



Left: Seen from the dining patio, the Bella Blue Pebble Fina pool is a jewel in the California native landscape. An automatic pool cover provides significant energy savings. *Heuchera maxima* and broken concrete walls frame the view upon entering the property from the side yard. One red stucco wall frames the pool on the left. Two other red walls (at right and behind the firepit at a right angle to the pool) frame the view on the right.

Middle: Staggered concrete steps lead from the lower, more natural area to the spa and pool. A large existing oak tree frames the view on the left, and the fireplace provides massing and screening on the right.

Right: The upper, more manicured human centered landscape transitions to the lower, natural landscape that abuts open space. Curving decomposed granite and flagstone paths let the owners slow down and experience the California native plants in the area they call the "lower 48." Meadow and chaparral plantings continue the open feeling from the lawn down to the property line.



This residential design project is located in Trabuco Canyon, an unincorporated community in the foothills of south Orange County, California. The backyard joins up with the 2,500-acre Whiting Ranch Wilderness Park. Because the property is long and narrow, tapering towards the end, one of the primary design goals in this project was to open up the view to the park, making the property "borrow" the view and create a transition from residential property to park.

The clients wanted a pool of suitable size for daily lap swimming, combined with a spa to provide after-hours comfort and relaxation, and an opportunity to enjoy the view. A gas fireplace anchors the dining area off the kitchen and dining room, and a redwood patio cover provides afternoon shade for dining and the rooms at the back of the house. Broken concrete, recycled from this project and others close by, form raised planters for vegetable gardening. Within the enlarged central entertaining space, are several intimate seating and dining areas, centered around the pool and spa.

The property is divided in two by a change in grade and a glass fence for pool safety. This division, through a set of staggered concrete steps, marks the transition from public and more human dominated space to private and more nature dominated space. The "lower 48," as the homeowners call the lower half of the property, is intended to be a quiet area for reading, working, and viewing the larger landscape. A swath of meadow draws your eye out from the upper lawn to the transition to true chaparral.





# Trabuco Canyon Residence

Blending the Backyard with the Wilderness

Landscape Architecture by Alison Terry, Terry Design Inc.

PHOTOS: CHRISTIAN R. TERRY

In analyzing the site, the following issues were apparent. First, there was an overabundance of lawn. An estimated 75% of the landscaped area was cool season turf, requiring lots of water to irrigate. Second, the entertaining spaces were small and didn't take advantage of the potential views from the upper part of the property. The site felt closed down to the important elements (i.e. view, open feeling) and open to the wrong elements (close neighbors and property line block walls). Above all, the property didn't reflect the owners' personalities and the location.

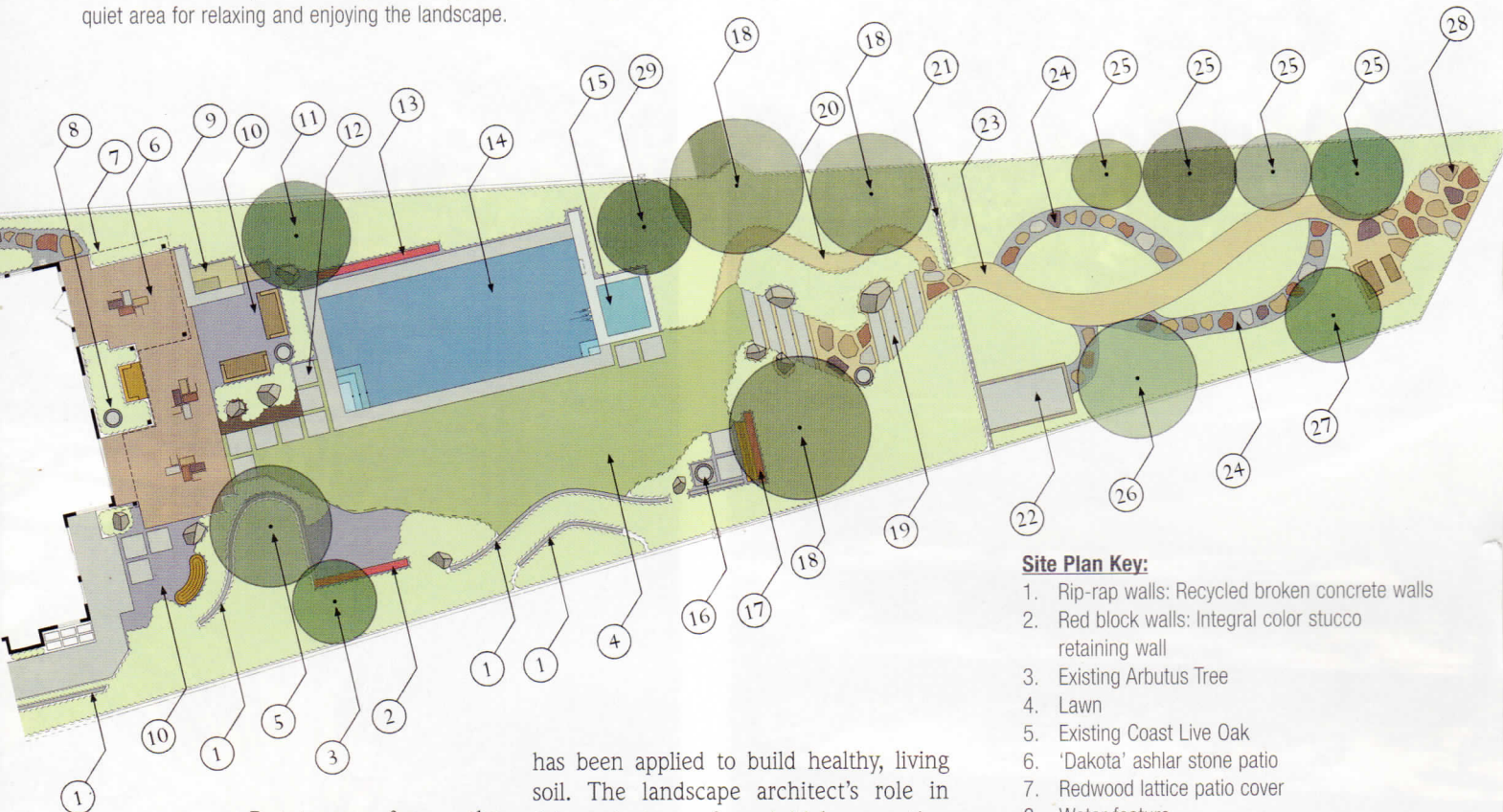
The materials and colors used in this project are simple and natural. Bel Air rubble on the fireplace and on the raised bond beam of the pool evokes the powerful feeling of stone. The stucco is integral color, which will weather unevenly, avoiding a harsh contrast between the hardscape and the landscape. 'Dakota'

random ashlar stone is used for the patios. Colored, washed concrete is used for the pool and spa coping, stepping pads, and steps, adding a simple, modern touch to the landscape design. An ozone filtration system for the pool and spa makes daily swimming healthier for hair and skin. The 'Bella Blue' Pebble Fina plaster finish mirrors the sky. A corner fireplace invites people to appreciate the warmth from two sides. A separate firepit seating area with redwood seat is close to the spa.

Sustainable elements incorporated into this residential landscape include of building materials, irrigation, drainage, planting, and soil preparation. Stones from the site and from a common HOA area were salvaged and re-used in the landscape. The existing concrete patio was broken up and used for the rip-rap walls. The irrigation was replaced with a drip system, with bubblers at trees and MP



Below: The owners of this residence in Trabuco Canyon, California, asked Alison Terry of Terry Design Inc. to help blend their long, narrow backyard with the adjacent wilderness park. Terry used native plants and recycled materials to create two distinct spaces in the yard. An upper area was designed for entertaining, while the "lower 48" serves as a quiet area for relaxing and enjoying the landscape.



#### Site Plan Key:

1. Rip-rap walls: Recycled broken concrete walls
2. Red block walls: Integral color stucco retaining wall
3. Existing Arbutus Tree
4. Lawn
5. Existing Coast Live Oak
6. 'Dakota' ashlar stone patio
7. Redwood lattice patio cover
8. Water feature
9. Corner fireplace faced with rubble stone
10. Decorative gravel patio
11. Bay Laurel tree, standard
12. Concrete steppers, colored and washed
13. Red block seatwall: Integral color stucco
14. Pool: Pebble Fina 'Bella Blue' plaster finish
15. Spa: Elevated at the edge of upper level
16. Firepit with potted concrete fire bowl
17. Red block wall with redwood seat attached
18. Existing sycamores
19. Concrete stairs leading down to lower level
20. Decomposed granite path
21. Glass fence, pool safe
22. Pool and spa equipment, ozone
23. Curved decomposed granite path
24. 'Dakota' random flagstone paths
25. Fruit trees: orange, avocado, peach, apple
26. x Chitalpa tree
27. Multitrunk Arbutus 'Marina' tree
28. 'Dakota' random flagstone patio
29. Existing Toyon tree

Rotators for the lawn area. A smart controller monitors water use relative to the evapotranspiration (ET) rate of the plants. Water runoff is disseminated throughout the site, allowing for infiltration back into the groundwater. Fine grading encourages water re-direction towards low spots. The front yard incorporates three Eco-Rain tanks on both sides of the yard for infiltration.

Almost all plants are California natives or low water use plants (Mediterranean climate and succulents). The few thirsty plants used are roses for scent, and fruit trees. Fruit trees and the garden are grown and maintained without chemical pesticides or fertilizers. Compost tea, a live brew of nematodes, fungi and bacteria,

has been applied to build healthy, living soil. The landscape architect's role in this project was from initial conception through onsite construction oversight. There were relatively few issues or delays, unusual for a project of this size. The credit for this can come from the respectful working relationships between the owners, the landscape architect, and the contractors.

#### Project Team

*Landscape Architect:* Alison Terry, Terry Design, Inc.

*Mason, backyard:* Larry Conner, Conner Masonry (retired)

*Mason, front yard:* Jim Wright, Wright Construction

*Pool Contractor:* Fluid Dynamics Pool and Spa

*Landscape Contractor:* Richard Bogda, Cumberland Landscape

*Concrete Contractor:* Joe Conti, Macon Concrete

*Wood Contractor:* Jeff Todd, Woodscapes Design

*Compost Tea:* Sheri Powell-Wolff, Compost Teana



Agave



Aloe striata



Artemisia californica  
'Canyon Gray'



Blue-eyed grass



Dudleya