

Beyond the Garden Gate

The Andersons removed an aging kidney-shaped back yard pool snuggled up against the house and pushed the new rectangular shaped pool back from the house, gaining level outdoor living space for their nicely updated 70s rancher. "We love to be outside," Dixie explains, as she ticks off their back yard events – casual morning coffee, barbecues with neighbors and family Easter parties. She uses words like "warm" and "inviting" and talks about how the landscape project has opened up an "awesome" view.

Technically Anderson is talking about the view from the top of their up slope yard, but in reality, the view from the house-level looking up is equally awesome. Fifteen years ago the space was juniper at the bottom and bare at the top. Now boulders create a living hillside wall, surrounded by flowers and plants. A serpentine hillside path, three weeks in the making, beckons children to run along its length while gently climbing the hill. A final stretch of as-yet under-realized space at the top, awash with California poppies, buffers the end of the Anderson property with their neighbor's lot.

When it comes to beautiful gardens Lindy and Gary Sitzmann have something in common with the Andersons — both used Sullivan from Enchanting Planting as their landscape designer. Where the Anderson yard is larger, the Sitzmann's Orinda garden is jewel box in size; a space Sullivan rightfully calls "super beautiful."

The earlier concrete patio was at best nondescript when the parties sat down to talk about their wish list. The backyard spaces were disconnected, so Sullivan dropped the grade in one area to link the hardscape to a deck off the dining and living room. Their outdoor space includes the nearly requisite lounge area, barbecue, fireplace, arbor and view of neighboring hills, but if you're lucky enough to enter the outdoors from the master bedroom, you'll find a pocket-sized Japanese garden. It might not be beyond the garden gate, but it's

definitely worth seeing.

Beyond the Garden Gate, the 2016 Moraga Juniors Garden and Outdoor Living Tour, will be held from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. April 30, rain or shine. Tickets are \$40, and available online at www.moragajuniors.org or at the following locations: Across the Way, Moraga; McDonnell Nursery, Orinda; and Orchard Nursery, Lafayette. A portion of each ticket is tax-deductible and lunch is available for an additional fee.



The Anderson's "Secret Garden" is a gem.

Photo Cathy Dausman



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