



NEW MONTEREY Neighborhood News

October 2010

Next meeting: Monday, October 11 – Hilltop Center – 7 PM

GARDEN NOTES – This month we visit Alexandria Albin’s garden on Cypress Street. She says:

My garden is my sanctuary. It is also a welcoming home to many creatures including pacific tree frogs, lizards, birds, salamanders, and fish, as well as my dog and cat. It has taken many years of trial and error and hard labor to get it to the place it is now. There is always something blooming at any time of year and when there are not, I have enough colorful architectural plants that provide visual interest. I rely mostly on perennials, self-seeding annuals, and succulents. Through the process I have grown to understand the importance of planning and staking out where plants go and of editing by repeating plants, colors, and textures, having different sitting rooms for different times of day and irrigation.

I moved into my grandparent’s home approximately 15 years ago. It was a ubiquitous 1950’s stucco single story house. The yard was very overgrown, with two large Oaks that were in desperate need of pruning. As I started weeding I slowly uncovered the great bones of the garden. My grandfather made granite stone bordered beds from rocks he collected over the years on the local beaches. There was a small hill where a large pine once stood with a collection of rocks and large abalones that barely held the erosion, he made a series of steps to the hill. On top of the hill was a rotting pigeon coup where my uncle had kept his pigeons as a boy.

Once the debris and weeds were clear I could see what actually was planted and surviving. My grandfather made the mistake many naïve and exuberant gardeners make and that is planting things that you like without consideration of the conditions. Due to the Oaks around the property and the microclimate of our location the garden was very shady and had a narrow window of sunlight in the middle of the day. There were several anemic fruit trees that I pulled. There was a small cypress tree on the border of a two foot retaining wall in the front of the house. The primary plants I kept were the majestic mop head hydrangeas and a large bougainvillea on the one sunny wall.

Over the years I worked on the infrastructure of the garden by laying in hardscape. I removed the small retaining wall and put a large Carmel stone front



wall with staircase to the front doorway. I built a stone retaining wall in the back to hold back the soil erosion, which ultimately became a pond. I put flagstone down for the walkways to reduce the dust and be a heat reflector. I removed some of the small beds to open up the space to create sitting areas. I think over the years we put in approximate 15 tons of stone in the yard. It is hard to believe that a small yard can absorb so much stone.

Please see **CYPRESS GARDEN** on page 2

IMPORTANT MEETINGS IN OCTOBER

October 6 - 7- 9:30 PM - Priority-Based Budgeting Public Workshow #1 - Monterey Conference Center

October 7 - 7-9 PM - Downtown Specific Plan Workshop #1 - Monterey Conference Center

October 11 - 7-9 PM - New Monterey Neighborhood Association - Hilltop Center

FROM THE PRESIDENT – On Election Day, don’t vote, if you are not informed on the issues. If you do not understand clearly how the candidates differ and what each stands for, don’t vote. If you are not informed about the propositions, don’t vote on them.

This election, all elections, are too important to leave the decision making to people who have little idea about what they are being asked to decide. Voting is certainly a privilege, but beyond that, it is our responsibility to cast an informed vote.

There are those who have already made up their minds how they will vote in 2012. They are unwilling to risk being confused by the facts. There are those who don’t vote, regardless. They may be unable to vote, or feel their vote won’t make a difference. If you want to skip some issues and only vote the ones that you have informed yourself about, that’s okay. The worst event possible is that voters who were ill informed will approve someone or some proposition that they wouldn’t have if they had been informed.

One source of information for voters is on-line at smartvoter.org. Fill in your address and ZIP code and you will be taken to a web page showing the location of your polling place and all of the races and propositions that will be on your ballot. There are links from each candidate to more information about the candidate and what s/he stands for. There are links from each proposition to information about the proposition, including the meaning of voting yes or no.

You may think it is okay not to vote if you are satisfied with the way things are going. By not voting, you are NOT supporting the status quo, the decision makers in power. By not voting, one puts incumbents at a disadvantage. While their supporters do not show up to express their concurrence, opponents of the status quo frequently do show up and can easily outnumber the supporters who bother to vote for the incumbents.

Not voting favors challengers and hurts incumbents. Not voting has consequences.

Our founding fathers saw free public education as a prerequisite for an informed electorate. They put a lot of power in the hands of the people, understanding that we would need to be educated if we are to be able to make the decisions required for a healthy democracy. Use your education. Get informed. Use your wisdom. Make your informed decision. I have great respect for citizens who do their homework, even if I disagree with them. Informed, thoughtful people can disagree and still make a democracy work. It won’t work well any other way.

Howard B. Fosler

CYPRESS GARDEN *from page 1*

In the meantime, I made mistakes similar to those of my granddad by being budget conscious and not wanting to get rid of plants or buying plants at the store that I thought were oh so pretty. Over time I had a random patchwork of plantings.



Finally, in 2008 I decided it was time to tackle the gestalt of the yard. I took a brutal approach and ripped out plants that simply did not work. I either tossed, gave them away on Craigslist or Freecycle. Then with a fresh empty canvas and a color wheel I mapped out a general idea of the colors and plants I wanted to have in the garden. I started, first with strong architectural plants, like Phormium to anchor the borders. I augmented their presence with softer brighter plants, like Helichrysum limelight. In the shady borders around the Hydrangeas I added ferns, abutilon (Chinese Maple), hellebores, and lilirope, a nice architectural plant with white stripes. Using light colored plants in the shade created depth in the borders, from there I repeated a lot of the patterns, plants, and colors throughout the yard. I made sure to have different heights of plants and added complimentary and sometimes contrasting shades, textures, and colors.



Along with the plantings I added drip irrigation with a tank for liquid fertilizer, which has made life so easy, and invested in night lighting, which made using the garden as a living space at night a nice alternative. Finally, I made a simple two tiered pond and waterfall which has become a home to a chorus of small pacific tree frogs and minnows and creates a nice organic feel to the yard.

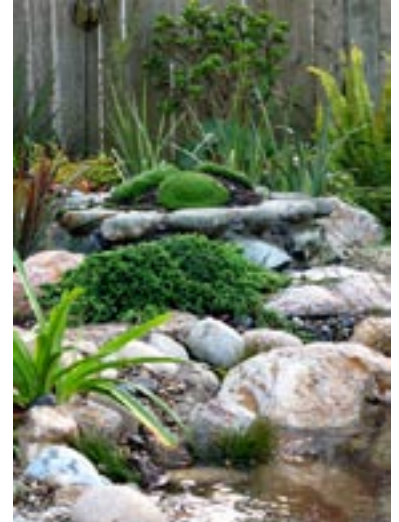
The lessons I learned are enormous.

1- Planning plantings and using a color wheel does make a difference and repetition of plantings actually makes your space look bigger.

2 - You don't have to have a lot of money, but using it wisely for the big bang elements...like irrigation and lighting were worth the effort.

3 - Be creative, I found all my outdoor furniture at Last Chance Mercantile and I used found wood rounds for side tables.

4 - If you have time search Craigslist and Freecycle for hardscape materials and plants. And mostly...it is ok to move plants around or pull them if they don't work.



For these and more pictures in color go to:

www.newmontereyneighborhood.org/gardenAlbin

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newmontereyneighborhood.org



NEW MoNTEREY Neighborhood News

NEW MoNTEREY Neighborhood Association

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