

# A WHOLE NEW *OUTDOOR* WORLD

One modest revision breaks ground  
for an inspired landscape

BY MARY JAMES  
PHOTOGRAPHY BY EMMA ALMENDAREZ



**M**ajor makeovers start small at Bill and Anna Drew's Cielo estate. Four years ago, a new beige couch for the family room "made the walls look too peachy," Anna recalls. "So we repainted, and that led to more changes—many more."

By then the couple had lived in the four-bedroom Mediterranean-style home high above Rancho Santa Fe for a decade since moving from El Cajon to be close to the school their three daughters attend.

"We liked that Cielo was a newer community, private and quiet," says Bill, a commercial real estate executive since the 2014 sale of Drew Ford, the East County dealership owned by his family since 1927. "Plus here we could have land—our lot's an acre and change."

While the kitchen, baths and other rooms were refreshed, the grounds dominated by a palm-studded lawn, a dated pool-spa and small outdoor kitchen sufficed for children's playtime and the couple's frequent parties for friends and family. But a barbecue on a hot summer's day changed that.

"There I was, baking in the heat," Anna says. "I thought, 'We need a roof over the grill.' Then I started looking around the backyard. Things just snowballed from there."

Replacing much of the lawn at Bill and Anna Drew's Cielo estate, a European-inspired garden of intimate spaces is crossed by decomposed granite paths radiating from a classic Tuscan fountain. Custom wicker lanterns tucked in olive trees glow after dark.



Above: A curved pergola shades a custom masonry sofa adjacent to a new fire feature and the refurbished pool and spa. Facing page: Clipped 'Green Beauty' boxwood and boxleaf euonymus line paths that connect the side yard to new travertine paths and patios outside the main residence and new pool house.

Over the next two years, the couple worked with award-winning landscape contractor Harry Thompson of Torrey Pines Landscape Company to create elegant garden rooms around a new pool house designed by San Diego architect Keoni Rosa. Inspired by everything from the latest postings on Houzz to classic formal gardens, wine-country ambience and even Hearst castle, the Drews wanted to blend elegant European design with California's relaxed lifestyle for a look both timely and timeless.

"I didn't want to do just Italian or French. That can seem kitschy. Instead I wanted a mix," says Anna who emphasized a neutral palette splashed with blues, refined finishes like smooth Santa Barbara stucco, and traditional furnishings and

garden accents. "I didn't want a riot of color, so I asked for a limited number of plant varieties that would repeat around the yard. The goal was to create something lasting, with a feeling of balance and calm."

At the center of the reimagined backyard is the 1,200-square-foot pool pavilion designed for entertaining a crowd as well as family dinners, trainer-led workouts and afternoon escapes with a good book. Disappearing doors open the pavilion's plush living room and bar, gourmet kitchen and casual dining tables and counters to a new sunny travertine patio and walkways that link to the main residence, pool and new gardens.

Ample outdoor seating—cushioned sofas, chaises and rocking chairs—invite conversations beneath espresso-brown

arbors, some with curtains to block cool breezes.

A custom masonry curved sofa overlooking a fire bowl; the spa, glistening with new glass-mosaic tile; and the refurbished pool is a favorite hangout for the Drew girls and pals. "It's like they're camping out," Anna says. "We love sitting there too, looking up at the stars."

Classic accents abound, including antique brass patio lanterns and blue-and-white Asian garden tables that echo porcelains displayed in the home. Italianate terra-cotta pots brim with choice succulents and purple bougainvillea, while cream-glazed urns are capped with globes of clipped dwarf olive. Custom wall trellises carpeted with pink 'Cecile Brunner' roses float gentle fragrance in the air.



Herbs and seasonal vegetables grow next to a cutting garden framed by a bougainvillea-topped arbor and gate.

Facing page, center: A "seat-wall" edges a slope where apricot and citrus trees grow, adjacent to the family's kitchen garden.



## A Formal Garden Defined

If you are an organized person who gets dizzy at the thought of asymmetry, then the balance and orderliness of a formal garden might just suit you to a "T." Symmetry, achieved through the repetition and mirroring of geometric forms, plants and color, is the overriding design element that brings about the formal garden's methodical look. Well-trimmed lawns, clipped hedges and pruned plants characterize this style's neat and tidy, no-coloring-outside-the-lines appearance. Hardscape dominates with terraces, columns and pathways offering structure. Walls or hedges provide visual barriers and keep landscaping within a well-defined plan. Since there's little straying from the pattern, it may be easy to incorporate some elements in your own landscape, but because a formal garden needs to keep its immaculate appearance, the style takes work to maintain.



## 10 Steps for Creating a Formal Garden

1. **Mark** entranceways with columns, topiaries and arches.
2. **Create** a central path that runs through the landscape.
3. **Arrange plantings** on either side of the path that echo each other.



4. **Place a focal point** such as a sculpture or water feature at the far end or in the middle of the central path.

5. **Create a destination spot**, such as a deck, at one end of the central path.

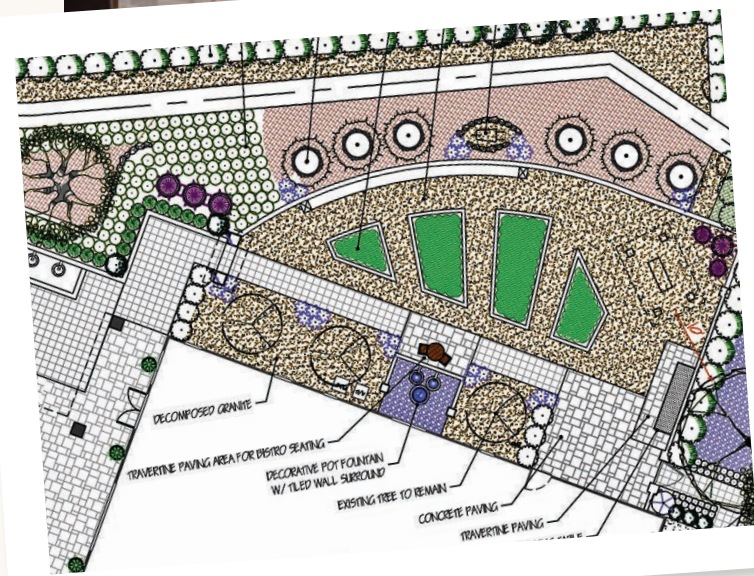
6. **Add other well-defined paths** that radiate from the central path.

7. **Demarcate** garden areas with hedges or walls.

8. **Mirror plants, colors, structures and shapes** within each garden area.

9. **Repeat** a geometric shape throughout the garden design.

10. **Limit your plant and color palette** (traditionally formal gardens contain green—in hedges, topiaries, trees and lawns—and white in flowers).



A bistro table and chairs sit outside a cozy walled patio near the master suite.



Clockwise from left: A teak bench overlooks a decades-old olive tree. • A porch swing is a favorite spot for reading, naps and conversations. • A travertine walkway passes stone-clad beds of edibles and flowers. Facing page top to bottom: A bench beneath a cottonwood tree invites restful views of a glowing shade garden. • A new wall and gate open to travertine-topped outer and inner entry courtyards.



“It was a full-time job,” Anna says. “I did a lot of thinking—worrying, second guessing—in the middle of the night,” she adds with a laugh. “It seems I was always calling Harry. I learned, though, that if I thought of something, he could do it.” (She also bounced options off one of her best friends, local designer, Keli Wozniak.)

Harry and his team also refined the home’s entrance to reflect backyard vistas that greet visitors as they step through the front door. Bands of Old World rustic cobblestones now accent the broad driveway and a new travertine walkway leads into walled outer and inner entry courtyards bisected by tall archways.

Patterned encaustic concrete tiles on an outdoor fireplace here repeat on two new arched wall fountains with spouts that drip into echoing urns below. Custom metal window boxes, a living succulent wall, beds

punctuated by slender ‘Icee Blue,’ yellow wood and stylized container plantings add to the warm welcome.

Here and in other focal points around the grounds, 75-year-old olive trees were craned into place to replace accent palms in the original landscape. Two gnarled specimens now flank the foot of the driveway, each underplanted with vibrant Mexican sages, Spanish lavenders and agave rosettes.

Another olive accented with large custom teardrop wicker lanterns heralds the entrance to an elegant new formal garden patterned after manicured European landscapes Anna loves. Designed by Douglas Dilworth and Lei Huey Jeanes, also from Torrey Pines Landscape Company, the walled side garden invites strolls down decomposed granite paths that radiate from a simple Tuscan fountain and pause at a teak





## Formal Gardens to Visit in California

Some of the most amazing examples of formal gardens are within driving distance—and are open to the public.

**Alcazar Garden**, San Diego: A formal garden in Balboa Park with boxwood hedges, fountains and annuals, influenced by the gardens of Alcazar Castle in Spain. [balboapark.org](http://balboapark.org)

**Filoli**, Woodside: The elegant formal garden of gold mining magnate William Bowers Bourn II in northern California is a grand example of an English Renaissance garden defined by hedges, walls and terraces. [filoli.org](http://filoli.org)

**Inner and Outer Peristyle Gardens** at Getty Villa, Pacific Palisades: The Villa's two formal gardens occupy courtyards within the compound. A reflecting pool and sculptures highlight the Outer Peristyle Garden while columns line the square-shaped walkway of the Inner Peristyle Garden. [getty.edu](http://getty.edu)

**Virginia Robinson Italian Terrace Garden**, Beverly Hills: The Italian Terrace garden includes terra-cotta lions watching over citrus trees and the Great Lawn and Pool Pavilion framed by Italian cypress. These are among the five themed gardens of Virginia Robinson, heir to Robinson's Department Store. [robinsongardens.org](http://robinsongardens.org)

This page, clockwise from top: Bands of cobblestones dress the concrete driveway outside the entry courtyard. Palm trees here and throughout the property were replaced with olive trees and drought-tolerant lavenders, succulents and other Mediterranean-garden stalwarts. • Foxtail agave rosettes nestle amid purple wands of French and Mexican sages. • White flowers, like these spring-blooming snapdragons, are favorites in the Drew garden's restrained color palette.

Facing page, clockwise from top left: Donkey's tail sedum and fishhooks senecio overflow a fountain filled with watery-hued succulents. • Tile around a courtyard fireplace is repeated in a custom wall fountain. Water echoes as it drops from a spout into the urn below, adding to the entry's welcoming ambiance. • Steps from the pool house is a new bocce court, a favorite spot when the couple entertains.



Lutyens bench. Geometric parterre beds edged with boxwood hold 'Iceberg' standard roses along with purple or white flowering annuals and perennials that scent the air. More fragrance drifts from jasmine climbing a diamond-patterned espalier.

Steps away, beneath a laced cottonwood tree, snow-white camellias, yellow clivia and other shadelovers line a T-shaped path, home to a succulent-planted fountain "dripping" with trailing donkey's tail sedum and fishhooks senecio. "I know someday I'll be a grandma," Anna muses, "and I imagine grandkids riding their trikes down these paths or joining me on a bench to read a storybook."

Another side yard has new life as an edibles and cutting garden that thrives in tall geometric raised beds dressed in the same creamy ledgerstone as a new retaining wall along the property line. Apricot and citrus trees line the bank here, steps from a farm sink and a playful swing, where the couple can share their sun-sweet harvests.

At the end of last year, with the makeover finished, the Drews celebrated with a New Year's party and their annual Super Bowl bash. Earlier this summer, the pool pavillion, patios and gardens filled with friends marking the high-school graduation of the couple's eldest daughter, Nicole.

"This is such a great place for hanging out with friends and family, for us and our girls," Anna says. "We love sharing fun times and quiet times now and more in the years to come." ❖

