2014 Camping Guide

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A Bright HOME MAKEOVER
FRESH START

By ditching the lawn and turning their yard into a series of outdoor rooms, a couple finds themselves living alfresco.
As Liz and Peter Keenan can attest, downsizing can have its upside. Four years ago, with their teenage daughter, the couple moved from their large home—which had a pool and sprawling lawn—to a smaller house in their Pacific Palisades, California, neighborhood. With the move came a chance to create a yard that fits their new way of life. “It became more about lounging outside with our friends,” says Liz. “We didn’t need lawn for the kids—and didn’t want the boring look of it. Or the maintenance.”

They hired architect Dane Twichel and landscape architect Rob Steiner to overhaul their new place, a corner lot with expanses of lawn and concrete. “With a smaller house, we needed outdoor spaces that would become extensions of it,” says Liz. To that end, Twichel dismantled some interior walls of the 1980s house and installed French doors off two rooms. Then Steiner designed a tree-shaded lounge off the living room and a dining patio off the kitchen. Throughout the yard, he planted low-water natives—“It’s the right thing to do here,” says Peter—and strategically placed trees for privacy from the street.

“It’s better than what we had,” says Liz. “We’re outside all the time now. And when the succulents bloom, it’s magic.”


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**DINING AREA**

**BEFORE** The paved patio was hot and uninviting.

**AFTER** French doors open onto a semiprivate patio for dining (right). The designer defined the area using HardiePanels, a rot-resistant fiber-cement board (jameshardie.com), attached to steel panels. The partition, painted sunny yellow (Hibiscus by Benjamin Moore), gives the space intimacy, while its window provides views of the ferns, meadow grasses, red-flowered kangaroo paws, and succulents along the path in the foreground.

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**GARDEN WALK**

**BEFORE** A patio of cracked aggregate ended in an upward-sloping lawn, a tired fence, and a carob tree.

**AFTER** A gravel path edged with succulents (opposite) leads from the kitchen door and up steps to a meadow of red fescue (additional soil was used to shape the new terrace).
"With a smaller house, we needed outdoor spaces that would become extensions of it."

—LIZ KEENAN
SPORTS COURT
BEFORE This patch of grass behind the garage was wasted space—the lawn required too much water and was walked on only for mowing.
AFTER A ping-pong court paved with Del Rio gravel replaces the thirsty lawn; it is now a big draw for daughter Grace and her friends.

“We didn’t need lawn for the kids—and didn’t want the boring look of it. Or the maintenance.”
—LIZ KEENAN

FRONT YARD
A low wall of painted HardiePanel provides a cool backdrop for shrublike white-flowering tea tree (Leptospermum laevigatum), white low-water blue fescue, blue oat grass, and blue and pink muhly grass replace the lawn. Groundcovering gazonias add silver leaves and creamy blooms.

ALFRESCO LOUNGE
An outdoor seating area opens off the living room along the side of the house. The wicker sofa is from Restoration Hardware (La Jolla sofa, from $1,655; cushions from $63; restorationhardware.com). Although it’s close to the sidewalk, the space feels private, thanks to a low hedge of ‘Smokey’ coast rosemary (W estringia), dwarf tea tree (Lept ospermum laevigatum ‘Reevesii’), and a tall Metrosideros hedge.

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