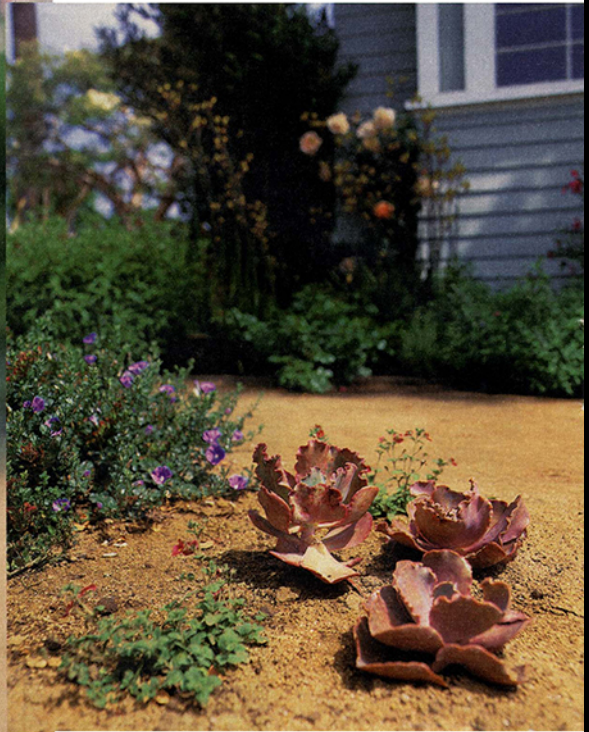


gardens



No Ordinary Day at the Office

A fragrant flower-filled garden surrounds two studios in South Pasadena

BY SUSAN HEEGER + PHOTOGRAPHED BY LISA VOSPER

Like most commuters, graphic designer Maureen Erbe and photographer Henry Blackham often rush to work without noticing the details— the state of the sky, the twitter of birds, the scents of the garden blooms. But their commute is short, and the environment quickly attracts attention. Their respective studios — hers a South Pasadena bungalow, his in the converted garage behind it — are surrounded by a fragrant, flowering garden. They can't get to their doors, in fact without brushing through a privet hedge and picking their way past sages, English roses and geraniums.

"It's a great setting for a creative business," says Erbe, whose firm designs brochures and other promotional materials. Blackham, her husband, does mostly advertising work, and they occasionally collaborate, as they have on marketing and advertising for Azusa-based grower Monrovia Nursery. This project, among others, contributed to their decision to create the garden. After all, they had swapped their Hollywood office for a house in a tree-filled neighborhood. "We made a quality-of-life choice," says Blackham, who supervised the property's transformation from a weedy lot to a yard that stops traffic.

Clockwise from left: *Salvia greggii* 'Sierra de San Antonio' enlivens a border. Echeveria hybrids and ground morning glory are planted in decomposed granite. 'Sally Holmes' roses climb around the entry to Maureen Erbe's bungalow-turned-studio while assorted roses, lavender and salvia add fragrance and color to the front yard. Society garlic and verbena surround a crepe myrtle in an island planting.



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Clockwise from above: Yellow-green *Pittosporum eugenoides* used as a backdrop for bold yellow 'Bush Dawn' Kangaroo paws, an Eastern redbud tree and 'Tamora' and 'Mary Rose' roses. In the foreground is a clipped *Pittosporum crassifolium*. Henry Blackham's corrugated metal studio is in the background. Hebe, golden thyme and oscularia spill onto the broken concrete path between the studios of Erbe and Blackham.



Barry Campion, the Venice garden maker whom the couple hired to design their office landscape, describes the mandate they gave her: "They wanted the public to enjoy the plantings but they needed screening so they could concentrate on work. The solution? In place of a fence, they planted Texas privet, and within its leafy walls - kept low for looky-loos - layered contrasting sweeps of two-toned silverberry, blowsy teucrium, westringia, and mixed roses, buddleia and ceanothus.

Campion, who had done one residential garden for Erbe and Blackham (and is designing another for their South Pasadena home, bought six years ago), knew the couple preferred naturalistic plantings and muted tones, so the borders unfold in soft blues and pinks, with splashes of gold, bronze and yellow from kangaroo paws, Jerusalem sage and a buttery Hap-penstance rose.

Clockwise from right: Rusty red kangaroo paws.
'Buff Beauty' climbing roses soften the austere walls
of Blackham's studio 'Buff Beauty' roses.



Roses are among the flashiest blooms in a garden focused more on leaves than floral shows. Blackham's studio is swathed in 'Buff Beauty' roses, which soften the corrugated metal building and tie it to the '20s house, which is draped with climbing 'Sally Holmes.' Several David Austin roses- pale pink 'Wife of Bath', peachy 'Tamora' and apricot 'St Cecilia' - bloom among strap-leaved flax and native ceanothus.

Although the garden doesn't appear manicured, Blackham says it doesn't require detailed and expert trimming. To keep its lush, full look, it also demands additional water. But for Erbe and Blackham, the garden's rewards outweigh its costs. Passersby stop to admire plants and leave notes requesting botanical names. The couple's employees love to wander outside or just view the scene from their desks. "Some of our friends wonder why we've spent money on this," Erbe says.

"My feeling is, our world is what we live in every day. We make it what it is." <

