

MODERN LUXURY

Interiors

CALIFORNIA

LOUNGE ACT

THE LATEST
LAUNCHES
TO CREATE
AN OUTDOOR
SANCTUARY

+
THE GOLDEN
STATE'S
BRIGHTEST
STARS SHARE
THEIR STORIES

FORCE OF NATURE

DESIGN'S TOP TALENTS TAKE IT OUTSIDE



SPRING FORWARD

Let's be honest. We're living through uncertain times right now. As I write this note, COVID-19 is sweeping the globe, and the world is not what it was even a few weeks ago. I hope that by the time you read this things are looking up for all of us. It feels kind of funny navigating a global pandemic while also producing a design magazine. But as I put the finishing touches on the pages you're about to flip through—from my at-home-office/dining room table—I'm reminded that beautiful rooms and inspiring architecture feed the soul. And that's what the *Modern Luxury Interiors California* team members and I are striving to do.

This issue focuses on everything green, from sustainable design to stunning outdoor spaces and more. Here in California, the year-round beautiful weather makes for an abundance of incredible gardens, outdoor entertaining areas and pools, some of which you'll discover in our "Green With Envy" story. There are three diverse outdoor projects featured, including a Beverly Hills hilltop stunner by architect Paul McClean and interior designer Lynda Murray. Besides breathtaking views, the home boasts a large entertaining area and a gravity-defying transparent pool. It's like nothing you've ever seen. Nearby in Brentwood, landscape designer Patricia Benner worked with eco-conscious clients to create a peaceful lawnless garden, which is pictured below. She and her team focused on using drought-tolerant plants and reclaimed materials in the space, which was divided into a dining room, living room and breakfast nook, complete with a graywater koi pond and "rugs" made from pebbles. The end result is a sophisticated and mindfully designed oasis that seamlessly brings the indoors out. Finally, San Francisco-based SurfaceDesign Inc.'s St. Helena project, which you can spy on our cover, is something out of a dream. The property—which is set within one of the oldest zinfandel vineyards in California—was transformed from a spooky, dilapidated site into a serene, Eden-esque refuge that makes the most of the Golden State's beautiful light. If you're inspired by the firm's work, make sure to pick up a copy of *SurfaceDesign: Material Landscapes* (\$50, The Monacelli Press), which came out earlier this year.

In these trying times, I hope this magazine serves as a bright light. Hang in there, and enjoy the issue!

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FROM TOP: PHOTOS BY MUNN SINCH, JESSICASAMPLE

UNCOMMON GROUND

Keeping California's arid climate in mind, Patricia Benner created a lush "grassless" garden in L.A.'s Brentwood neighborhood, complete with areas to live, lounge and play.

THE CONCEPT Verdant gardens are the stuff dreams are made of, but in this age of global warming, it's important to be mindful of the environment. "When our eco-conscious clients wanted to rip out a thirsty lawn but were concerned about getting a dry, dusty parking lot in its place, our solution was to take the indoors out," says Patricia Benner, principal of L.A.- and San Francisco-based Benner Landscape Design (benner-design.com). "They wanted to implement sustainable practices into their home, so we worked with them to install a graywater system for irrigation and paired it with a drought-tolerant garden to conserve water." Also on the wish list? Lavender and other Mediterranean plants.

THE TEAM Benner led the team from her L.A. studio. "I started with a number of schematic layouts for the garden and worked with the clients to conceptualize the space," she says. "Once we had the concept down, we went about detailing and furnishing the spaces so they read as individual garden rooms that we unified around the connecting spine of the entry path."

THE MATERIALS "To replace the green of grass on the ground plane, we used drifts of drought-tolerant shrubs and perennials and succulents in a field of Del Rio pea gravel," Benner shares. "We also sought to bring green up the walls of the house with lush Boston Ivy and fragrant espaliered citrus trees." Olive trees create a silvery overhead plane on which to hang wicker basket lights, while citrus and apple blossoms, jasmine, lavender and roses create a fragrant scent.

THE CHALLENGES "The biggest challenge was to make the entry garden feel like an outdoor living space and not a hub of circulation crosscurrents," says Benner.

THE HIGHLIGHTS Besides working with forward-thinking clients, Benner enjoyed implementing sustainable practices. "It was also fun to play with the idea of turning a garden upside down by lessening the emphasis on greens at the ground plane and instead focusing on greens at the vertical surfaces and overhead," she says.



Clockwise from top left: Light-colored pavers provide a path to connect different areas of the yard; Patricia Benner topped the homeowners' Smith & Hawken furniture with textiles and tableware from Nickey Kehoe; the rattan light fixtures are from Inner Gardens.