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# Magazine

THE BEST OF SOCAL



## a most reluctant hero

She's a Scientist, a College Professor and an Inspiration, Not to Mention the First American Woman in Space. But Sally Ride Shuns the Celebrity Stratosphere.

By Janet Wiscombe

Surfing the Giant Waves of Todos Santos • FASHION: Decades on Melrose Avenue  
VERY FIRST PERSON: His Son, the Walking Billboard • HOME & GARDEN: Around the World





**if you left london** for Tangier, detoured to Nairobi via Greece, made a pit stop in southern Spain and wound up in Los Angeles, you'd be in Barbara Drake's garden. Within its pistachio-green fences are bits and pieces inspired by her jaunts—a Moroccan-style fountain, cushions wrapped in Indian sari silk, design motifs from the Ndebele tribe of South Africa. The plant selection mixes African, Mediterranean and American desert flora. The raging color palette, charged with cobalts, mints and magentas, flows from indoors out and back, through perpetually open French doors.

## hot spot

a passion for the raging colors and patterns of faraway locales gives a courtyard garden an exotic point of view





Barbara Drake and Peter Huck with their cat Micky on the steps of their Spanish house that's decorated and landscaped Mediterranean-style. From the bedroom is a view of the backyard resurfaced with hard-packed sand and decomposed granite to resemble the desert. An orange clock vine climbs the fence, and dudleyas circle the raised reflecting pool, painted Drake's favorite color.





Above: Drake painted a South African motif on the fountain in the front courtyard and planted pots with geraniums, aloes, agaves and succulents. Left: A potted cactus on a pedestal provides a backyard focal point.

#### barbara drake's passions

- ◆ Sipping mint tea in Marrakech.
- ◆ Delacroix, O'Keeffe, Matisse.
- ◆ Gaudi's Parque Guell in Barcelona.
- ◆ Cobalt blue, "a healing color."
- ◆ Paul Bowles' novel "The Shelter"





Clockwise, from top left: The couple created a side garden by removing a central strip of the long narrow driveway, painting the concrete to resemble tile pavers and adding beds of geraniums, rosemary, artemisia and mixed lavenders. Diamond-patterned clay pots and silver plants, such as this echeveria, reflect the gardens' themes.



"I've always been drawn to sun, light, strong color and pattern," says Drake, a native of England who came to Los Angeles in 1991 to design and decorate for commercials and films. More recently, she has also begun designing interiors. For her work, she often travels in search of things—art, furnishings, fabrics—that she can transform into other things, such as parts of movie sets. Two years ago, in the same spirit, she and her partner, journalist Peter Huck, found their house, a 1932 Spanish bungalow with putty-colored walls, louvered windows and a concealing cloak of ancient ficus trees.

The day she saw it, Drake drew plans for its transformation, plotting to scrap windows for glass doors, add fountains and nix trees and lawn to let in light and plants suitable for California. Many of these—potted succulents, banana trees, frangipani—came from Drake and Huck's previous garden in West Hollywood. Others—rosemary, salvias, lavenders—Drake added for their "healing qualities" and knack for thriving with little water.

But before these took to root, she and Huck had to deal with a hot, hard sweep of concrete that ran from their front courtyard to their back fence. In the court, where they wanted a floor for garden chairs, they laid Saltillo tile pavers. They sawed the concrete driveway into strips, planting the middle and edges with rosemary and scented geraniums, and painting the rest to resemble tile pavers. Behind the house, around a pair of raised mounds reserved for cac-



Right: Near the pool grow succulents and a kitchen garden of thyme, Russian sage, rosemary, lavender and yarrow. Below: The old garage, now Drake's studio, opens onto the terrace, which features potted plants and vintage garden furniture.



ti and a reflecting pool that became the view through their bedroom doors, they covered the ground with a hard-packed blend of sand and decomposed granite, which, Drake reports, "is very gentle on bare feet." This is crucial to a gardener who often rises at dawn to pinch herbs. The couple also eat outside as much as possible and generally see the garden as an open-air extension of their house. Huck, who's English too, shares Drake's passion for "controlled wildness" and loves the plants—cereus, agaves, Joshua trees—that his partner regards as living sculptures.

"They're like chess pieces we move around," Drake explains, describing the free-associative process of creating her green tableaux. Her unifying motifs are geometric—diamonds, triangles, spheres and squares—that appear in paving, mosaic tables and painted pots. And her colors, when not inspired by Greece, Morocco or Mexico, come from her own overheated imagination. After all, she says, "Hollywood is a place of dreams." ■