

# The Designer

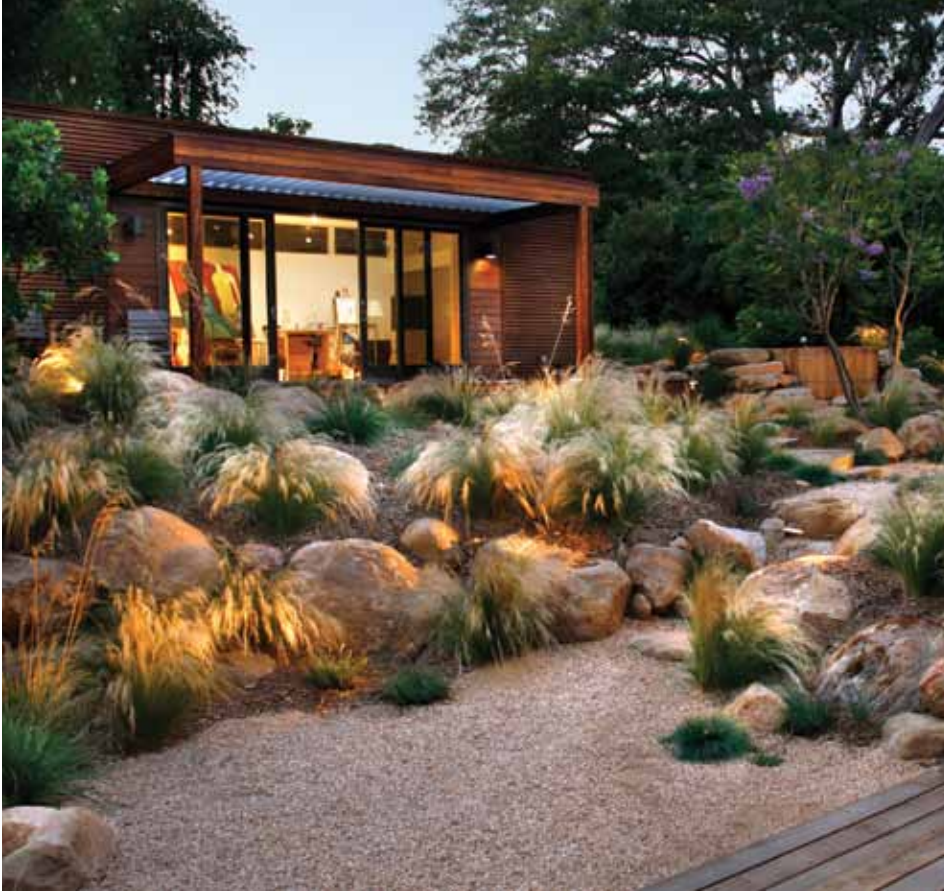


Association of  
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**Cover and Contents Page Photos:**  
 Margie Grace  
 International Landscape Designer of the Year

# The Designer

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## on apld.org

In addition to serving the needs of the professional landscape design community, apld.org has information for the public.

- Discover how to care for the environment in your own garden.
- Find APLD members in your community using our online directory.
- View stunning images of the featured work of APLD members.

In the Summer 2009 issue of *The Designer*, contributor Rick Laughlin's name incorrectly appeared as Rich Laughlin. We apologize for this error.





2009  
DESIGNER OF  
THE YEAR

# Residential Gold Award

Margaret Grace, Grace Design Associates, Inc., Santa Barbara, CA

The home is called Casa Pedregosa, which means “abounding with stone.”

The main design challenge was to transform a gently sloping, flat, heavily excavated and re-compacted city lot into a completely natural looking site so it would appear as though the house had grown out of an “already existing” landscape. Pedregosa means “rocky,” and the site was

true to its name. Unfathomable quantities of sandstone boulders were unearthed during site preparation for the new house and studio, along with nearly 200 tons of sandstone rubble, a nice pile of salvaged sandstone curbstones and a beautiful pre-existing cut sandstone wall. All of the stone was to remain on site and be incorporated into the landscape.

Somehow, the landscaping needed to tie together the new home’s modern architecture and the neighborhood’s venerable historical homes.

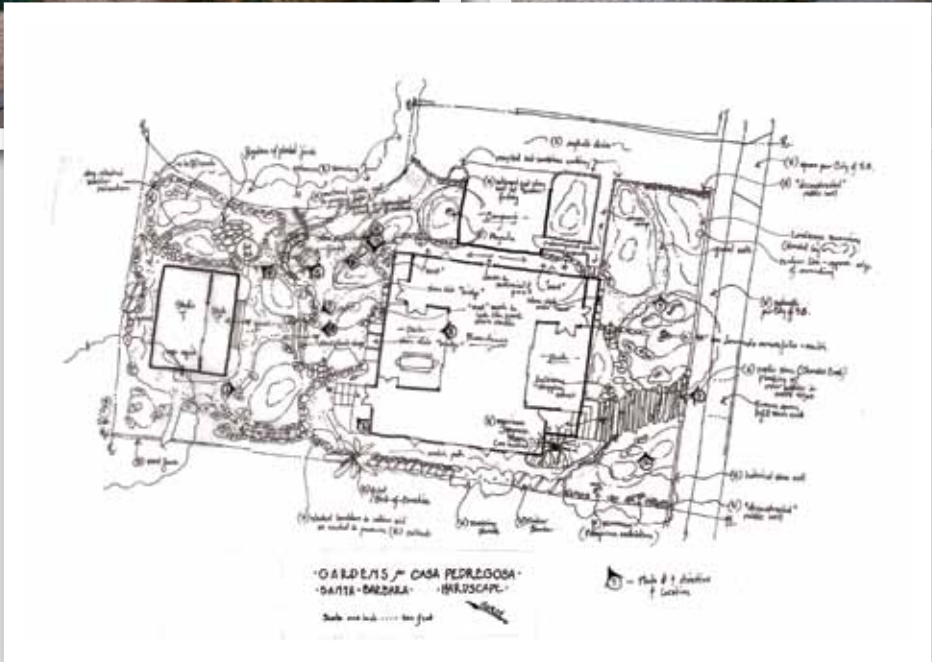
The clients, recent Iowa transplants, requested “a little bit of home” be incorporated in the landscape; yet the gardens must retain a strong sense of place to be successful. They wanted spaces for quiet contemplation, rejuvenation, lively discussions, lovely meals and musical evenings. Gardens would be extensions of the home’s living space.

Site drainage and flood control were very troubling issues. The main house sits in a low spot and an underground three-foot diameter pipe, carrying what once was an ephemeral stream, bisects the property, running under the master bedroom. These issues were not addressed by site engineering, so they had to be dealt with in the landscape design.

Everything was to be “super-green.” Maintenance needs were not to exceed half a day/month (ha!). The site is located in USDA Zone 8, Sunset Zone 24.







**Judges' comments:**

*This is a fine example of the composition of existing site, new construction and plantings that works to be beautiful, functional and sustainable. Stellar work."*

**Design Solutions:**

Terracing, boulder placement and land contouring bring form, interest and flow to the once-flat space, providing distinct spaces with distinct "feels" and uses. A stone amphitheater and firepit are the center of social gatherings. Fixed seating on one side of the firepit allows the other side to serve as a stage, additional seating or a place to lay out sleeping bags and sleep under the stars. A cedar hot tub is situated near the firepit – sufficiently distant to allow for quiet moments yet sufficiently near to enjoy the flame while soaking.

Every last piece of stone was used on site: for mounding, for walks, for walls that control floodwaters, retain soil, create screening, etc. Walls were built in different styles, from rustic stacked fieldstone to fitted gravity walls to mortared cut stone walls – and some were then "broken down" to differing degrees to suggest a long history of site occupation.

Simple plantings evoke a calligraphic Asian painting. Light, movement, views and a strong indoor-outdoor connection were incorporated into the design.

Grasses were used extensively, minimizing landscape maintenance requirements and referencing the homeowners' prairie roots. The garden connects the house to the site, the neighborhood and the larger setting seamlessly.

All landscape work was designed and built by our firm. In addition, we consulted with the clients regarding decks, shade louvers and step design; these elements were built by the general contractor.

**Green Features:**

Ninety-five percent of landscape materials are local (within 15 miles) or found on site, saving huge quantities of fuel/pollution for transportation. All plants, with the exception of a handful of fruit trees, are low water use

and/or drought tolerant; all plantings are watered by an automated drip irrigation system designed to maximize efficiency. Landscape mounding and boulder piles enhance site drainage, reduce total planted area/water use, create wildlife habitat, collect runoff and increase storm water percolation. A drainage "moat" surrounds the house. Bridged by stone in many places, the moat prevents runoff from creating puddles under the house and carries it into swales, preventing long-term house health, such as mold and rot problems. Low water demand/high water use plants border the swales. All hardscape is permeable, and locally recycled material is used extensively as mulch throughout the gardens, while shade trees moderate temperature and glare.