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Interiors

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OPENINGS FROM L.A.'S
TOP TALENTS

Patricia Benner, principal of Benner Landscape Design, enjoying some sun at her latest garden project in Brentwood.

EAST MEETS WEST

Patricia Benner of Benner Landscape Design brings a taste of New England to a glorious Brentwood garden.

*By Laura Eckstein Jones
Photographed by Caitlin Atkinson*



TRENDING
garden design

From far left: A stately Tipuana tipu tree graces the garden entrance; the pool area view captures distant hills in the golden light at day's end.



From left: A limestone trough fountain surrounded by planting provides the pleasing sound of water on the terrace; low planting hugs the pool house and nestles around the steps.

When a developer approached Patricia Benner of Benner Landscape Design (benner-design.com) to create a garden on a Brentwood property about to go up for sale, she took a light touch overall. But when the

clients who bought the property contacted her to realize their vision and program for the house, she took the garden to a whole new level.

Benner looked to the home's shingle-style architecture for inspiration. "The house was very

much like houses I had known from summer places where I spent my youth... Nantucket and the coast of Maine," she says. "I remembered lovely summer perennial gardens and sought to create that romantic feeling. The owners were very much

From left: A California Sycamore tree helps shade the outdoor living room and deck; a native Strawberry tree (Arbutus marina) lines the perennial border at the house, while Wisteria climbs the pergola in the dining area.



on board with that direction.”

Layout-wise, the current owners desired a more extensive lawn to maximize the substantial back slope, making it usable and beautiful. From a functionality perspective, Benner created multiple zones, including a seating area and fire pit at the top of the back slope, a substantial vegetable garden behind the guesthouse, fruit trees, planting and a walking trail on the slope. “I extended the lawn area by adding a retaining wall that allowed for a more pleasing orthogonal treatment of the slope transition,” she says. “As such, we made the whole garden accessible and usable and created a view garden to be enjoyed from the terrace at the top of the hill. Additionally, we added the lily pond and layered planting with roses and perennials in the spirit of a New England summer garden.”

Around the home, the gardens contain a mix of structured greens, perennials, and roses. The slope features a mix of drought-tolerant plants and California natives,



From left: Landscape tie steps provide access to the elevated view garden; climbing Eden roses dress the walls of the pool house and tie into the colors of the perennial border along the lawn.



Below: Raised veggie beds with abundant growth have steel corners for extra structural support.



in addition to planted areas that support the water needs of various fruit trees along the walking path. “The hardscape in the garden is a combination of bluestone and gravel in the tradition of coastal homes in the Northeast,” Benner shares.

From start to finish, the project took about two-and-a-half years to complete without significant challenges. “Maybe I remember the project with rose-colored glasses on, but the birthing process of the garden went remarkably smoothly,” says Benner. “I think it captures the essence of a shingle-style home in New England I remember so fondly.” And although the garden is beautiful year-round, Benner thinks it’s the most stunning in late spring. “I love to be in the garden in May and June when the roses, especially the climbers on the house, are in their full glory!” ■