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## Sitting pretty

With professional help, a Los Osos couple transformed their tiny lot into a natural wonder

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By David Middlecamp | The Tribune | [purchase prints](#)

Backyard firepit and seating George and Deborah Stanton home in Los Osos. David Middlecamp 6-1-2011.

By Sharon Crawford | [sd Crawford@charter.net](mailto:sd Crawford@charter.net)

George and Deborah Stanton of Los Osos thought they couldn't have an outdoor sitting area because their small lot had no level space. Then, after seeing a neighbor's garden remodeled by Sage Ecological Landscapes they consulted the company's proprietor, Todd Davidson.

The prospective landscape plan included three sitting areas. The existing soil would be leveled and organically amended. Four tons of sandstone select flagstones and Santa Barbara boulders would be used throughout the garden.

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### Sitting pretty

The Stanton's tips for remodeling a garden:

The Stanton's hadn't considered a sitting area near the street, until they realized that the existing Oak and Strawberry Arbutus trees would screen it from view. There, the Sage crew built a semi-circular bench of stacked sandstone overlooking a chunky basalt water feature, surrounded by black pebbles. George added some rocks to the shallow basin and rearranges them periodically to change the fountain's sound.

The path between this area and a second sitting area near the house curves slightly,

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- Consider the garden views from indoors as well as outdoors.
- Water features will contribute another dimension and soothing sounds.
- Garden lighting and a fire pit can enhance evening enjoyment.
- When work is in progress, try to be available to answer questions and to make decisions before it's too late.

suggesting a leisurely stroll to appreciate the path-side flowers. Midway, a tall black basalt column with water flowing gently down its sides tends to bring visitors to a halt. In the second seating area, a simple wooden bench sits near a Mexican fire pot. Jasmine provides fragrance during its blooming period; other shrubs include angel trumpet, princess flower, and a Chilean coral bell with fuchsia-like blossoms.

The back yard was leveled to accommodate a meadow of creeping red fescue. The alternating upright and fallen grasses resemble ocean waves. The tall wood fence is screened by taller Pittosporum 'Silver Sheen'. At its mid-point, a small basalt fountain is backed by a smoke bush. A mirror attached to the fence behind it is tilted to allow a view into the fountain from the second-story deck. The Stantons loved this view so much that they had a window enlarged to enjoy it from indoors also. Outdoor lighting provides pleasurable viewing after dark as well.

A sculpted feminine face overlooks the scene from a back corner. On the opposite corner, a semi-circular sandstone bench overlooks a gas fire pit, topped with bits of glass. Behind the bench, a raised bed is filled with proteas, lambs-ear, coral bells, heliotrope, and three melaleuca trees. Between the fire pit and the meadow, a low mound supports stunningly tall aeoniums and other succulents.

The side yard was simply a six-foot-wide walkway between the south side of the house and a tall wooden fence. Now, both sides of the walk are planted with edibles and vines that clamber up a new arbor. The edibles include two grape varieties and grafted apple and pear trees espaliered against the house wall. George calls this area "a garden of olfactory delight." Scented vines include a white clematis, Angel's trumpet (Brugmansia sp.), Giant Burmese honeysuckle, Japanese honeysuckle and Wonga wonga (Pandorea pandorana).

The garden project took three months; the Stantons say the result was worth the disruption. They are delighted with the numerous features that they had not previously considered, and they praise the diligence and expertise of the Sage work crew.

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