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RESIDENTIAL

ON THE COVER:

Jones Valley Legacy Phase II, p 48

**New Japanese Inspired Redesign
for Dana Point Home, p 22**

Unique Miami Beachfront, p 28

PLUS

ONCE IN A BLUE MOON, p 32

SEA RIDGE RESIDENCE, p 36

A MODERN VINEYARD, p 42

Terry Design, Inc., Feature Article

Sea Ridge Residence

by Terry Design, Inc.

Above: This Rancho Palos Verdes, California, residence, which overlooks the Pacific Ocean with views of Catalina Island, was redesigned by landscape architecture firm Terry Design, Inc. in 2018. The new property includes an infinity edge pool and raised perimeter spa that were designed to blend in with the sea and sky. Random ashlar travertine provides a neutral frame for the glass tile spa.

The Sea Ridge Residence project in Rancho Palos Verdes, California, originally designed in 2013 and put on hold, was redesigned in 2018 by landscape architecture firm Terry Design, Inc. and construction was completed in 2020. The original main house level pool, spa, and hardscape were poorly executed and nonfunctional, and did not meet the owner's needs. The lower-level hardscape and softscape was difficult to access and lacked cohesion or purpose. The owners, who are successful business owners and love to entertain with their large family and for business and charity functions, asked for an expanded main level entertainment area, and for safe, comfortable access to the lower portion of their property for active recreation and accommodating large events. Working with the city's strict grading restrictions, the firm utilized all available space for these purposes.

The infinity edge pool and perimeter overflow glass-tiled spa are centered within the main entertainment space, emphasizing the awe-inspiring 270-degree view of Palos Verdes and Catalina Island in the distance. There are graceful stairs on both sides of the slope down to the lower play lawn, making all spaces flow together and all parts of the property accessible. At the lower level, in addition to the large flat lawn, are raised vegetable beds built with repurposed Palos Verdes stone (found onsite during construction), gravel paths, fruit trees, and a firepit patio with a built-in masonry sofa.

Right: The *Rhaphiolepis* (bottom left) were preserved throughout construction. Lady Banks rose, and *Ostespermum* (middle, next to the Lady Bank rose) frame the Palos Verdes stone wall at the intersection of several paths.



Above: Randomly assorted flagstone steps transition from the lower garden area up to a travertine patio. The stairs up to the main house and pool level are visible above. The Landscape Architect emphasized color in this garden by adding 'Lady Banks' rose (bottom left corner), scented geranium (above the 'Lady Banks' rose), and 'Tuscan Blue' Rosemary (middle right; blooms blue flowers in the Spring and Early summer) flanking the steps.

Above: A mid-slope gravel path allows for meandering through the hillside garden and leads to the sports court. At night-time, low-voltage lighting fixtures provide safe access to all parts of the site, casting a warm glow on the hardscape.

In the front yard, an entirely new circulation system was designed to separate vehicular from pedestrian circulation and create a formal pedestrian entry suitable to the property. Previously, the entire front yard was dedicated to vehicular circulation with no ability to safely walk to the front door. The Landscape Architect created a strong central axis in the front yard that carries through to the back yard and reinforces the home's architectural layout. Overall, the design has a formal, European feel at the main house level, with subtle reverse curves echoing the home's arched windows. Terry Design's scope of work also included reviewing the home's doors and windows and determining how to provide more usable space in the back yard. They worked with the general contractor for the home remodel to close off one door at a lower level and backfill against the house, creating a sizable amount of recouped space. Then awkward transitions to other areas around

the house were removed and a lower-level master bedroom patio was designed, removing stairs that blocked the view. A small outdoor kitchen at the main pool level is easily reached from the kitchen for everyday use. Spread throughout the site are smaller, more intimate seating spots with varying views and aspects. The fruit trees and vegetable beds are very important to the owner's mother, who grows vegetables for authentic Chinese cooking. The owners love continual flowers and color, which is a challenge not only in this marine environment but when designing for drought tolerance.

Plantings include low water use shrub Bougainvillea, Plumeria, Agave, Tagetes lemonii, Salvia leucantha, Phlomis, Pennisetum 'Fairy Tails', Iris, Thyme, and Osteospermum. Colorful favorite roses include 'Julia Child', 'Lady Banks', 'Knock Out', and 'Drift', for their disease resistance and frequent blooming. Fruit

trees include Avocado (types A and B for pollination), Fig, Citrus, Pomegranate, and Persimmon.

One of the most satisfying aspects of this project for the team was that they completed the construction right as Covid hit. All five of the owners' children, ages varying from young teenagers away at school abroad, to young adults, came back to live at the home, enjoying all their newly competed outdoor spaces.

Materials and Installation Methods:

Because of the city's grading restrictions, all demolition and installation work completed below the main pool level were performed by hand. During this process, a substantial amount of Palos Verdes stone was uncovered, which was used as veneer and caps for the lower retaining walls on the property. All upper patios and caps are 'Tuscan Walnut' Travertine

in a random ashlar pattern. Random flagstone was used on the lower steps to blend in with the Palos Verdes stone veneer, as there are currently no quarries that produce Palos Verdes flagstone. The steps down to the lower lawn level are fabricated from single curved pieces of travertine. The mason created cardboard templates for each step for the fabricators to follow as the radius were not purely geometric. The team installed a dimmable LED strip light under the handrails for the two sets of stairs down to the lower portion of the property to create a consistent glow on the steps.

Environmental Impact and Concerns:

All work done on the lower portions of the property was executed without the use of any mechanical equipment, which made the work less impactful on the property. The majority of the Palos Verdes stone found onsite was repurposed in a wall veneer and as

Top: Generous curving travertine steps lead from the sports court up to the firepit area and further uphill to the main level. Roses add color and scent to the firepit patio, while drought tolerant prostrate Rosemary (bottom left corner; blooms blue flowers starting in March) work with the seaside conditions.



Above: The front entry includes a fountain by Campania International surrounded by colorful plants including Gold Coin Plant (underneath the fountain), Iris (purple flower within the Gold Coin), and 'Julia Child' Rose (yellow flowers at the bottom).

Above Right, Top: During the day, the subtle curved infinity edge is visible, with the glass tiled surge basin below. There are low seat walls on either side of the pool to encourage seating and maximize use of the spa.

Above Right, Bottom: Tagetes lemmonii (bottom middle, which blooms yellow flowers in the fall and winter), shrub bougainvillea (pink flowers in the bottom middle corner), Bird of Paradise (right, along gravel path, which bloom bright orange flowers from fall through spring), and Echium (to the right of the Bird of Paradise, and blooms tall purple flowers between May and September) provide a continuum of color through the year. Plumerias (pink flowers in the bottom left corner) adds a lush subtropical feel while using little water.



edging on some gravel walkways, eliminating the need to export the stone. All soil, other than the pool excavation, was retained onsite. All non-primary paths are permeable gravel and drainage for the property below the pool level is directed to infiltration areas strategically located throughout the site.

Collaboration with the Client and Other Designers:

Based on Terry Design's seven-year design relationship with the homeowner, they trusted the team's design sensibilities and construction knowledge and that allowed this project to go from design inception through construction, working with the team of contractors who are frequent collaborators. The Landscape Architect has an ongoing relationship with the client to maintain her investment in her property. The owner loves walking through her property as she expresses her belief, "My garden is my life," which leaves little doubt that she appreciates the end result of her project.

Significant Issues and Special Factors:

Working with the city's grading restrictions necessitated a creative approach to space planning. These restrictions also required the contractor to

find dedicated crew to do the grueling hand work for the lower-level demo, grading, and masonry work. The pool excavation was done with machines, but while drilling the pool and spa caissons, the team encountered many rocks which slowed the drilling rate considerably.

These clients had difficulty imagining the final design for their property, even though the Landscape Architect prepared a 3D computer model during the design process. Because of this, the project continued to be redesigned throughout construction. As each space began to take shape, the clients' visualization improved, leading to more design exploration and refinement as the project progressed.

The team also encountered long delays in fabricating the travertine step treads, wall caps, and coping due to the custom radii. However, once those materials arrived, they were quickly installed and provided much inspiration to the team to complete the project. 🌿

Team:

Jett-X (Demolition, Excavation and Grading);
Rudy Conriquez Masonry;
Fluid Dynamics Pool and Spa;
and Gina Bush Landscape.