

Gardening In Mom's Shadow In Morro Bay

A Morro Bay couple let their backyard lie fallow for 13 years before converting it into a multipurpose living area where they can take advantage of their outdoor space

Written by Sharon Crawford, Photographed by Lance Kinney
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Christine and Victor Granados occupy the Morro Bay property that once was her parents' home. Both have demanding jobs, and they treasure weekends when they can enjoy outdoor activities together.

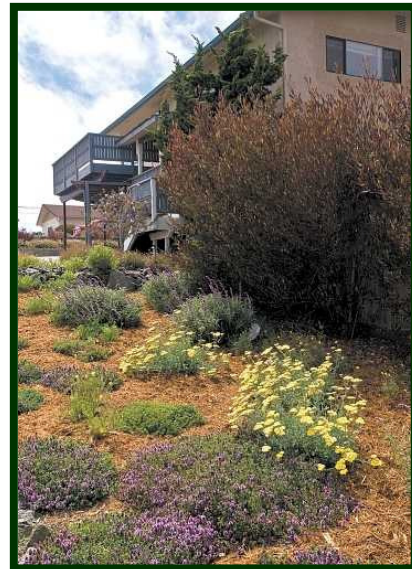


But although their backyard was fenced for privacy, the steeply sloped and weedy space was not conducive to outdoor living. After 13 years, they decided to do something about it.

Their priorities for a garden makeover differed somewhat. Victor envisioned a plaza, like those of his native Venezuela. Christine desired a fishpond and also wanted to retain some elements reminiscent of her mother's garden. They heartily agreed that their garden should attract wildlife.

Suzanne and Mike Morrison of Earthscapes, a landscape designer/builder

team, began by clearing the lot of vegetation, leaving only three Hollywood junipers in front and a Brazilian pepper tree in the backyard. At that point, the Granados worried about the displacement of the frogs, birds and butterflies that had thrived among their weeds.

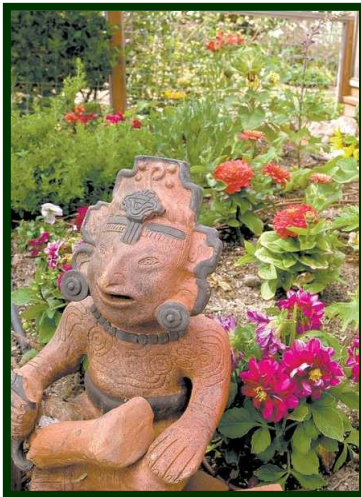


The sloped site was terraced, using Euro-cobble pavers and retaining walls of Europa block from Air Vol Block in San Luis Obispo. The soil that was

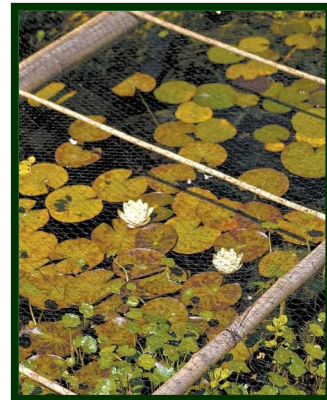
removed to create the front yard terrace was deposited behind a new curved retaining wall in the back. The resulting level space now comprises a generous plaza with a naturalistic pond and stone waterfall.

Square green pots line up along the retaining wall, defining the far bank of the pond. The pots, from Pacific Coast Home & Garden, contain succulents, reeds and Mexican feather grass. Large pots with variegated aeoniums, a palm and a lemon tree form a taller backdrop for the waterfall. More reeds and canna lilies, black mondo grass and yellow-flowering bidens emerge from the soil between the river rocks that surround the pond.

In the area below the retaining wall, where her mother used to garden, Christine requested a simple raised bed for flowers and vegetables. She placed an Aztec sculpture her mother had acquired in Mexico in one corner of the bed, as a memorial to her mother.



The Granados asked that the remainder of the sequestered lower space be left for them to develop gradually. They've placed a bench next to the wall where it is sheltered from the wind, and installed a small pool sited to be warmed by the sun. Victor carved out lava rocks to make planters for succulents around the pond. With aquatic plants installed, he calls the pond his "pollywog nursery."





During the garden construction, the Granados spent time researching the requirements of fish and frogs and ways to attract other wildlife. The garden is now alive with birds, bees, dragonflies and, to their delight, so many croaking frogs that conversation on summer evenings can be difficult.

TIPS FOR ATTRACTING WILDLIFE TO THE GARDEN FROM THE GRANADOS

- **GO ORGANIC**
Avoid herbicides and pesticides, particularly around ponds.
- **IF YOU BUILD IT THEY WILL COME**
If you create appropriate habitats with shelter and conditions conducive to reproduction, the wildlife will come.
- **DO YOUR HOMEWORK**
Learn the preferred foods of the wildlife you want to attract and select plants accordingly.

