



Garden designers Barry Campion and Nicholas Walker terraced a Malibu hill and covered it with both California native plants and those from similar climates. A playhouse overlooks the hill's colorful array of salvias, buckwheat, flannel bush, penstemon, coastal sagebrush, deergrass, lilac verbeena, pink rockrose, yellow Jerusalem sage and purple echium. Opposite, top left, Cleveland sage.



Gardening in fertile California provides the opportunity to create beds using solely native plants. While purists favor the strictly home-grown look, plants from similar climates, especially those near the Mediterranean, can be added to the mix. Venice garden designers Barry Campion and Nicholas Walker took this approach on a Malibu hill, where their clients' wish for a year-round show ruled out natives-only.

"An all-California garden wouldn't have been flowery and colorful long enough," says Campion, explaining that there are periods when the plants aren't looking their best." On the other hand, she says, native plants are very useful for those transitional areas—common in Southern California gardens—between cultivated and wild landscapes. By using natives in these spots, you blur the lines of demarcation, making the scene seem all of a piece and not a patchwork of parts.

Here, the owners wanted the hill—a garden link between their ranch-style house above and their swimming pool below—to connect visually with the nearby mountain's chaparral, and they wanted it to thrive with little water



by SUSAN HEEGER ❖ photographed by LISA ROMEREIN

Team Players

California Natives and Drought-Tolerant Plants Create a Low-Maintenance Masterpiece in a Malibu Garden



Showy pestemon



Fremontodendron 'California Glory'

and care. Natives, besides being tough enough, have a casual, unfussy look that suited the owner's home and harmonized with the boulders they chose as landscape accents. They also loved the native grass meadow that Campion Walker proposed- a soft, naturalistic swath that would offer a walking route through the garden.

After stabilizing the hill with concrete block retaining walls and terraces, the designers drew up a list of California plants that are especially tolerant of garden conditions: sprawling silver coastal sagebrush, fragrant white and Cleveland sage, ground cover manzanita, lilac verbena, showy penstemon, ceanothus, coyote mint and monkey flower- all from Tree of Life Nursery in San Juan Capistrano.

They added robust Mediterraneans, many with later or longer blooms, including white and pink rockrose, yellow Jerusalem sage, purple echium and a slew of different salvias. For sculptural drama, they tucked in succulent dudleya from Baja and local foothill yucca and flashy Mexican and Texan look-alikes, dasylirions. On either edge, where the terraces give way to the hill's natural slope again, they concentrated more natives- buckwheat, ceanothus, tree mallow and matilija poppy. Grasses such as deergrass and Berkeley sedge



To create a textural effect, above, the designers incorporated acacia, aloe, agave, succulent dudleya from Baja, local foothill yucca, California poppies, native grasses and pride of Madeira. Opposite: A native grass meadow of vetiver, *Carex pansa*, and wildflowers provides a walking route around and through the garden.



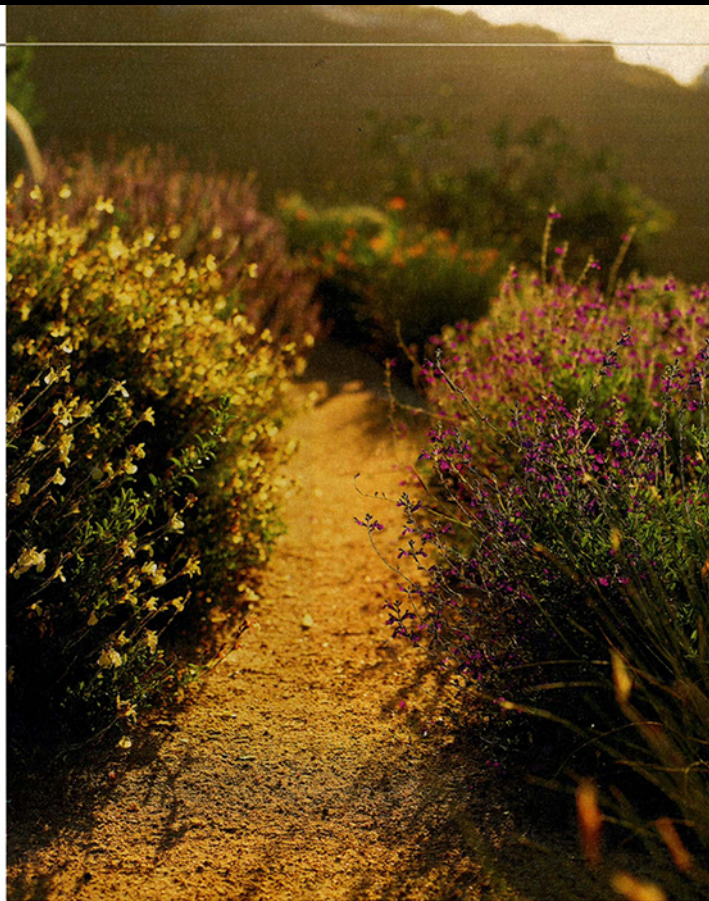
Artemisia pycnocephala 'David's Choice'



Hybrid tree mallow



Britton's chalk dudleya



Buckwheat spills onto terrace stairs, left, Salvias, lavender and grasses border a garden pathway, right.



John Dourley manzanita



'Trish,' a Persoff's hybrid monkey flower

enhanced with an edge of rustling vetiver- from India and Asia- along with a wildflower sprinkle of syrinchium and *Ursina anethoides* 'Solar Fire,' an orange South African perennial.

Although none of these plants require much water, the designers have many of the natives on their own irrigation cycle, ensuring that touchy types like *Fremontodendron* 'California Glory' get no more than they need. (A layer of shredded redwood mulch also cuts down on surface evaporation.) At planting time, Campion and Walker worked organic compost into the clay soil but skipped the fertilizer, which can cause natives to grow quickly but die early.

Local deer have been one of the few challenges, sampling the many types of ceanothus like free-loaders at a salad bar. Still, Campion says that most plants have grown lustily, draping the block walls in one year and creating a rich and varied plant community on a lot once ruled by weeds.