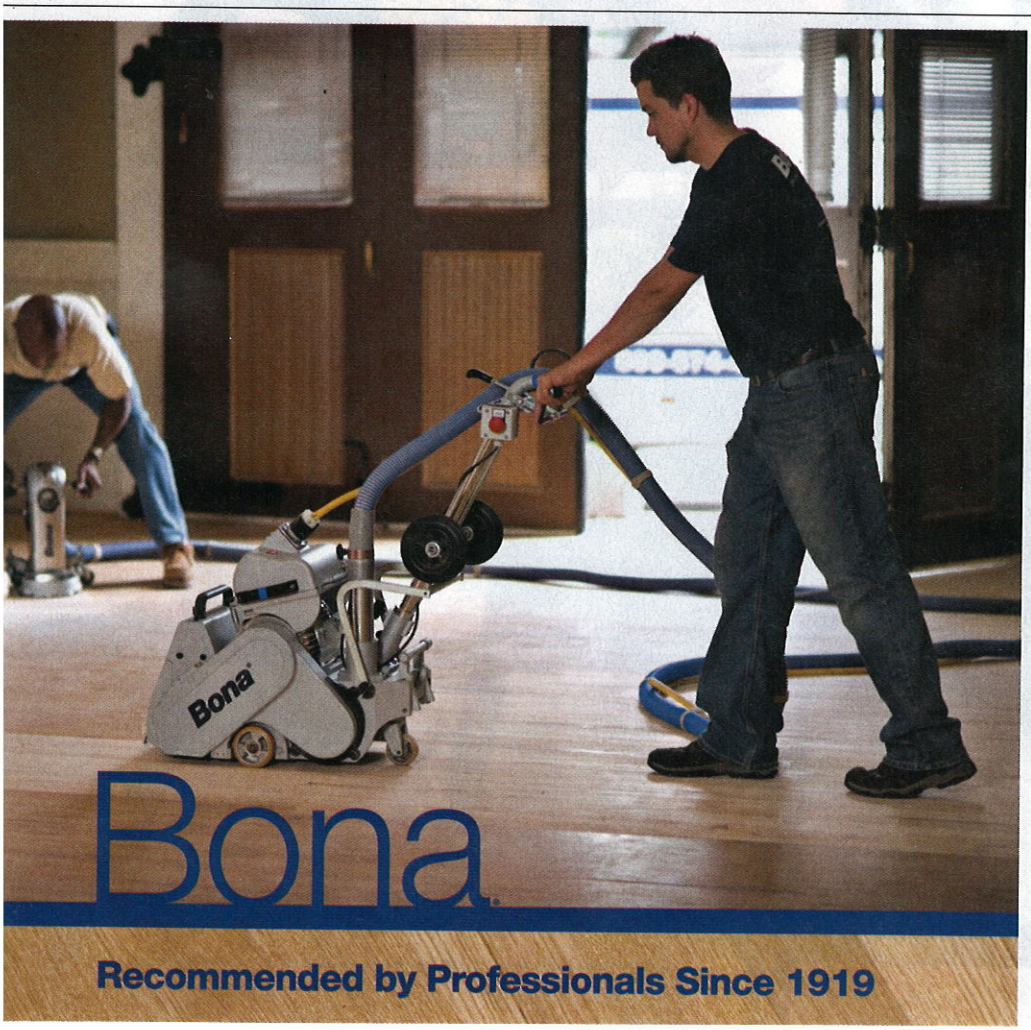
Along the south side of the house, Mexican fan palms echo those at the beach. They're underplanted with fine-leafed sheep fescue (*Festuca filiformis*) and 'Yellow Wave' phormiums.

OUTDOOR SHOWER

A cobble-embellished wall on the home's north side edges the shower, for use after visits to the beach; a laurel hedge provides privacy.

PLANTINGS

A blooming *Leucadendron* 'Safari Sunset' and an upright, spiky-leafed 'Maori Queen' phormium add rosy hues above a silvery green phormium and deep green *Carex tumulicola*.



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