



The colors of the blooming garden accent the Dutch farmhouse-inspired home of Cynthia Bennett-DeBeixedon and Ed DeBeixedon. Below the wall, a curved border is edged in smaller rocks, echoing the curved fountain and stone wall.

ROCK GARDEN

Creative stonework is the backdrop for this colorful California garden

by Debra Prinzing
Photographs by Deidra Walpole

Garden Profile
Location:
Pasadena, California
Hardiness Zones: 9-10
Site specifics: Rocky soil amended with topsoil, part shade, part sun
Age: 2 years

CYNTHIA BENNETT-DEBEIXEDON HAS A PASSION FOR Northern Europe's old-world architecture and comfortable, intimate gardens. When she and her husband, Ed DeBeixedon, were searching for a home in the Arroyo, a historic neighborhood in Pasadena, California, they kept their eyes open for the European details they loved. Instead of buying, they built a new home in the area with old world touches.

"I didn't think we could make it work," Cynthia says, describing the lot they planned to build on. "It was a very uneven lot that sloped 10 feet in two directions. Plus, it was full of rocks." Local zoning restrictions mandated that four ancient oak trees remain on the property, so they had to work around those when designing the house and garden.

Cynthia, an interior designer, and owner of Cynthia Bennett & Associates, a firm specializing in high-end residential remodeling, designed a 3,500-square-foot, Dutch-style farmhouse, borrowing her favorite elements of homes in rural Holland where she had lived for many years.



Like traditional cottage gardens, Cynthia's has formal outlines with informal plantings. She pairs edibles with ornamentals, choosing useful plants that bring joy to the senses.



ABOVE: Rocks gathered from the property were used to build walls, edge flower beds and pave walkways. Those natural stone elements act as the backdrop to an ever-blooming garden of perennials, roses, vines and trees.

BELOW: The homeowners, Cynthia Bennett-DeBeixedon and Ed DeBeixedon created an old-world-style garden.

"We created a home that was influenced by Dutch barns, and then wrapped the garden around it." The home's exterior is seamlessly knit into the landscape, thanks to the design's reliance on native river rock collected from the once-vacant property. "The river rock in this area comes from the *arroyo seco* [dry river bed]," Cynthia says. "We used a lot of it to create walls around the perimeter of the patios." By terracing the garden with various levels, the design obscures the property's steep grade changes, and allows low stone walls to create a beautiful, organic backdrop to Cynthia's mixed borders.



The plantings incorporate dozens of nostalgic and climbing roses, drought-tolerant Mediterranean herbs and long-blooming shrubs such as hydrangeas. Climbing vines (such as wisteria, climbing hydrangea and black-eyed Susan vine) growing on homemade elevated trellises help screen the garden from neighboring properties. A spacious patio has an outdoor wood-burning fireplace to warm guests on cool evenings. At the patio's edge, a circular pool displays an urn and a bubbling fountain. The water trickles over the vessel's rim and spills into a lower pool that's situated between a small lawn and perennial borders. A second patio holds the outdoor grill and offers plenty of seating for a crowd along the 18-inch-high seating wall.



ABOVE: Originally from the Mediterranean, *Cerinthe major* 'Purpurascens' (honeywort) has purplish-blue bracts that open to deep purple tubular flowers. It is a magnet for honeybees.



RIGHT: The bell-like flowers of honeywort add a subtle beauty to the rest of Cynthia's garden. Plants like these have only become popular in the United States in the past five years.

Cynthia and Ed are pleased with the way this intimate property accommodates everything they wanted in a garden—an orchard, an herb-and-vegetable garden, a potting bench, and plenty of exuberant rose and perennial borders—all linked by stepping stones and gravel pathways.

"In this small space, we must have seven or eight fruit trees, a fig tree, miniature lemon and orange trees, a plum tree, nectarine and apricot trees, and a fence made of live apple trees at the entry to the herb garden—just like a friend in Holland had years ago," she says. "It's just amazing how many flowers are packed into this garden. I can look out every window and see them—we have flowers all around."



LEFT: A sundial, a gift from some of her office staff, is an artful addition to Cynthia's vignette of roses, irises, herbs and perennials.



BELOW: Tucked into the corner of her garden, Cynthia's potting bench is the scene of numerous planting projects. The bench is adjacent to her herb garden and collection of fruit trees.



Along one side of Cynthia and Ed's bedroom, windows overlook the shade garden. On the other side, French doors open onto a small balcony that provides views of the sunny borders.



ABOVE: An 18-inch-high river rock wall encloses and surrounds the lower dining patio. Because Cynthia designed it at the height of a comfortable chair, the wall is ideal for extra seating during large parties.

RIGHT: Native to Western Australia and a favorite of floral designers, *Anigozanthos* (Kangaroo paw) thrives in Cynthia's garden. The branching stems of this unusual perennial produce red tubular flowers.



Cynthia's Favorite Plants

Cynthia's garden is always in bloom. Here are just some of her best flowering plants:

- Abutilon* spp. (Flowering maple)
- Alcea rosea* (Hollyhock)
- Anigozanthos bicolor* (Kangaroo paw)
- Alstroemeria* spp. (Peruvian lily)
- Campsis grandiflora* (Chinese trumpet vine)
- Cerithe major* 'Purpurascens'
- Delphinium* spp. (Delphinium)
- Digitalis* spp. (Foxglove)
- Distictis buccinatoria* (Red trumpet vine)
- Distictis x riversii* (Royal trumpet vine)
- Erigeron karvinskianus* (Santa Barbara daisy)
- Hardenbergia* (Vine lilac)
- Helleborus* spp. (Lenten rose)
- Jaminiium polyanthum* (Pink jasmine)
- Penstemon* spp. (Penstemon)
- Rosa* 'Altissimo'
- Rosa banksiae* (Banksian rose)
- Rosa* 'French Lace'
- Rosa* 'Jacqueline du Pre'
- Scabiosa caucasica* (Pincushion flower)
- Schizophragma hydrangeoides* (Japanese hydrangea vine)
- Solanum jasminoides* (Potato vine)
- Thunbergia grandiflora* (Blue sky flowers) ✨