

Vivid Red Makes A Bold Backdrop

The wall makes a visual statement while creating a privacy screen that changes the focal point from a road to views of the garden

Written by Dawn White and Photographed by Lance Kinney
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Few people would consider installing a red concrete wall as part of their front-yard landscaping, but for San Luis Obispo resident Heather Stevenson, there was no questioning her decision. Stevenson, a designer, used the red wall to create privacy for the family's front garden, essentially creating an eclectic outdoor haven for the road-facing area.



Stevenson, a designer, used the red wall to create privacy for the family's front garden, essentially creating an eclectic outdoor haven for the road-facing area. "I wanted a beautiful view from inside the house and inside the red wall," she said. "We don't see the street anymore — just our beautiful garden."



Stevenson worked closely with Cal Poly graduate Bruce Tomb, now a San Francisco-area architect, to create the contemporary garden that is both drought tolerant and low maintenance. In addition to the wall, the pair moved in large boulders from a quarry in Cambria to contrast with the plants.

Creating an inspirational garden while being eco-friendly was essential for the front landscape, Stevenson believed.

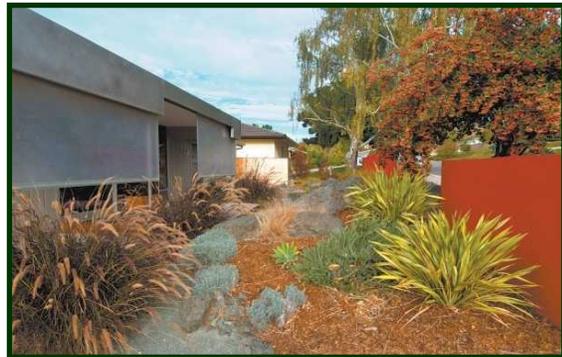


“I thought of the front as a sculpture and worked to create depth, height, layers, textures and color throughout,” she said.



To pick plants, she worked closely with **Suzanne Morrison of Earthscapes** in Los Osos to find foliage with cool green, blue and gray hues. Soft plants such as rosemary and lavender were placed next to dramatic-looking plants such as New Zealand flax to create texture and depth.

“If deer liked it, I didn’t want it,” she said. Stevenson’s backyard was ideal for her family because the area is mostly flat before sloping down to a natural creek. For the slope area, she worked with Dante D’Alfonso of Templeton to restore the slope to its natural habitat. Looking good came second to being as indigenous as possible, she said.”



“I wanted the animals to have a natural landscape where they could find refuge year-round,” she said, explaining her choice to return the area to its native state.



Plants such as manzanita, buckwheat, quince and other evergreens were chosen from Las Pilitas Nursery in Pozo. The plants are grown in tough climatic conditions and in poor soil to make them as adaptable as possible, she explained.

The rest of the yard is amply shaded by trees including a couple varieties of redwoods, and a Canary Island pine. Nearby, a hot tub is a warm and cozy spot to enjoy the yard and the stars on cool winter evenings.



Far below near the creek bed, shady sycamore trees thrive in an essentially untouched landscape. In the spring, native grasses flourish, but it's a simple natural landscape the rest of the year, just as Stevenson and her children want it.

