

A Community  
Newsletter  
from the  
Grossmont –  
Mt. Helix  
Improvement  
Association



# viewpoints

Spring 2012

Volume 42 Issue 3



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## 2012 ART & GARDEN TOUR

*"The earth laughs in flowers."*  
~ RALPH WALDO EMERSON

**M**ark your calendars for Sunday, April 15th to enjoy the GMIA Art & Garden Tour. Inside this issue you will find the Art & Garden Tour brochure and map. Be sure to bring this with you as you visit four amazing gardens in our neighborhood.

As always, admission to our Art & Garden Tour is complimentary to GMIA members. This year we are trying something new! When members visit their first garden, they will receive wrist bands that will provide entry at each additional garden.

Nonmembers may participate on the tour for a nominal donation (\$5). There is no entry charge for children under 18 years old. While it is

See TOUR on page 3

## 75<sup>th</sup> Annual Meeting Meet & Mingle

May 19th, 2012

**G**et to know your neighbors and enjoy an evening under the stars at our "Meet & Mingle" Annual Meeting on May 19th. Our meeting will again take place at the magnificent Cuyamaca Water Conservation Garden. Members have told us how much they like this beautiful venue and casual format which offers lots of opportunity for relaxed social connection.

Good news! We have extended the time for this event (5:30 to 8:30 p.m.) to allow members more time to walk about the Garden. We are thrilled to announce that GMIA member Kay McGrath, who volunteers at the Garden, has offered to give informal personal tours of the site on the night of our event.

We are so lucky to have her serve as a knowledgeable guide. Thank you, Kay.

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## Attack on Planning Group Update

**O**ur Winter Viewpoints featured an article regarding the attack on our Planning Groups. Due to the large public outcry, the Board of Supervisor's hearing to decide the fate of the proposed "Red Tape Reduction Task Force" was postponed from February 29th to March 28th. As of our Viewpoints printing deadline, the hearing had not yet occurred. By the time you receive this issue, the hearing should have taken place. Please refer to our web site at [www.gmia.net](http://www.gmia.net) to find out the results. Your GMIA Board would like to thank our members for your support in this matter, especially those who sent letters or emails to the Supervisors, and showed up at the hearing in support of our community groups. ▲

GROSSMONT - MT. HELIX



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**Viewpoints** is a community newsletter published by the Grossmont – Mt. Helix Improvement Association. Letters to the Editor should be sent to P.O. Box 2751, La Mesa, CA 91943-2751.

*This newsletter reflects the efforts of your entire Board of Directors.*

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**www.gmia.net**

## Message from the President

Quality of life: elusive to define, hard to measure. What makes a neighborhood a good place to live? Most of us would agree that the wellbeing of a neighborhood depends upon many interconnected issues. Most basic of all, residents should feel safe from crime and have access to good quality education and employment. Beyond these elementary factors, there are many subjective ideas about what defines a great community. For those of us fortunate to live in the Grossmont-Mt. Helix area, we know our outstanding quality of life is largely dependent on our environment.

The unique physical assets of our region are a vital framework for our way of life. Maintaining our low density footprint and semi-rural lifestyle is the mission of GMIA. Thank you to all our members who share our commitment to be vigilant stewards of our distinctive neighborhood. Along with the Valle de Oro Planning Board, we all must work to ensure the character and quality of our community.

Nowhere is the character of our neighborhood better exemplified than by our acclaimed annual Art & Garden Tour. GMIA members generously open their private gardens and invite neighbors to visit their personal retreats. Selfless volunteers organize, administer and staff this community wide event. We come together to celebrate the magnificent beauty of our area. What a great group of people, what a wonderful place to live!

## Message from Jeff Rule Art & Garden Tour Curator

Thank you to all our GMIA members who will participate in a safe and memorable Art & Garden Tour. Please be aware: our traffic barricades, no parking signs and parking recommendation signs must ensure that emergency vehicles will have clearance at all times. County regulations require 16' of clearance (think big fire truck width) in order to safely pass parked vehicles. This is why, in most cases, we only allow parking on one side of the road. You are welcome to drop off passengers in front of the garden property entrance before driving to find suitable parking. Please be sure to leave 16' clearance for emergency vehicles and do not block driveways. Thanks for slowing down on our narrow, winding roads and parking in the recommended areas. ▲

### Thank You!

Our special thanks to these renewing members who have made additional gifts to GMIA of \$25 or more the past three months: Eleanor Tobin, Brian and Judy Pike, Phil and Cynthia Garns, Robert and Marcia Malkus. ▲

### Are You Current?

Please check your mailing label which reflects the expiration date of your membership. If your mailing label is not dated 6/30/12 or later, please take this opportunity to renew your \$18 annual membership either online using our secure PayPal account at [www.gmia.net](http://www.gmia.net) or via postal mail: GMIA, P.O. Box 2751, La Mesa, CA 91943. ▲

## Cell Antennas Invasion Update

Representatives of GMIA and the Valle de Oro Planning Group appeared at the Planning Commission hearing to successfully oppose cell site plans outlined in our Winter Viewpoints article. We convinced the Commissioners that antennas located along our roads and in our front yards would add to existing utility pole blight and were not appropriate within our community. The Commissioners denied the request. The applicant then appealed their decision to the Board of Supervisors, who will have final determination at a hearing in the near future. Please reference our Winter Viewpoints for contact information for the Supervisors' offices to express your concerns. Our website, [www.gmia.net](http://www.gmia.net) will have updates and an announcement of the date of the hearing when available. ▲

MEET from page 1

We extend our appreciation to our GMIA event committee Jocelyn Zimmerman, Larry Nichols, Allison Henderson and Kay Bickley who had the tough job of sampling delicious wine and tasty tidbits. They have chosen five excellent wines for tasting, a selection of non-alcoholic beverages, and substantial appetizers to complete the evening. Seriously, these volunteers have really worked hard to ensure our event is a success – please thank them when you see them at our meeting.

Complementing this Annual Meeting, GMIA will hold our State of the Community Forum on September 24th to update our members on issues of interest in our neighborhood. We hope to see you at both events.

Tickets for “Meet & Mingle” are \$25 per person. To reserve, you may either complete and mail the enclosed reservation form, or reserve online using our secure PayPal service at [www.gmia.net](http://www.gmia.net). ▲



### Water Conservation Garden Bonus

As a bonus to GMIA, the Cuyamaca Water Conservation Garden will offer a discounted family membership of \$40 (a savings of \$20) to our members who join that evening. Membership includes free admission to special events, reciprocal admission to over 250 botanical gardens, and discount rates for the numerous classes they hold year round (e.g. hillside gardening, succulent planters, aquaponics, creative basket making, composting, etc., and classes for children). Plus, you will have the satisfaction of knowing you support this treasure in our community.

TOUR from page 1

not our intention to open our tour to the general public, we will accommodate guests who wish to experience our event.

We will gladly enroll new members at the tour for our annual fee of \$18. Please be aware, however, that our organizational by-laws limit membership to residents or homeowners within our borders. Our geographic boundaries extend from east of Bancroft Drive, south of El Cajon,

generally north of SR94 and Rancho San Diego, and west of SR54/Jamacha Rd.

This annual event is made possible by the efforts of your entire GMIA Board of Directors and community volunteers. Our brilliant garden descriptions are written by Director Pat Ryan whose vivid prose can evoke the fragrance of blossoms wafting from the page. Gardener extraordinaire Director Don Newcom ably lends a hand in garden selection.

Director Sue Creveling graciously serves as our Volunteer Coordinator. A special thank you to Director Jeff Rule who skillfully oversees our event as our Art & Garden Tour Curator. Jeff secures the gardens, coordinates efforts leading to the day of the event, procures our event permit, manages logistics and signage, and expertly handles all the myriad details that make the Tour so special. Thank you to all! ▲

GMIA is a 70+ year old nonprofit 501(c)4 public benefit membership organization. Our mission is to preserve and enhance the character and quality of the community and foster pride in the area. We do not employ a paid staff and are served by an all-volunteer board.



## Orchid Talk

**G**MIA invites you to learn about orchids that you can grow and enjoy in your home. We will host an informative Orchid Talk on Saturday, June 9th at 10:00 a.m. at the Community Room in the Casa de Oro Library, 9805 Campo Road. Come hear Tom Biggart, owner and head grower at Granite Hills Orchids. Tom's family owned business specializes in Australian Dendrobium species and their hybrids. If you have an orchid in need of "doctoring", bring it along and Tom will dispense advice. For questions or more information, call GMIA Director Dagmar Miller at 619-579-1844. ▲

## 2012 Calendar

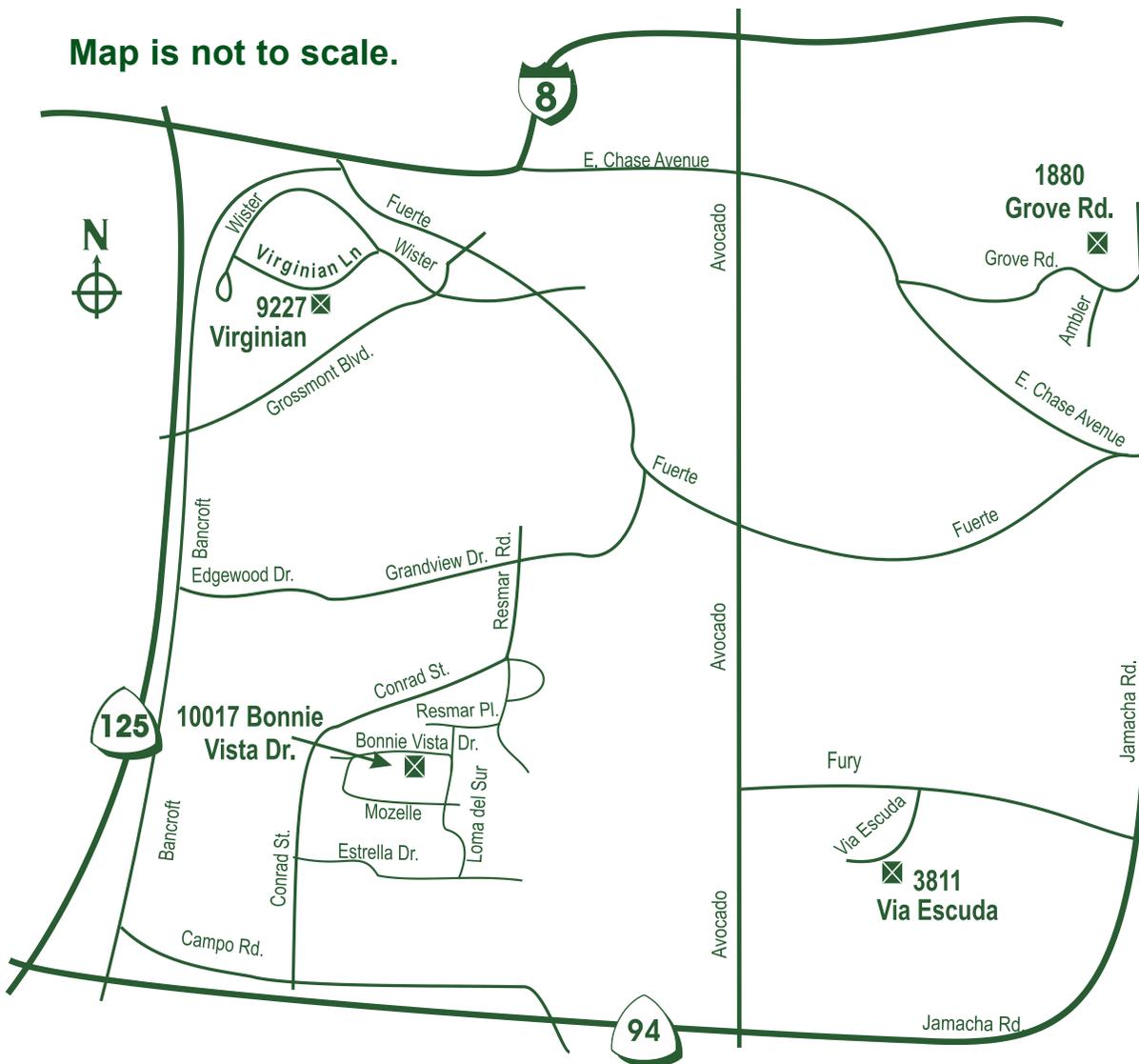
April 15	Art & Garden Tour
May 19	Annual Meeting 'Meet & Mingle'
June 9	Orchid Talk
Sept 24	State of the Community Forum

# Grossmont - Mt. Helix Improvement Association

## 2012 ART & GARDEN TOUR

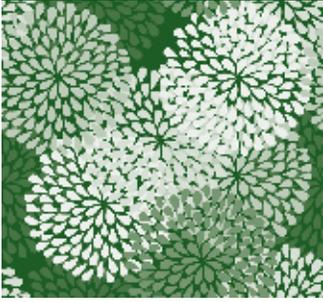
Sunday, April 15th 🍀 Noon - 4 p.m.

On behalf of our GMIA members, thank you to our Art & Garden Tour hosts who have generously provided their beautiful gardens for our event. Thank you also to our fine artists whose work will be on display for purchase and enjoyment. As always, please show consideration when parking and do not block the road or driveways. Be sure to wear flat walking shoes as some properties have a slope or stairs. Children who are respectful and under control are welcome—no playing or running around. We hope you enjoy this year's tour. Please note, our tour takes place - rain or shine.



This Art and Garden Tour is produced by GMIA Board Member Jeffrey Rule; garden descriptions provided by Board Member Pat Ryan, volunteer coordination by Board Member Sue Creveling, additional committee support by Board Member Don Newcom.

Design & layout of brochure by Victoria Vinton, Coyote Press Graphic Communications, [www.coyotepressgraphics.com](http://www.coyotepressgraphics.com).



*The Garden of*  
**Vince & Kay McGrath**  
**3811 Escuda**

**W**hen we last toured the McGrath garden in 2008, the expansive 70 percent drought tolerant backyard was featured. Using expertise acquired as volunteers for the Water Conservation Garden, Vince and Kay have spent the last two years transforming their thirsty front lawn into an inviting, 100 percent drought tolerant garden with an inviting patio and entrance. The irrigation system utilizes a combination of a subterranean drip system and a low precipitation spray system using multiple rotation stream nozzles. Our second tour highlights this inspiring conservation-minded update.

The owners have lived here since 1979 and have kept a few favorites from the old garden. A bonsai olive and cypress, and a holly bush remain amid a varied array of drought tolerant plants that fill mounded areas surrounded by curving paths. Wander through this area to discover grevillea, a mix of flax and grasses, "Winifred Gilford" salvia, desert spoon, colorful blooming arctotis acaulis, aloes and agaves, leucadendron, kalanchoes, a desert willow and crape myrtle. Succulents are added continually as the owners fill in the spaces with new discoveries. A low curving stone wall defines the new patio. Cross the driveway to view a mini-version of a dry streambed, modeled after one at the WCG. A collection of attractive succulent-filled pots frames the side gate entry.

Level, manicured flagstone paths weave through the backyard. Raised-bed planters each feature unique plantings: The Sage Garden, the Butterfly Garden, the Rose Circle, the Big Bear Garden, the Whimsical Garden, and the Water

Conservation Garden Sampler. Wander the paths to discover a cornucopia of flowers and shrubs enhanced by garden objects and pottery. Varieties of fruit trees are scattered throughout the garden.

Kay suggests keeping trees in a small-scale garden at eye level where they can be enjoyed. A favorite technique is to select a one-gallon evergreen shrub with a strong leader and train it into a tree. Two colorful examples are the *Solanum rantonnetii* (blue potato bush) and the *duranta* "Sweet Memories." The purple blossoms attract bees and butterflies and are relished by the birds. See a *duranta* by the pergola, a recent addition designed by Vince. Stop here on the patio and enjoy the fanciful wooden birdhouses, also created by Vince.

Wonderful southern views of Mt. Miguel are framed by an antique iron gazebo, home to many roses and a favorite of the birds. A deodar cedar provides some woodland shade near the Big Bear Garden. See the brightly colored tool shed at the perimeter of the garden that adjoins acres of open watershed with uninterrupted vistas. Many varieties of *Pride of Madeira* line the fence by the vegetable garden.

The thoughtful development of this garden reflects the owners' skilled craftsmanship, and unique artistic vision. Careful planning and years of inspired hard work have transformed a wide, flat space into many varied and intriguingly distinct areas. Thanks to the McGraths for tending and sharing their peaceful paradise with its new drought tolerant front yard.

*The Art of*  
**Vince McGrath**

Fanciful wooden birdhouses ornamented with unique found objects are the creative work of artist and garden-owner Vince McGrath. Formerly employed in the design industry, now retired, Vince has channeled his artistry to produce these one-of-a-kind birdhouses. Built of cedar to withstand the elements and to weather well, each will provide a bird family a fine-looking habitat. The perfect garden ornament! Contact: (619) 670-0810. 🌻



*The Garden of*  
**Tom & Karen Mooney**  
**1880 Grove Road**

***Important Note:***

The best way to approach this property is from Jamacha Road.

**B**oulders and more boulders, in addition to expansive views, were the hallmarks of this half-acre property when the Mooneys began landscaping it nine years ago. Using the massive granite rock slab and surrounding boulders as an inspiration and backdrop, the owners created natural decomposed granite pathways to wander through the area. The garden was then planted with native plants and drought tolerant trees, shrubs, flowers and succulents to. A grid of subterranean drip irrigation waters the area with the exception of the roadside plantings of coyote brush, and *erigonum arborescens*, or Santa Cruz Island buckwheat.

Featured here are two large Brisbane box trees, several *quercus ilex* oaks, and a line of unirrigated lemonade berry at the top of the hill along the property line. A

large pink breath of heaven (*coleonema pulchrum*) and a matilija poppy form a colorful border along the driveway. Throughout the area are annuals and perennials such as desert phacelia, ceanothus, verbena, blanket flower, California poppies, black-eyed Susan's and mimulus. Autumn moor grass, bunny tails fountain grass and blue oat grass dot the slope.

Follow the stone steps up the hill past many aloes, echeverias and manzanitas. These include coral aloe (*Aloe striata*), aloe vera (*Aloe barbadensis*) and the manzanita "Sunset," all top performers recommended by the owner. Notice the abundant lavender star flower vine (*grewia caffra*) climbing the wall, a useful shade-maker on the hot west side of the house.

The open gate and colorful side yard plantings invite you to explore the backyard. Pass iceberg roses and sunset rockrose and a backdrop of good-sized *Arbutus unedo* strawberry trees and a Hong Kong orchid. Stop at the gate to admire an impressive Mexican redbud. Once inside, explore the area around the lawn and patio. You will discover a small rose garden, a large lavender, native cape mallow, abutilon moonshine, sages, and butterfly bush. The owners have been reviving the three large olives trees. Wander up the small set of steps, past the Chinese fringe tree, to the side yard on your left and explore the tranquil and serene "Pacific Rim" style garden. Peppermint willows shade a small pond with a fountain and an interesting espalier of dwarf yew (*Podocarpus maki*) fastened to the house with wire.

Pass an extensive hedge of Indian Hawthorn and beds of flowering perennials that include an unusual oak leaf hydrangea and a new variety of dwarf butterfly bush. Follow the gravel path to a large stone fountain, designed and built by the owner and filled with water lilies. Notice the unusual espalied jade plant against the fence to help camouflage it. A row of dwarf bottlebrush frames the appealing conversation area by the fountain.

Down the slope are a citrus orchard, aloes and many

sages, including salvia "Waverly White" that attracts myriad hummingbirds. A vegetable garden is located at the bottom. Exit down the gravel drive bordered with African sumac and arbutus. Within just nine years, the owners have designed and created a unique and varied landscape that demonstrates their gardening philosophy of "Invitation, Exploration, and Destination."

### *The Art of* **Tom Biggart**

Tom Biggart has specialized in growing Australian orchid plants for over 30 years. After he retired from teaching, he decided to create the ceramic containers that would best accentuate the beauty, form and color of the plant within. Hand thrown pots for orchids and other plants will be available. Contact: (619) 886-8121 Email: [tombiggart@mac.com](mailto:tombiggart@mac.com) Website: [www.granitehillsorchids.com](http://www.granitehillsorchids.com)

### **Neal Biggart**

Neal Biggart has loved color and making things with natural materials all her life. After she retired, Neal studied ceramics, and together with her husband, established a home ceramics studio. She now makes enamel and ceramic jewelry, as well as ceramic dishes. Her style incorporates the Asian elements of color and line, but also emphasizes the beauty of natural materials like clay, copper, and glass. Contact: (619) 886-8121

### **Jason Sneddon, IB Crazy Coops**

Jason Sneddon, owner of IB Crazy Coops, has been building beautiful, yet simple, sturdy and extremely functional, custom, handmade chicken coops, aviaries and other animal structures for the last 5 years. They are the centerpieces of many gardens from San Diego to the Hollywood Hills and from backyard farms to mansions. In the works are a documentary on his "Crazy Coop" adventures and serving as a resident structure and poultry expert at a major San Diego event in May. His amazing coops and rare breed chickens are the "delight of his awesome clients!" Contact: (619) 730-0568, Website: [ibcrazycoops.com](http://ibcrazycoops.com). 🌻



### *The Garden of* **Ramon & Gloria Ross** **9227 Virginian Lane**

**T**he Ross garden was last seen on our 2005 garden tour. This year marks the fourth visit to this ever-changing, one-acre property with spectacular views, in one of Mt. Helix's earliest developed areas. The owners have lived in their historic 1927 Spanish style home for 30 years and have been expanding it and their landscaping ever since. As you enter the property, you will cross an expansive tile

terrace from where you can appreciate the view and the hillside below. Survey this one-acre slope and be reminded that it was once bare! The owners planted every one of the mature oaks, sycamores, Canary Island pines, alders, eucalyptus and palms. Now, step into the small Italian courtyard behind you with its palms and splashing fountain.

Walk across the terrace to your left to explore the newest addition, a shady, Japanese style garden with a restful retreat called an "azumaya." Pass lush ferns, a Buddha statue, and a "tsukubai," a traditional fountain with a bamboo water dripper. Continue down the steps to an inviting pond with many huge koi that are long time residents. Along your traverse of the property, you will pass a lovely rose garden and a massive planting of plumbago that is shaped often to form flowing mounds.

A colorful colony of buildings constructed over the years by the owners nestles on the opposite side of the yard. This whimsical village contains a tool shed, a woodshed, and features a playhouse that contains many cherished items, family photos and books from Gloria and Ramon's childhood. Take a peek inside and imagine spending the night as the owners have done. Also new since our last visit is a four-year-old vineyard of zinfandel and cabernet sauvignon grapes. As you make your way down the property you will pass an orchard of peach, pomegranate, persimmon and apple trees, as well as some newly planted Afghan pines.

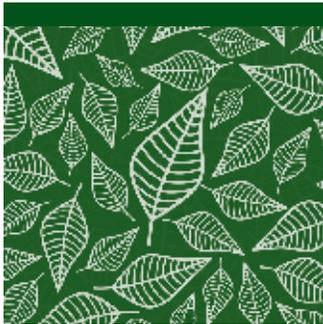
Replacing thirsty groundcover and the use of more organic materials have become new priorities for the owners. Some interesting drought tolerant choices are the use of small cuttings of *Aeonium haworthia* (pinwheel) and large *Agave attenuata* to outline the steps. Many other varieties of aloes and other succulents fill the garden.

On your way back up, notice the stone steps throughout the yard, built by the owners over the years as they developed

their property. Enjoy the canopy of sixteen year old king palms, windmill palms, and kentia palms. The theme of blue tiles blends the garden together from top to bottom. It is always captivating to visit a property that has been owned for so long by the same owners. We appreciate the generosity of the Rosses who have invited us to view the development of their unique garden over the last eighteen years.

### *The Art of* **Ely Dotseth**

Originally from the Bay Area, Ely Dotseth has been a potter/artist in La Mesa since 1986. Ely and her business partner, Sharon Patsko, opened Get Centered Clay Studio in 2008. Their studio offers classes in potter's wheel, sculpting techniques, and hand building. They also provide firing services and sell supplies for potters. Studio space is available for rent and for special events. Contact: (619) 667-7077; [www.getcenteredclay.com](http://www.getcenteredclay.com). 



### *The Garden of* **Bob & Holly Yarris** **10017 Bonnie Vista Drive**

**T**he garden of Bob and Holly Yarris demonstrates how a once lush and thirsty lawn, with subtropical shrubs and trees, can be transformed in just one year. The front yard has become an appealing, welcoming, water-wise and useful space. The Yarrises have lived in their 1968 home for 34 years. Their goal was to create a landscape that reflected and enhanced their home's art and décor; an intriguing collection from their travels to Santa Fe and Mexico. Conserving water and creating an area they could enjoy were also top priorities.

Many large palms and luxuriant bougainvillea are elements of the past, carefully worked into the new design. Two "After Dark" peppermint willows will eventually bring shade and make an inviting entrance to the paths that circle large mounds of mixed succulents and shrubs. Here you will see leptospermum, blue oat grass, *racena marginata*, leucospermum, bulbine, lantana and paddle plant. Walk past a splashing fountain to a stone bench that provides a focal point to survey the yard and the view of Mt. Helix. Large boulders frame the bench and tall, soft green *Senecio talinoides* surround it. *Grevillea* has been used extensively to camouflage the utility box in the corner.

Custom designed double iron gates, built by a Tecate metal craftsman, open to invite you to the front door. Enter the

shady garden under an extensive trellis of bougainvillea to view their stunning collection of Kafir lilies and camellias. Lights on the garage were made in Cabo San Lucas and the metal sculptures by the gate come from Palm Desert. With these elements and a new, warm paint color, the Yarrises have created a harmonious environment. This waterwise garden is irrigated with a subterranean drip system. The owners invite you to drive by after dark to enjoy and appreciate their night lighting.

Cross the driveway and continue down the west side of the house, past roses, vegetables, and citrus. Small, intimate patios are enhanced by large pots of sage, heavenly bamboo, bougainvillea and alstroemeria. The remaining patch of lawn belongs to their dog "Bailey." A colorful hedge of Spanish lavender outlines a large window. Notice the stag-horn fern carefully remounted for display by the door.

The Yarrises have created an appealing and well-kept backyard garden space with inviting seating areas to enjoy the impressive views to the Southwest. It will be exciting to watch the newly transformed front yard garden mature into a fulfillment of their vision.

### *The Art of* **Patti Chamberlin**

Working from her home studios in San Diego and Montana, Patti Chamberlin has been weaving using natural materials for over 20 years. Most recently she has been incorporating driftwood and found antlers into her weavings. She has received awards at the Del Mar Fair and her artwork is displayed in galleries throughout the western United States. Contact: [basketpatti@cox.net](mailto:basketpatti@cox.net) 