

Great baths shouldn't just soothe the senses—they should make a splash. As part of our inaugural Great Design Awards, we've selected the best new products—from stunning surfaces to statement tubs to sculptural fixtures—and gathered expert tips for even the smallest of spaces

t seems a bit crazy in retrospect, but before Joanna and I were married, I suggested we buy this property together and build on it someday. She thought it rash and was not initially keen on the idea, but I told her not to worry, that even if our relationship didn't work out, it would be a sensible real-estate investment. I'm pleased to say that, in the end, both have proven successful.

After a 40-year career as an architect, designing houses for many clients, I was finally confronted with designing one for myself and my family—surprisingly, something I had avoided all this time. Joanna and I both love Mediterranean architecture, our common ground, so the house I devised is a mixture of northern Italian and southern French influences, a farmhouse compound pretending to be a country villa. I like to think it looks like an architect had nothing to do with it, that it is and has been "of its place" for a long time. We called it Villa Corbeau, in jest, after the resident crows of the neighborhood.

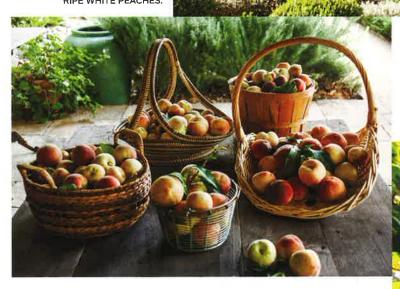
The garden at Villa Corbeau follows suit and was designed to look like a Mediterranean garden gone to seed. About a half acre in size, it was accomplished over a year of Sundays in 2008 with help from friends and dedicated gardeners Pat Omweg and Alfredo Garcia. It's laid out with vistas and pathways connecting various destinations and outbuildings, including a rose garden, pool pavilion, fountain, arbor, pergola, and potting shed. The pathways are decomposed granite with steps of local sandstone. Their axial geometry lends order to the whole, but the vegetation has been left to overgrow its borders, intruding here and there, crowding the paths and creating a slightly unkempt, older-looking landscape, an effect that became apparent just a few years after the garden was planted.

Although some Italian cypress and a couple of California pepper trees were added, the property was already dignified by several dozen mature California live oaks. These, along with bay laurel and *Pittosporum undulatum* (a.k.a. Victorian box tree), create a dense background, screening us from neighboring properties and making for a secluded private setting.

Because rain can be an infrequent event in Southern California, the palette of plant material is reasonably drought-tolerant. There are gravel terraces rather than lawns, and although occasional volunteer seeds are left to take root and some gift plants from friends have made their way into the mix, there are few waterhungry species in the garden. The sweet-dry fragrances of lavender, rosemary, jasmine, and other Mediterranean regulars, however, fill the air with rich memories of European travels.

Another part of the landscape is devoted to agricultural produce, with a walled vegetable garden that is planted year-round and changes seasonally, an orchard of citrus- and stone-fruit trees, and several

RIGHT MARC
APPLETON AND HIS
WIFE, ACTRESS/
DIRECTOR JOANNA
KERNS, SIT BENEATH A
WROUGHT-IRON ARBOR
OF HIS DESIGN. SOFAS
AND COCKTAIL TABLE
BY JANUS ET CIE.
BELOW A BOUNTY OF
RIPE WHITE PEACHES.



hens that help our compost and oblige us with just enough fresh eggs. When the white-peach tree ripens—and it does so all at once, with a vengeance we are overrun with hundreds of sweet, juicy fruits, forcing us to give most away to friends and neighbors or make more ice cream than we should ever eat.

Thomas Jefferson, a far better architect than I (even in his spare time), who also loved his garden, once said, "Though an old man, I am but a young gardener." As I grow older, the challenges of tending the garden constantly remind me of this, but it is nevertheless our favorite place to relax, unwind, entertain, and dine. Joanna and I still enjoy traveling to Italy, Spain, France, and beyond, but sometimes, now, after a few days on the road, we look at each other and wonder why we ever felt the need to leave home and this small "California Mediterranean" paradise.



RIGHT A TEAK TABLE
BY APPLETON IS LAID
UNDER THE ARBOR'S
ANTIQUE LANTERNS.
DINNERWARE BY
JULISKA; TABLECLOTH
FROM WILLIAMS
SONOMA. BELOW THE
ROSE GARDEN'S BEDS
ARE BORDERED WITH
HEDGES OF DWARF
MYRTLE. A GREEK
OLIVE JAR SITS UNDER
A CANOPY OF
CALIFORNIA LIVE OAKS.



