

# TAKE IT OUTSIDE FOR HOME ENTERTAINMENT



From outdoor kitchens to seating areas designed for year-round pleasure, here's how to get started designing your own outdoor living or dining room fit for a party.

Gardens can serve many functions: to some, they are productive food sources, to others they are experiments in ecology, and to others still, they are not just a place to celebrate—they are a reason to. Gardens can extend your home entertaining space even further with outdoor kitchens and cooking sources, tables and lounge areas, and party-friendly landscaping that encourages a good time.



Built-in stairs serve triple duty: as a seating environment, as a pathway, and as a home for planters in this multi-tiered garden.

To get started creating an outdoor entertainment area in your own home, consider the elements of any memorable gathering. Think about your ideal guest list: are you interested in creating space for lots of people to gather, or would you prefer to keep your dinners intimate? Consider the menu: do you want to be able to cook outside? Do you want to encourage communal cooking, or do you prefer to keep it a solo activity? Do you like to keep your entertaining packed with activities, or would you like to create spaces where conversation can take center stage? How do you want your

space to feel? When plotting and planning your ideal outdoor space, questions abound. Below are some helpful categories to think about when you begin designing the outdoor space of your dreams.



Surround your seating area with material that will be soft underfoot for trips between the dining table and a dip in the pool.

## Space & Entertaining Style

The first set of decisions you may want to consider relate to the kind of entertaining you'd like to do and how much space you have to work with. Regardless of the amount of space you have to work with from the beginning, almost any space can be tailored to create the mood you desire. If you have a large space but plan to host smaller affairs and gatherings, consider creating multiple environments—or outdoor rooms—within your yard. Plants can function as partitions, creating spaces of intimacy within larger contexts. Don't limit yourself to hedgerows: bamboo forests, large flowering bushes like hydrangea, dense tall grasses, trellised vines, even tall cacti can create borders that lend a sense of enclosure.

Furniture can also help delineate space. Seating areas with tables versus hammocks or lounge chairs can signal function and help create different moods within the garden. Architectural structures like pergolas or gazebos can also demarcate space





“Plants can function as partitions, creating spaces of intimacy within larger contexts.”



Adding a fireplace to your garden extends the season into cooler months by offering a place to get warm—and a place to cook.

and function, creating the effect of many spaces in one. If you have space restrictions, height is your friend. Look to create levels of interest with hanging plants, green walls, and climbing vines. Even tight quarters can feel spacious when you can see sky above: draw the eye upward.

Regardless of the amount of space you have to work with, consider how you would like the space to feel and how many guests you would ideally like to accommodate. If you prefer large parties but have a smaller space, opt for compact or dynamic furniture that won't eat up the footprint of the area. Folding tables and chairs are a natural fit for outdoor furniture not only because they can seat diverse numbers of guests but also because they are usually easy to stow in colder weather and easy to clean.

Hardscaping can also help dictate usage, flow, and vibe. Hardscaped pathways

tend to be made of traditional construction materials: wood, stone, brick, concrete, or tile. However, in time, desire pathways are made by foot traffic navigating from one point to another. Look to these pathways to help understand how your space is traversed to create a more natural approach to your design.

#### Cooking Outdoors

When the general function and layout of the space have been determined, the next issue to approach is cooking. Outdoor cooking can take many forms. Whether it's a small charcoal grill on the patio, a built-in gas-powered range, an open fire pit, or a



For al fresco entertaining in larger spaces, consider creating pockets of activity like this one that help punctuate the space.





Plan your kitchen garden close to the cooking action so you can make a quick grab for any additional herbs or ingredients.



A kitchen garden can be wide-ranging—consider including edible flowers and herbs in dishes, drinks, and cocktails.

cob oven, there are many ways to cook and dine *al fresco*.

Even if you choose not to have a permanent outdoor cooking option, more improvisational options are still available. Create a temporary underground oven to slow roast meat or vegetables—or even to bake a cake. The consistent, low temperature of an underground oven has the same effect as a slow cooker: turning sinewy meat tender and succulent, and vegetables like eggplant or tomatoes plump and juicy.

Plan your kitchen garden close to the action (but not so close that delicate plants would singe from the heat!). Herbs are an excellent choice for the kitchen garden

to enhance meals both indoors and out. However, consider other ways of incorporating your garden harvest into your entertaining. Make your cocktails exceptional with a bar garden. Think: a sprig of thyme in your gin and tonic, the spruicy notes of rosemary infused in vodka, or mojitos with fresh garden mint muddled and chilled over ice on a hot summer day.

### Atmosphere

Now it's time to set the mood. The plants you incorporate into your entertaining area will help set the tone of your space. Night-blooming jasmine or orchids blanket the air with their perfume for gatherings under the stars. Peppermint or strong-smelling herbs planted next to the dining table can accent the dishes you serve with their aroma.



Your garden can help create atmosphere for outdoor entertaining. Trailing flowers will provide visual impact and a sweet smell.





# A TOWNHOUSE GROWS IN THE BAY AREA

HILGARD GARDEN • BERKELEY, CA • USA



In Berkeley, California, an outdoor garden room filled with innovative materials and plant life makes a big impact on city living.





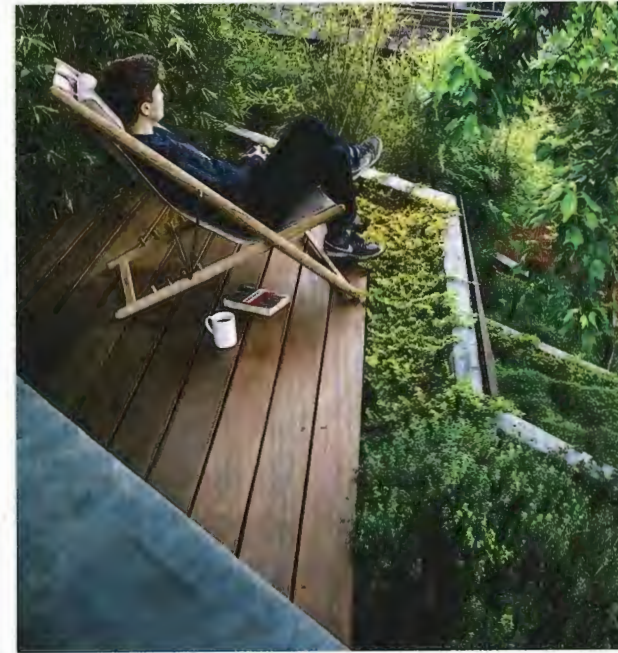
With its mild climate and easy winters, Berkeley, California is an ideal location to expand a home's footprint with an outdoor garden room. So, when approached by two Bay Area clients with the challenge of extending the living space of their 1964-built townhouse, Mary Barendsfeld was eager to bring the living space outdoors.

Barendsfeld began by addressing one of the more prominent features (and obstacles) of the garden property: a 17-foot (5.2-meter) elevation change that leads away from the home and toward the 60-foot (18-meter) upper level seating area with views of the East Bay and San Francisco skyline. While the neighboring townhouses accommodated this dramatic incline with level terracing using walls of paving units, Barendsfeld wanted something more distinctive.

She instead envisioned "an angular walk through a Japanese maple sculpture park" in place of the drab facade of paving units. She built a meandering "experiential garden path" of board-form concrete and weathered steel walls that runs up the sloping hill to the elevated seating area. Among the sculptural maple trees, Barendsfeld



Opposite: The sculptural maple-lined path was planted with aromatic lemon thyme ground cover to enhance the sensual effect.



Above, left: A perimeter wall was created with Corten steel—a favorite material of many modernist artists—echoing the sculptural garden.

Above, right: A seated perch above reveals the 17-foot (5.2-meter) elevation change of the garden—plus views of lemon thyme—to the seating area below.

planted aromatic lemon thyme ground cover to enhance the sensual effect of the experiential garden path. As a finishing touch, the triangular steel panels are backlit by LED bar lights, which illuminate the path upwards.

The aesthetic inspiration for this direction came from the townhouse itself whose cedar-shingled roofline echoed the natural wood border of some Japanese homes. Barendsfeld applied this direction to a restrained material palette of grays, browns, and cream: board-form concrete walls, ipe wood decking and benches, and white granite. Steel perimeter walls with water-jet-out circular patterns complete the enclosure. This limited palette allows for the vitality of the plant life—Koi bamboo, golden creeping Jenny, maples, and thyme—to take center stage.

Through the neutral palette and sculptural considerations of the trees, Barendsfeld has created a minimal yet impactful scene. "I want to stretch humanity's understanding of landscape architecture," the architect explains. "This project was able to touch upon a universal desire for formal and programmatic solutions that present themselves as art. This garden is land art."

At the foot of the terraced garden, Barendsfeld created a 400-square-foot (37-square-meter) floating white granite patio, with an adjacent reflecting pool. A glassed-in living room surrounds the patio, serving as both a visual and literal extension of the room, creating continuity between the indoor and outdoor spaces.

If you happen to be lucky enough to live in a year-round outdoor climate, follow Barendsfeld's lead when thinking through your own outdoor garden room. Make distinct seating areas through semi-enclosed spaces to create the feeling of protection that an indoor space has. Keep the architectural palette neutral and quiet to let the plant life remain the star. Focus on singular statement plants for a sculptural effect. Make the indoor-to-outdoor transition seamless by having your indoor space open directly to your outdoor seating area. Then, sit back, and watch your space grow.





**HILGARD GARDEN**  
**BERKELEY, CA · USA**

**GARDEN TYPOLOGY**

Garden room

**SIZE**

1,150 sq. ft. (107 m<sup>2</sup>)

**CLIMATE**

Subtropical

**HARDINESS ZONE**

USDA 10a

**ORIENTATION**

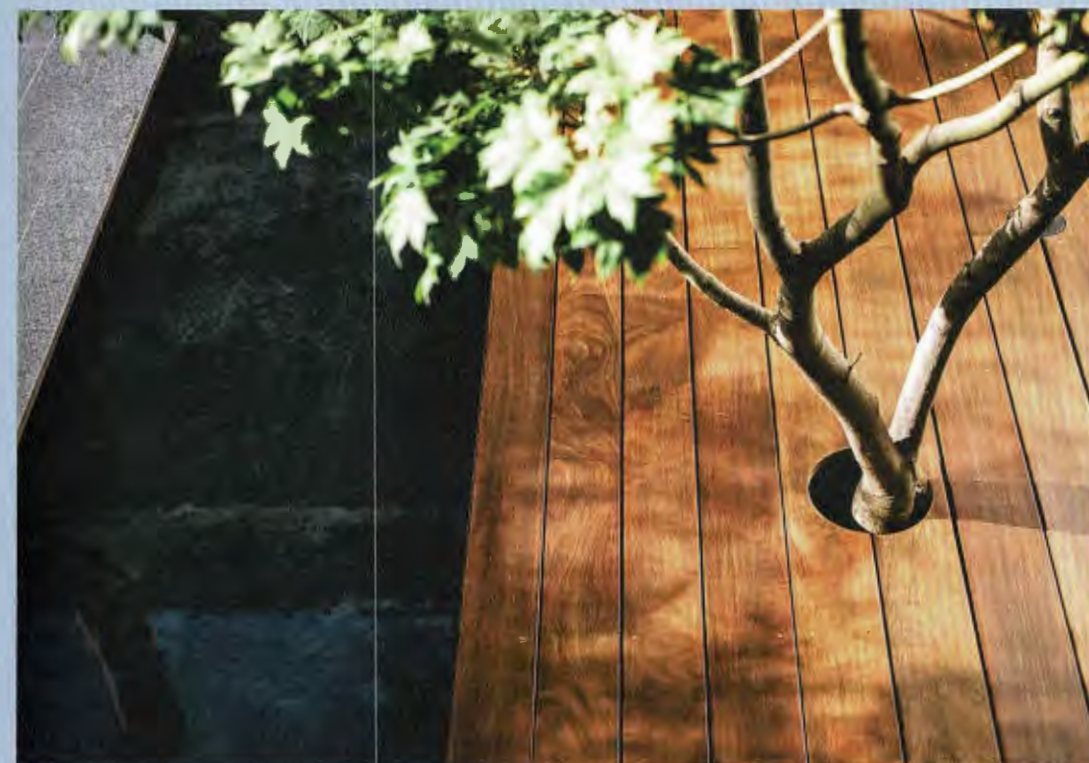
South



“As in art, gardens are spaces where we find a marriage of concept and expression.”



PREFACE



design. Replacing the typical lawn and flower bed dyad, new garden design is more sophisticated and multifarious. We've included gardens that explore the full sensory effects of a garden beyond just sight and smell, and ones that maximize smaller spaces, with vertical gardens and living walls taking center stage. We've also incorporated the expanded vocabulary of garden features, exploring garden design as a series of smaller moments or "rooms" within the larger context of the garden. From this exploration of contemporary garden design, we saw a tendency to blur outdoor and indoor boundaries, revealing a holistic approach in which the garden and the home are seen as one.

Finally, we wanted to highlight gardens that support a sustainable ecosystem. Whether through native plantings, optimized irrigation systems, plants that support native wildlife, or those that help

maintain soil health, we've featured garden designs that support the urgent and imperative mission of sustainability.

We hope that these gardens inspire the same wonder and curiosity that I experienced all those years ago, watching my mother coax blooms from her gardenia as she unlocked for me her secret language. As ever, we learn about the land from watching others—gleaning inspiration and knowledge from what they've learned and passed on to us—and hoping, in all the ways we can, to share in the magic of the growing world.

ABBYE CHURCHILL was the editorial director of *Wilder Quarterly*, and her first book, *A Wilder Life* (co-written with Celestine Maddy), was featured in the *New York Times Book Review*. Her writing has also appeared in the *New York Times*, *Vogue*, *Food & Wine*, and *W*. She lives in Brooklyn, New York City.