

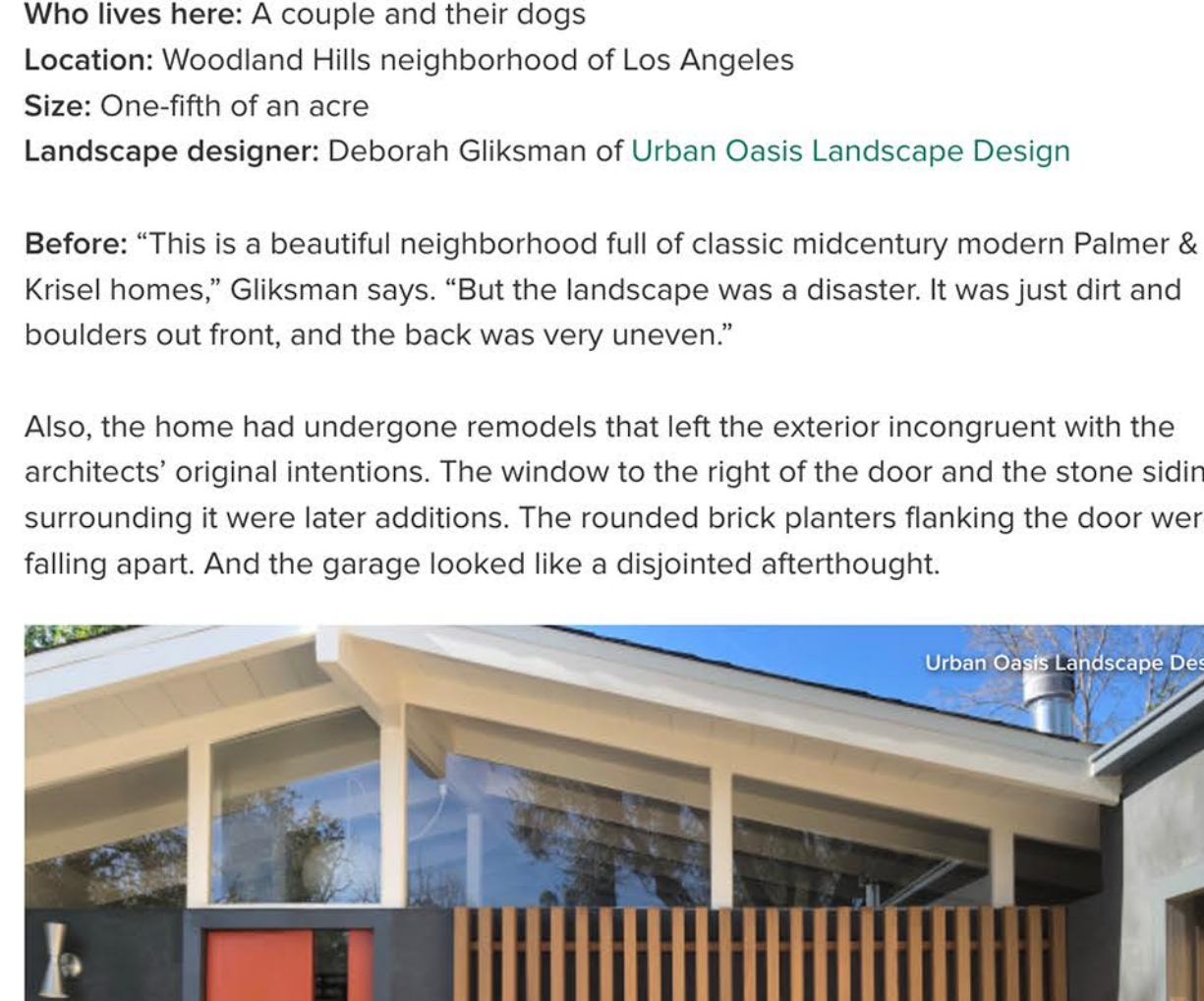
# Yard of the Week: Midcentury Makeover Brings a Home Back to Life

A landscape designer found on Houzz turned a Southern California yard into a relaxing space with earth-friendly features

**Becky Harris** 2 days ago  
Houzz Contributor. Hi there! I live in a 1940s cottage in Atlanta that I'll describe as "collected"...More

Save Comment 30 Like 89 Share

Beyond a few existing trees, this landscape in Southern California's San Fernando Valley was a blank slate. The homeowners, a couple with two dogs, found landscape designer Deborah Glikman on Houzz, then hired her to transform not only the yard but also the exterior of their classic midcentury house. As part of the remodel, the gutters were replaced, which gave Glikman the rare opportunity to direct the roof runoff water into two new rain gardens. The results of the renovation are refreshing curb appeal, a wildlife-attracting landscape and a yard full of serene spaces where the homeowners can relax and entertain.



Photos by Deborah Glikman

**Landscape of the Week**  
**Who lives here:** A couple and their dogs  
**Location:** Woodland Hills neighborhood of Los Angeles  
**Size:** One-fifth of an acre  
**Landscape designer:** Deborah Glikman of Urban Oasis Landscape Design

**Before:** "This is a beautiful neighborhood full of classic midcentury modern Palmer & Krisel homes," Glikman says. "But the landscape was a disaster. It was just dirt and boulders out front, and the back was very uneven."

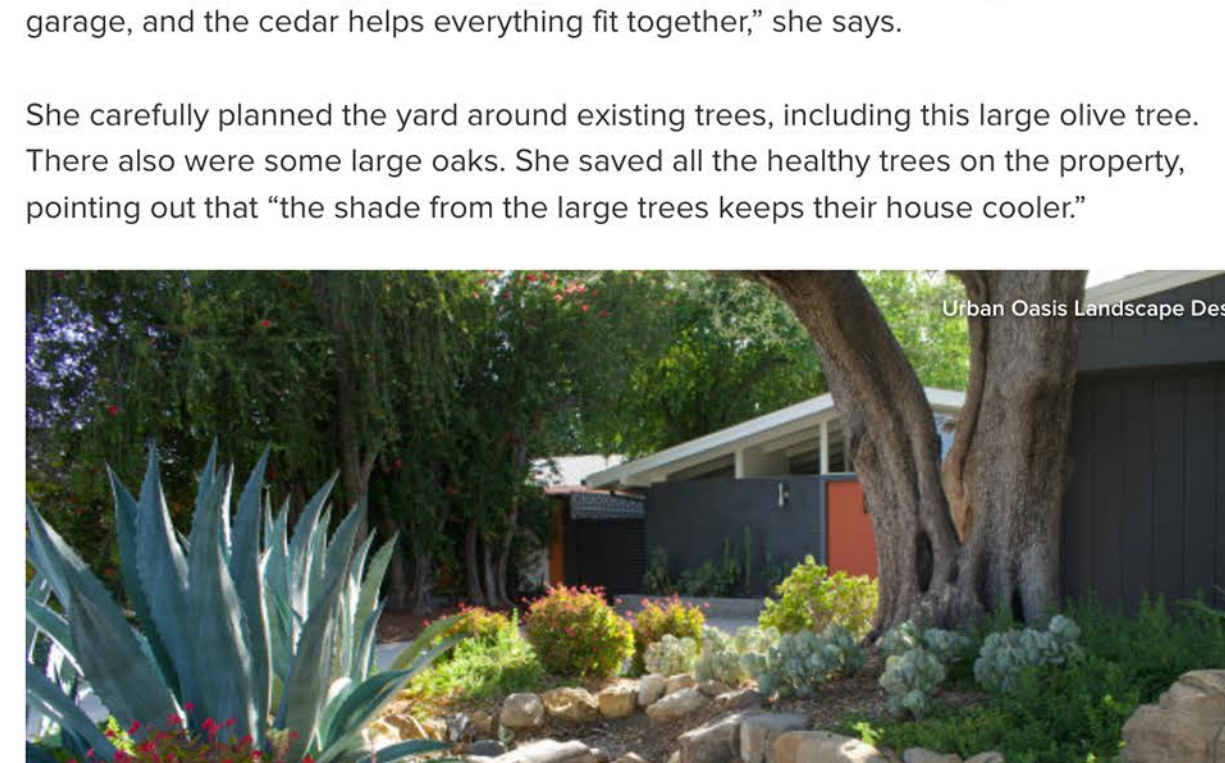
Also, the home had undergone remodels that left the exterior incongruent with the architects' original intentions. The window to the right of the door and the stone siding surrounding it were later additions. The rounded brick planters flanking the door were falling apart. And the garage looked like a disjointed afterthought.



**After:** Glikman removed updates from prior renovations that were not in keeping with the original architecture, such as the window next to the door and the stone veneer. The new exterior colors include a punch of orange on the front door and charcoal gray smooth stucco. She also added natural cedar screens to break up the facade.

New board-formed-concrete planters flank the front door. They contain a collection of exotic cactuses with shapes that provide contrast to the strict verticality of the new cedar screen behind them. Glikman used cactuses the homeowners already had and added new ones as well.

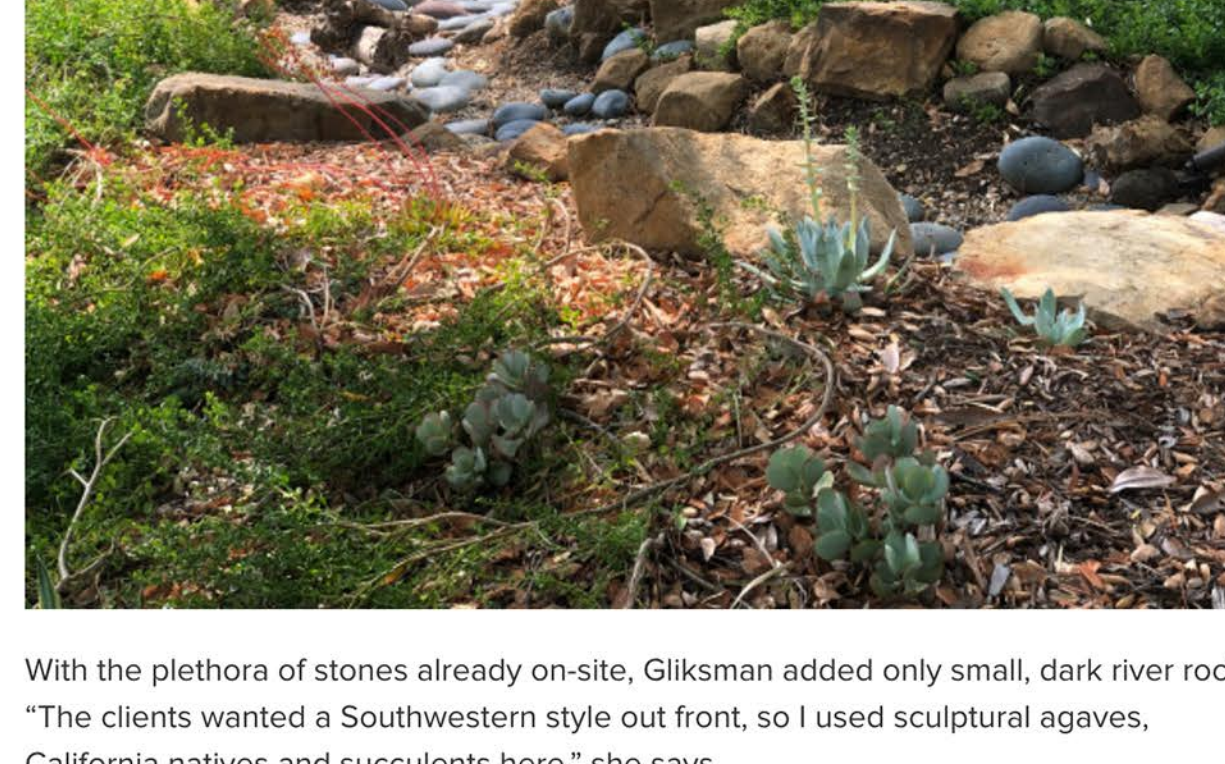
She crafted the house numbers out of polystyrene in a midcentury modern font and had them attached to the boards during the concrete installation. The result is that they are etched into the concrete.



Glikman used the same charcoal color on the garage and replaced the garage door with a cedar door. This gave the house and garage a cohesive look.

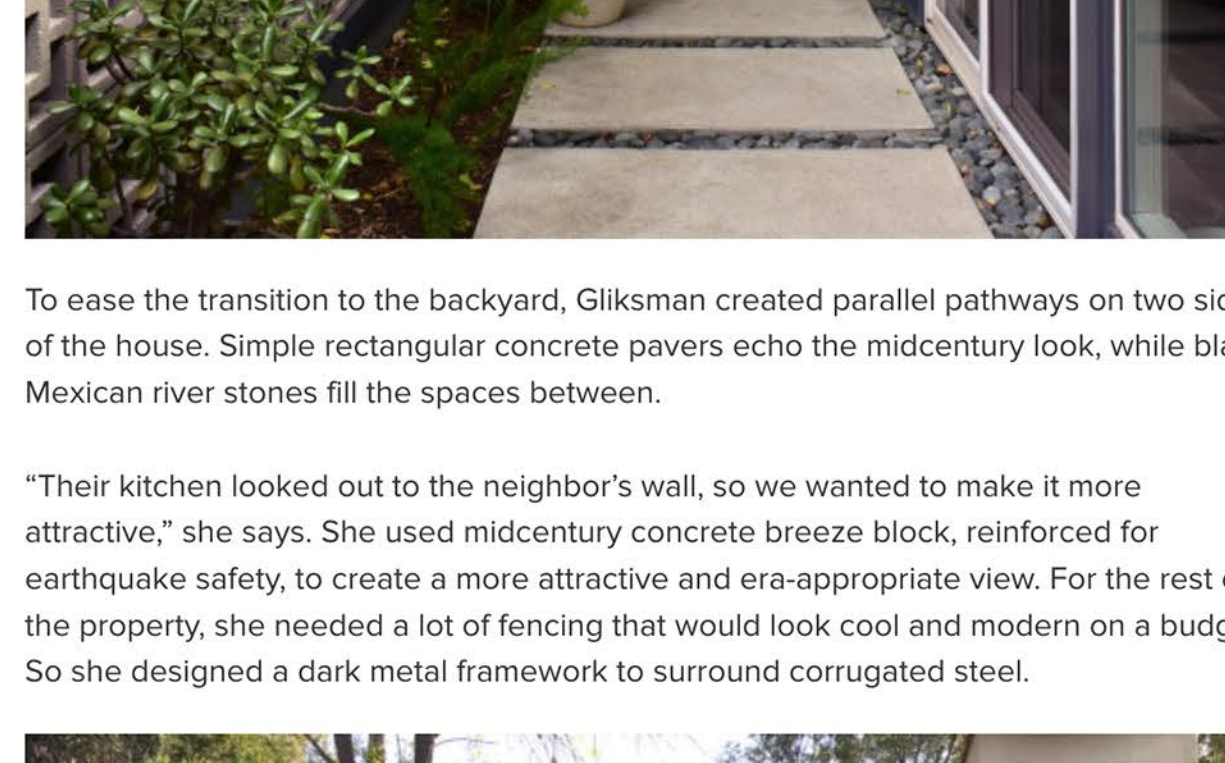
This photo was taken two years after the previous photo, with the landscape more filled in. One fun thing to note is that the cactus on the left has grown significantly since it was first planted. "I bought this as a cutting from someone to add to the homeowners' collection, and it's grown like crazy," Glikman says.

This photo was taken two years after the previous photo, with the landscape more filled in. One fun thing to note is that the cactus on the left has grown significantly since it was first planted. "I bought this as a cutting from someone to add to the homeowners' collection, and it's grown like crazy," Glikman says.



Glikman repeated the cedar slats on the garage. "There was a funky cantilever on the garage, and the cedar helps everything fit together," she says.

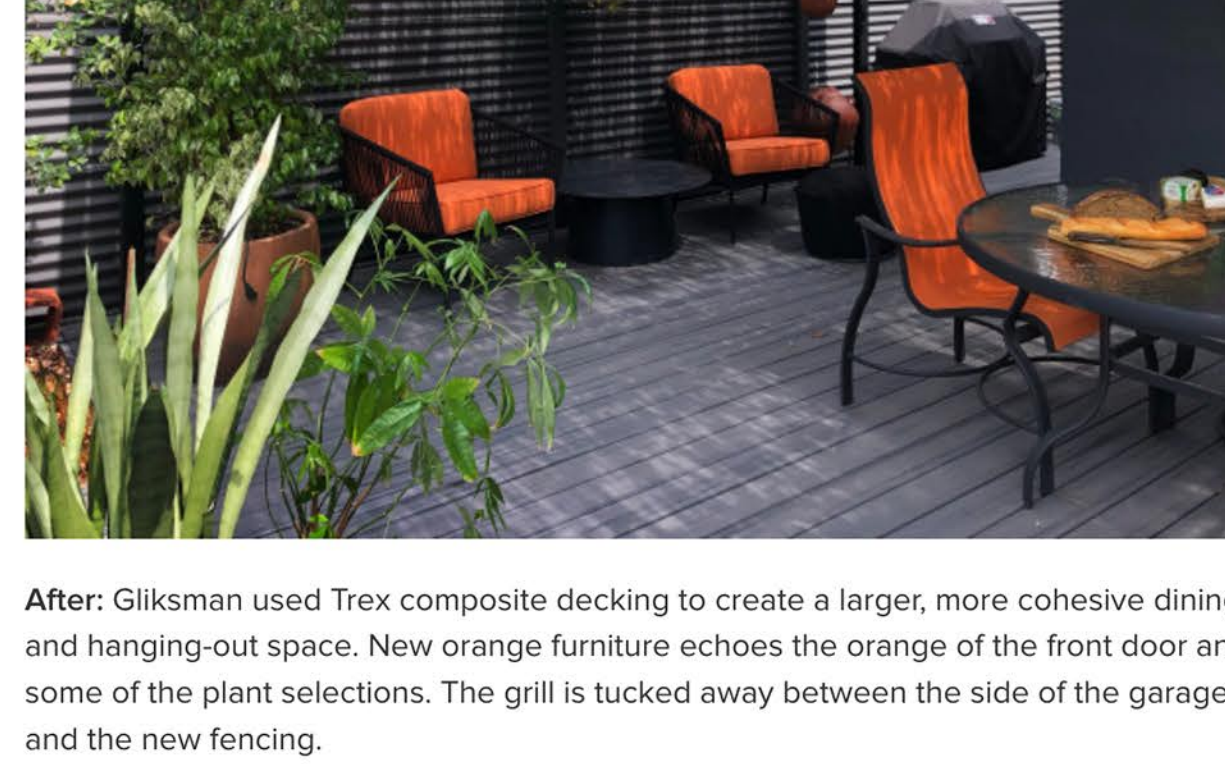
She carefully planned the yard around existing trees, including this large olive tree. There also were some large oaks. She saved all the healthy trees on the property, pointing out that "the shade from the large trees keeps their house cooler."



Glikman worked with the gutter installers to direct half the roof runoff water into this front yard rain garden and the other half to a second rain garden in the backyard. She dug a trench to serve as a dry creek, and filled it by reupsoiling all the existing boulders and stones on the site as well as some logs from the creek bed. She also added organic amendments, such as compost, to the sandy soil.

The runoff water is retained by the rain garden so that it can soak down into the earth, rather than running down the street into gutters and storm drains. The rain garden also catches some of the runoff water from the driveway.

### 15 Ways to Manage Excess Water in Your Landscape

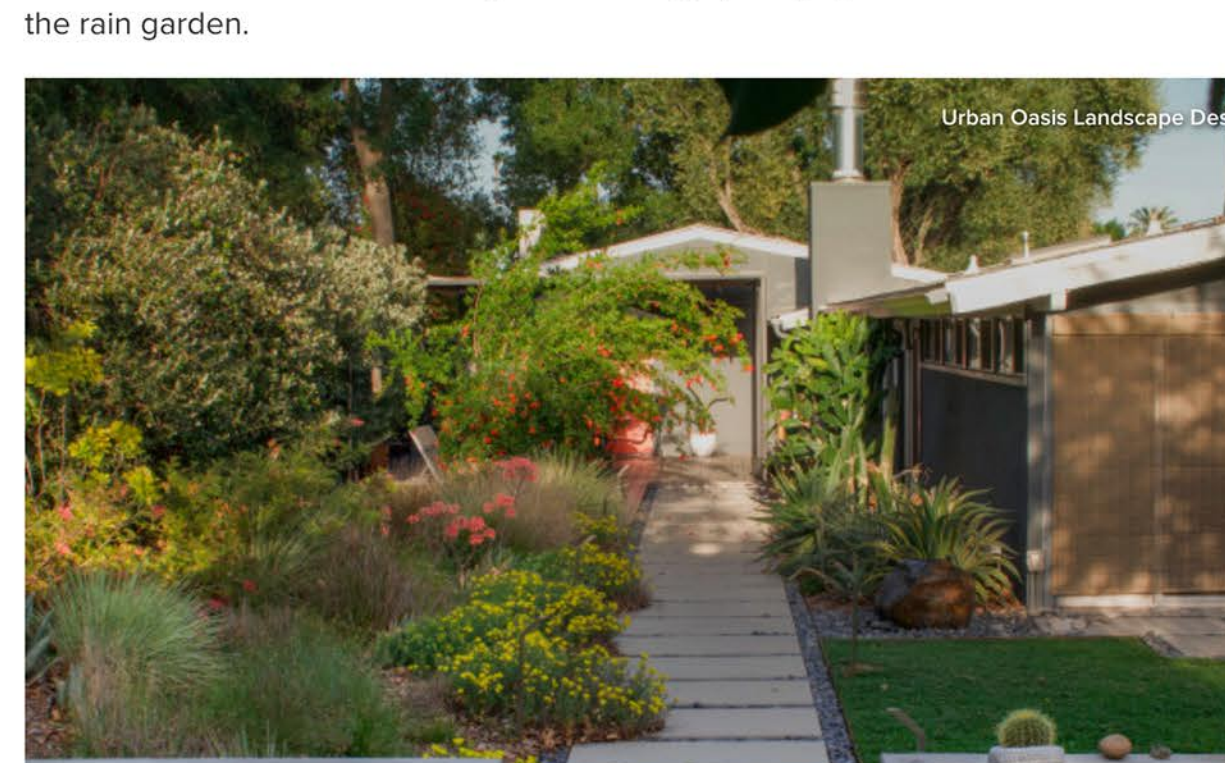


With the plethora of stones already on-site, Glikman added only small, dark river rocks. "The clients wanted a Southwestern style out front, so I used sculptural agaves, California natives and succulents here," she says.

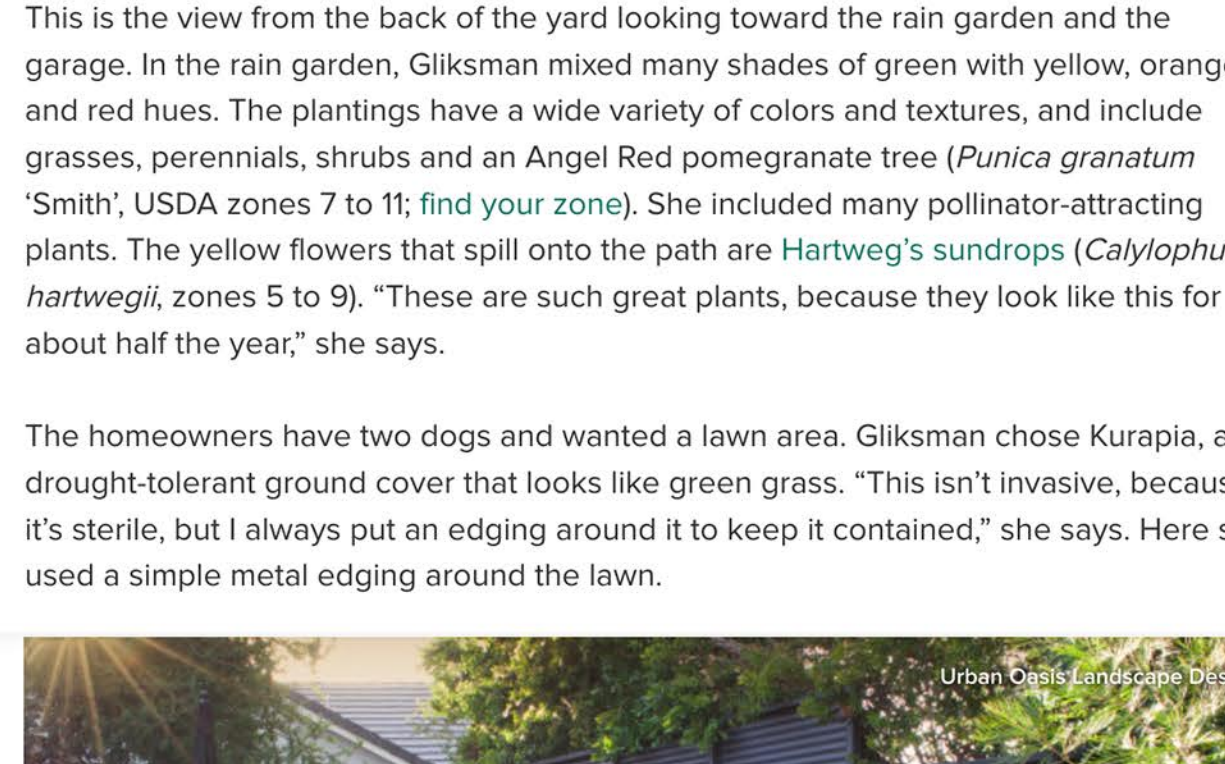


To ease the transition to the backyard, Glikman created parallel pathways on two sides of the house. Simple rectangular concrete pavers echo the midcentury look, while black Mexican river stones fill the spaces between.

"Their kitchen looked out to the neighbor's wall, so we wanted to make it more attractive," she says. She used midcentury concrete breeze block, reinforced for earthquake safety, to create a more attractive and era-appropriate view. For the rest of the property, she needed a lot of fencing that would look cool and modern on a budget. So she designed a dark metal framework to surround corrugated steel.

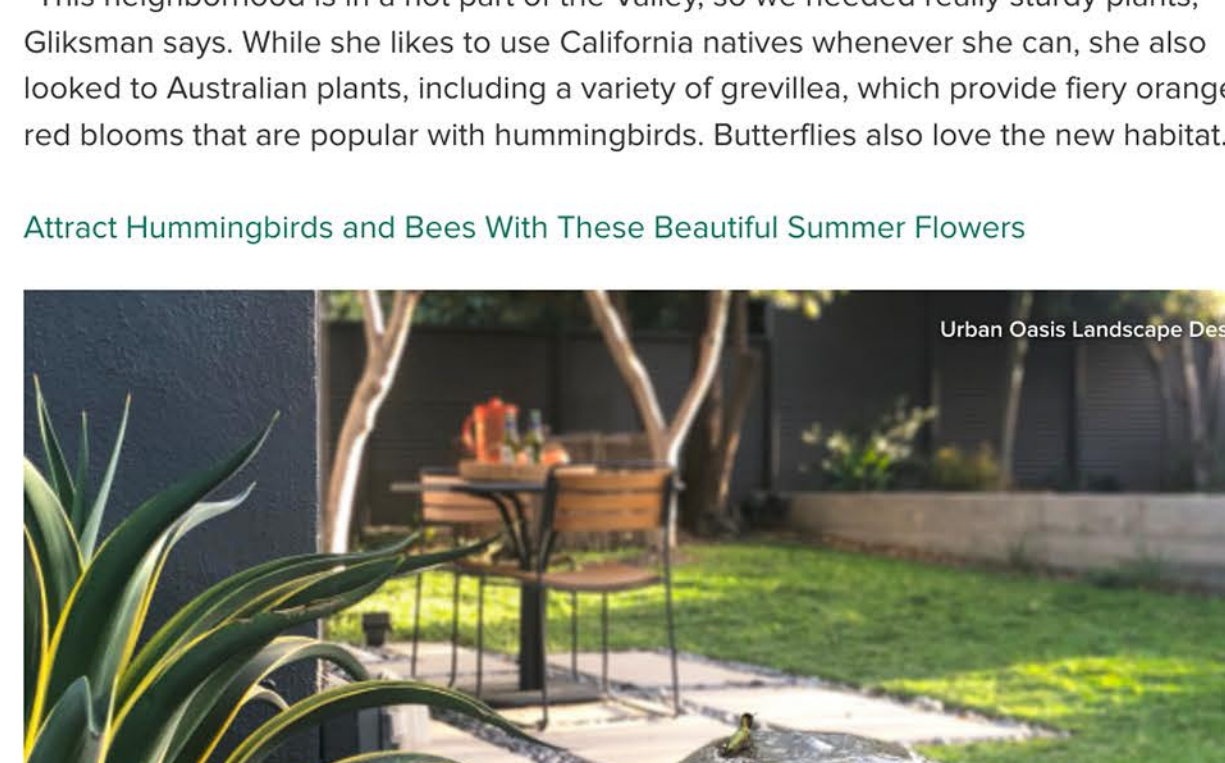


**Before:** This yard on the other side of the house was wider and offered a chance for more living space. The back of the garage served as a backdrop for a seating area.

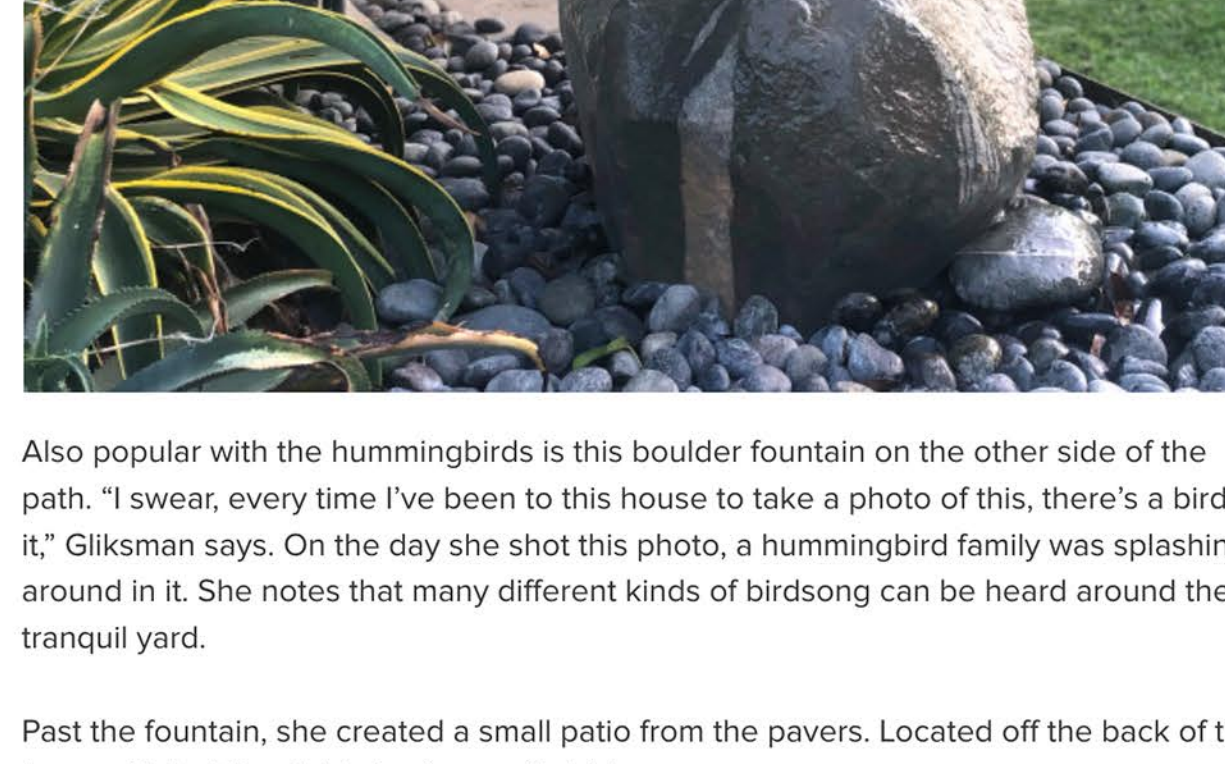


**After:** Glikman used Trex composite decking to create a larger, more cohesive dining and hanging-out space. New orange furniture echoes the orange of the front door and some of the plant selections. The grill is tucked away between the side of the garage and the new fencing.

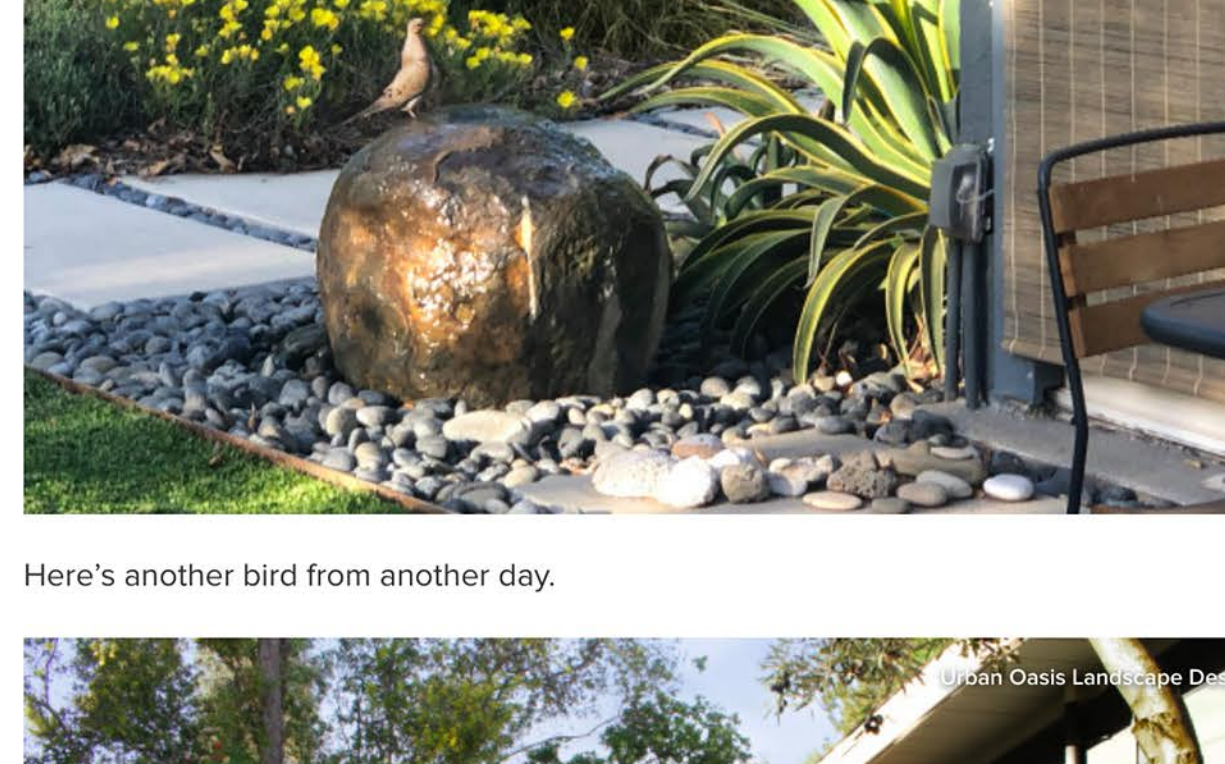
It gets really hot in the San Fernando Valley, so shade was a must. The designer installed a large steel pergola with a willow roof to protect the deck from the sun.



This is the view looking from the back of the garage down the side yard.



Down the path, Glikman designed a deck area for lounge chairs with an umbrella. Just beyond it is the second rain garden. The downspouts from the gutters are connected to a drain that runs underneath the path at an angle, bringing the roof's runoff water into the rain garden.



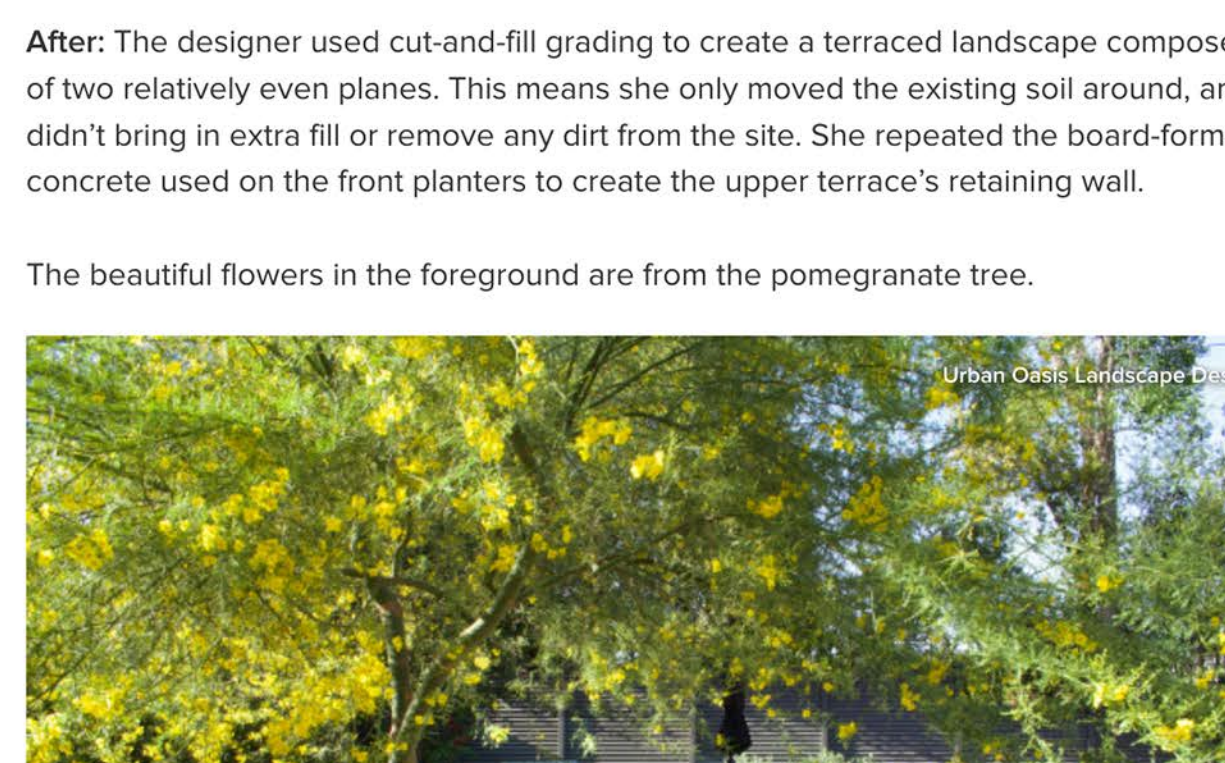
This is the view from the back of the yard looking toward the rain garden and the garage. In the rain garden, Glikman mixed many shades of green with yellow, orange and red hues. The plants have a wide variety of colors and textures, and include grasses, perennials, shrubs and an Angel Red pomegranate tree (*Punica granatum* 'Smith', USDA zones 7 to 11; find your zone). She included many pollinator-attracting plants. The yellow flowers that spill onto the path are Hartweg's sundrops (*Calylophus hartwegii*, zones 5 to 9). "These are such great plants, because they look like this for about half the year," she says.

The homeowners have two dogs and wanted a lawn area. Glikman chose Kurapia, a drought-tolerant ground cover that looks like green grass. "This isn't invasive, because it's sterile, but I always put an edging around it to keep it contained," she says. Here she used a simple metal edging around the lawn.



"This neighborhood is in a hot part of the Valley, so we needed really sturdy plants," Glikman says. While she likes to use California natives whenever she can, she also looked to Australian plants, including a variety of grevillea, which provide fiery orange-red blooms that are popular with hummingbirds. Butterflies also love the new habitat.

### Attract Hummingbirds and Bees With These Beautiful Summer Flowers



Also popular with the hummingbirds is this boulder fountain on the other side of the path. "I swear, every time I've been to this house to take a photo of this, there's a bird in it," Glikman says. On the day she shot this photo, a hummingbird family was splashing around in it. She notes that many different kinds of birds can be heard around the tranquil yard.

Past the fountain, she created a small patio from the pavers. Located off the back of the house, it's just the right size for a cafe table.



Here's another bird from another day.



This view across the yard shows how the new fencing creates a nice dark backdrop for the plants.



**Before:** "The backyard was so uneven, it was kind of unusable," Glikman says.



**After:** The designer used cut-and-fill grading to create a terraced landscape composed of two relatively even planes. This means she only moved the existing soil around, and didn't bring in extra fill or remove any dirt from the site. She repeated the board-formed concrete used on the front planters to create the upper terrace's retaining wall.

The beautiful flowers in the foreground are from the pomegranate tree.



Most of the upper terrace remains a blank slate, because the homeowners plan to add an art studio here someday. For now, Glikman used pea gravel for the surface, created an inviting shady seating area in the corner and added a delightful 'Desert Museum' palo verde (*Parkinsonia* x 'Desert Museum', Zone 8).

### More on Houzz

- Read more stories about patios
- Browse thousands of patio photos
- Hire a landscape contractor
- Shop for your outdoor spaces

Save Comment 30 Like 89 Share

See 30 comments