

A photograph of a garden in autumn. The scene is dominated by trees with vibrant orange, yellow, and red leaves. In the foreground, a stone pergola structure is visible, with two ornate, black lanterns mounted on a stone pedestal. The lanterns have a classic, slightly gothic design with glass panes. The garden is lush with various plants, including purple and yellow flowers. The overall atmosphere is warm and inviting, typical of a well-maintained garden in the fall.

A Garden Makes a House a Home

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Landscape architect Mark Tessier's design of this garden in California's San Fernando Valley takes its cue from the architecture of the house, designed by Scrafano Architects. They turned a 1953 house into a sleek, modern version of ranch house vernacular. They opened up the house by installing large windows to allow more light in and also to take full advantage of the views. The interior of the 5,000-square-foot structure was completely updated, and a new two-story, 1,000-square-foot studio and guesthouse was added.

Tessier envisioned the landscape as a series of distinct garden spaces, each with its own identity. "I saw them as reflections of adjacent interior spaces," he says. "The client desired a garden strongly rooted in environmentally responsible and sustainable design principles, which could still address the needs of a growing family's lifestyle."

A new entry for the property was created at the street edge by taking the front door of the house and moving it close to the street. Zig-zag bridges from traditional Chinese gardens based on the principles of feng shui provided inspiration for the staggered, floating wood bridge and sunken succulent garden that now defines the entry experience. A modern cast-in-place concrete water basin, drawing inspiration from a *tsukubai*, a Japanese purification fountain, provides a soothing and peaceful sound.

Referencing the valley's agrarian past, a grove of Valencia orange trees introduces an organized geometry to the landscape that continues, later, into the rear

yard. "The orange grove makes a strong connection between the main house, guesthouse, the multipurpose parking court, and sport court," Tessier explains.

The back of the house received new outdoor terrace spaces. "The hardscape and planting of the rear garden plays off the architect's rectilinear forms with long axes and crisp geometry," Tessier says. "It was envisioned as an open lawn for children's play and entertaining. I saw the lawn panel as a special element or rectilinear 'rug' of grass rather than a design more like wall-to-wall carpeting."

The forms of the main outdoor space are dominated by a breathtaking view of the San Fernando Valley and the borrowed landscape beyond, with its hues of gray, sage green, and the dusty greens of the native California sycamore. Many native species are also planted extensively on the property in small groups, as they would exist naturally in the surrounding foothills and canyons.

A secret garden for adults wraps around the opposite side of the house, providing the connection between the backyard lawn and the playroom. A complex series of angular paths, trails, and vegetative mounds creates a shaded respite from the Southern California sun and a framework for informal play. A permeable, decomposed granite surface contrasts purposefully with the more refined concrete finishes found in other areas of the garden, Tessier says. "The use of local materials helps pull in and connect the environment and landscape to the renovation, which has been awarded high honors."

BELOW A secret garden connects the lawn and pool to the children's outdoor playroom; playful angles, landscaped mounds, and shade create a setting for informal play. **OPPOSITE** Landscape architect Mark Tessier designed the rear garden to play off the house's rectilinear forms by using long axes and crisp geometry.





RIGHT The new outdoor living space at the back of the house looks out over the open lawn designed for play and entertaining. **BELOW** The rectilinear pool and panels of grass carry the eye out to the scenery of the San Fernando Valley.



