

PHOENIX HOME & GARDEN

The Magazine of Southwest Living

SANTA BARBARA

Style

JANUARY 2013
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PARADISE *Found*

A Santa Barbara Home Is Enriched With Terraced Gardens, Romantic Architecture and Comfortably Elegant Interiors

BY ROBERTA LANDMAN ■ PHOTOGRAPHY BY JIM BARTSCH

Cozy and welcoming, the living room took its color scheme from the fireplace wall's painting, a landscape by Arizona artist Jean-Luc Messin, says interior designer Susan Hersker. As here, garden vignettes are visible from all rooms of the home, merging indoors and out. French doors open to a lush backyard, and the arched leaded-glass window frames garden views.

Filled with koi, goldfish and water plants, this walled pond is located at the rear of the house. The stairway, with its tiled risers, the stucco walls, terra cotta-tiled roof and wrought-iron elements are characteristic of Santa Barbara-style architecture.



“GOOD THINGS come to those who wait.” The old maxim definitely applies to the lady of this noteworthy house.

Raised in California, she married, reared a family and lived happily amidst Arizona’s natural beauty for 25 years. But all the while, the memory of California’s lush vegetation called to her. “I was starved for green,” she jokes. That is no longer so.

Having moved to Santa Barbara, she and her husband now live in a residence that is surrounded by a wonderland of terraced greenery and graced with elements of Santa Barbara’s Spanish- and Mediterranean-influenced style. The setting was not blissful early on, however, for the 1960s-era Ranch-style house they purchased turned out to be structurally unsound, and the 1.3-acre sloping hillside was a tangle of weeds.

A tear-down remodel of the house ensued—as well as a Garden of Edenlike-revamp of the grounds—over the course of three years. During that period, the couple commuted from Arizona, living part-time there and part-time in the new setting’s detached guest house. Revitalizing the property were architects Ray Ketzler and Jerry Goodman, builder Rich Coffin, interior designer Susan Hersker, ASID, and landscape architect Charles McClure.

Hersker, a Phoenix Home & Garden Master of the Southwest, had worked with the wife on the couple’s Paradise Valley, Arizona, home. For the California project, Hersker flew over to Santa Barbara once a week for three years. Her client, who had been a food stylist for more than two decades, “is artistic and can visualize things and understands the design process,” and she wanted the house to reflect Spanish as well as Italian influences, the designer comments. “I am half Italian,” explains the homeowner. “I love the Mediterranean look and wanted that here.”

With that in mind, Hersker says, “We completely transformed this ’60s Ranch-style home into a beautiful Santa Barbara-style residence, utilizing historical elements found in the unique Mediterranean-like California setting.” Color, in hues authentic to the historic genre, was important, Hersker notes. The exterior, for example, is painted an umber-glazed maize tone, lending the home the desired appearance of gentle aging. The interior color scheme of golds, blues and terra cotta was taken from a painting over the living room fireplace.

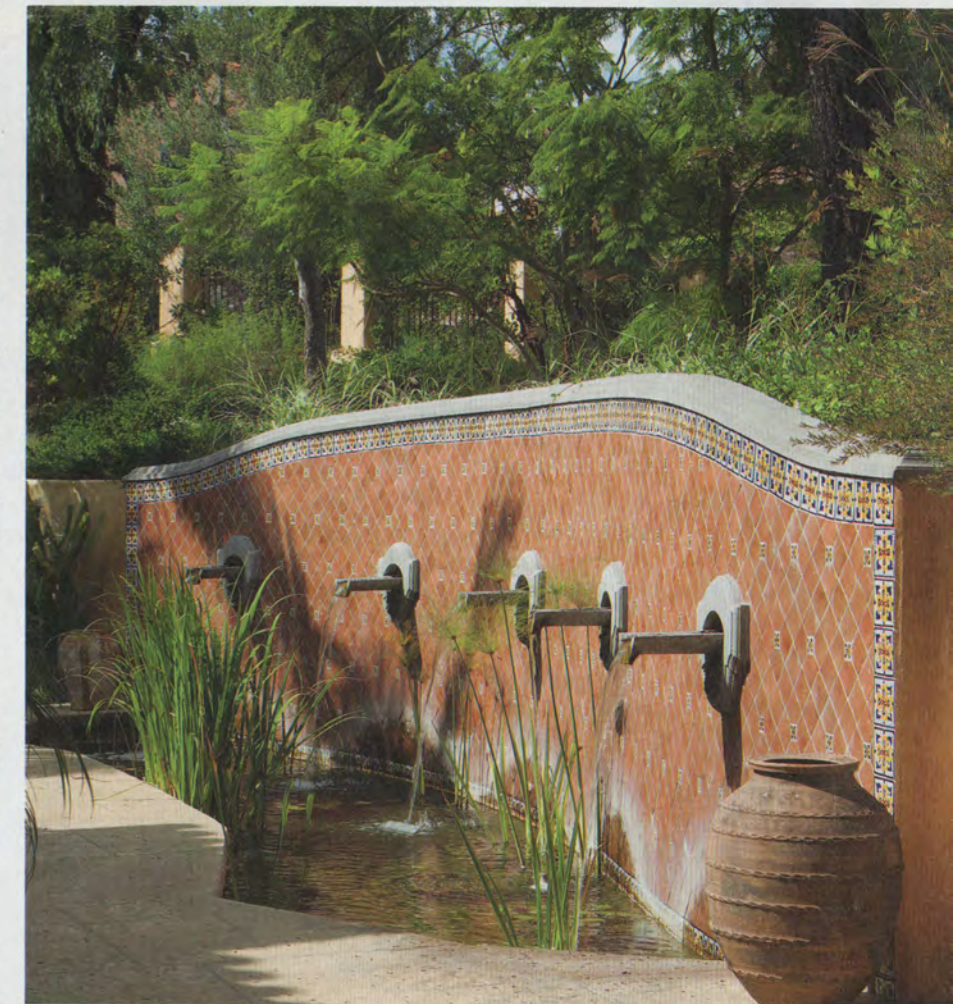
The house is emblazoned with many elements characteristic of Santa Barbara style, in addition to the ubiquitous terra-cotta roof tiles. “We made sure we included several different patterns in Spanish glazed tiles for stair risers and accents, along with genuine Mexican terra-cotta pavers,” Hersker points out. “We also used timeless wrought iron-

work in light fixtures, railings, grilles and screens.”

Hersker kept livability at the forefront as the home was being furnished. “We mixed ‘found’ antiques and custom-designed furniture to create a comfortable, classic interior to suit the client’s lifestyle.” “It does just that,” says the homeowner. “I did not want a showplace house. I wanted it to be welcoming and comfortable.”

These aspects also are reflected in outdoor areas that contain, on one terraced level, a charming draped pergola—the wife’s favorite spot—and on a level below it, a bocce ball court, dedicated to her Italian grandfather. A rose garden, trickling water features, a Zen garden and koi pond are among the property’s other delights.

And all about is the rich-green landscape the homeowner once missed. She remarks, “I feel like we are living in a park.” ■



Scuppers spill water into the basin of this tile-clad fountain, which is home to koi fish and an albino catfish named “Hoover.” Situated in front of the house, the water feature is actually part of a long retaining wall. The fountain’s field tiles are made of terra cotta, and trim tiles are Santa Barbara glazed decos.



Above: The dining room, emanating warmth in tones of black, gold and terra cotta, is located a few steps up from the living room. An old Moroccan iron grate set in the wall (right) helps integrate the spaces. High-back chairs are in a chenille print with nailhead trim. Both chairs and the custom dining table have turned-wood legs. Hanging from the beamed ceiling by chains, the custom iron chandelier has bulbs encased in candle-like mica cylinders. The window niche was created to accommodate the antique buffet.

Right: Bar stools with turned-wood legs and fruit-themed upholstery stand ready for a casual repast at the entry to the kitchen. While most of the house was constructed on the former home's original footprint, this revamped room was bumped out 4 feet at the sink wall so that a center island could be installed, the wife says. "We tried to make it look like a piece of furniture," she adds. The island base is painted cobalt blue, and its top is mesquite. Cabinets are knotty alder, and flooring is pecan wood with a walnut stain. Counters are topped with glazed Spanish tiles, and the same tiles in blue form the stove's backsplash. The plaster range hood was designed by Susan Hersker.





Above: A draped pergola sits on one of the property's lushly landscaped terraces. It is a perfect place for reading a book or entertaining, says the lady of the house. Seating, dressed with cushions in yellow Sunbrella fabric and blue trim, includes a rocking chair and a custom iron settee. The table near the rocker houses a speaker, while the round table is concrete. Flooring is Santa Barbara flagstone.

Right: Set under a vintage window grate, the potting table was made to look old. Its top is covered in tiles, and its antique sink is made of marble. Doors have perforated-tin insets.



With its colonnade, antique Mexican terracotta paver floor and barrel ceiling, this breezeway connects the once-detached two-bedroom guest casita to the main house. A Dutch door marks the entrance to these guest quarters.

See Sources.