

BY R.L. XANDER



CYNTHIA EGGER CALLS herself a horticulturist, but magician may be more appropriate. How else could she have transformed a once overgrown and shady yard dominated by three pine trees whose roots destroyed the seat wall and surrounded a small, cracked-concrete and brick patio? The yard belongs to a retired couple who turned to Cynthia, an athletic, third-generation horticulturist based in San Rafael, to give them a beautiful living space.

"They wanted a wonderful outdoor environment, as well as a space to look beautiful from inside the house," Cynthia says. What's more, although the clients liked the look of a cottage garden, they wanted a place that would be fairly low maintenance.

That's what they got, in spades. The reborn yard has separate sitting and barbecue areas, and a path from the main patio to a shaded section off the master bedroom. While her clients' first choice was a stone patio, Cynthia says they opted for the more economical choice of broom-finished concrete with flagstone accents. Blue star creeper serves as a ground cover between the flagstones.

There is a curved pergola at one end of the patio, its angle matching that of the seat wall. The curves add softness to what would have been a basic, rectangular, painted redwood structure. Approximately 12-by-16 feet, the pergola has a lattice detail to give a sense of enclosure. The decorative ends of the crossbeams add more elegance.

All these features are certainly appealing, but the garden's flowers are the true focal point of the yard. "This is a cutting garden eight months of the year," Cynthia states proudly, pointing to the featured hybrid tea roses she selected because they have the most repetitive bloom. She chose the other plants because they are easy-to-grow perennials and "look fabulous in cut flower arrangements."

#### The flowers Cynthia planted include:

**Delphinium** (magic fountain)-which features a range of pink, white and blue flowers on two-to-four-foot stock with compact flowers.

**Campanula Persicifolia**-these peach-leaved bellflowers have vertical stems arising from basal rosettes of larger leaves coming in blue and white.

**Chrysanthemum Maximum**-double-white Shasta daisies are white and more compact than the common wild-eyed daisies. These natives of Spain and Portugal are perfect in the Bay Area's Mediterranean climate.

**Aster Frikartii**-this Michaelmas daisy is hardy and colorful, its blooms a lavender-blue with yellow centers and dark green leaves.

**Alstromeria**-the Peruvian lily has lance-shaped leaves with funnel-shaped flowers in all shades, lasting two weeks as a cut flower.

**Phlox Paniculata**-ideal as a backdrop and great for cutting.

Cynthia, who not only gets her hands dirty but also writes about doing so in several local and national publications, has 25 years of experience. Ironically, however, horticulture wasn't her first career choice. She followed her father and grandfather into the field only after running into a brick wall with her original passion. As an undergraduate, she studied biology with an emphasis on oceanography. "I was turned down for an oceanography cruise because I was female," she recalls.

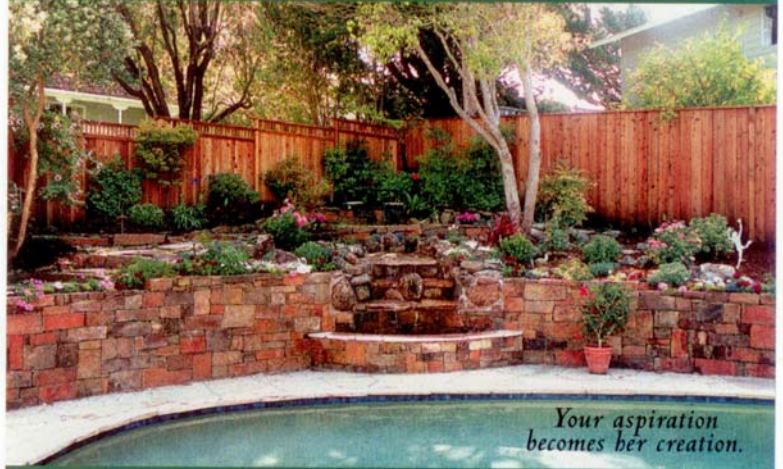
After experiencing rejection, she headed to Cal Poly San Luis Obispo for courses in horticulture, pest management, and more. Now Cynthia is a well-established professional who has run her own shop since 1985. She was twice named the best landscape designer in Marin County in 2004 and 2006 and is a member of the National Association of Professional Landscape Designers and The Royal Society of Landscape Designers in England.

Cynthia says the yard project for the retired couple was particularly inspiring because of the clients' responses. "The wife just loved the yard. There was such joy in her voice. She gave me an idea of what she had dreamed of having but gave me the freedom to develop a design," she says. As for the husband, "He was having a dream come true, as well, by doing the backyard his wife had always wanted."

For more information of how to magically transform your landscape, and maybe even add a spark to your marriage, contact Cynthia Egger at (415) 460-0858 or email her at [cynthia@eggerlandscape.com](mailto:cynthia@eggerlandscape.com). Check out her portfolio at [eggerlandscape.com](http://eggerlandscape.com). **THM**

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