

Stay at

2020

# Home and Garden

by Leslie Dinaberg

## OUR ANNUAL INTERIOR AND EXTERIOR DESIGN EDITION

WHEN HOME MEANS MORE THAN EVER

**W**elcome to the *Santa Barbara Independent's* annual Home and Garden special issue.

With all due respect to the very serious health and economic issues facing us right now, finding the joy and beauty in everyday life is also so important — maybe now more than ever, when our worlds have become so much more insular.

As Alice Walker wrote, “Whenever you are creating beauty around you, you are restoring your own soul.”

We hope you’ll find some restoration and inspiration in these pages. From practical stories about solar panels and ADUs to garden advice from experts and creative musings from some of our town’s top architects and designers, there’s a whole lot here to help light your creative spark or just inspire you to dream about a new project.

Enjoy!

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stories at [independent.com/hg2020](https://independent.com/hg2020).



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COURTESY

## Advice to Grow By

**W**orking to cultivate home gardeners who want to learn about soil, sustainable landscaping, plant and tree care, and growing their own fruits and vegetables, the UC Master Gardeners of Santa Barbara County are 163 trained and 74 currently active volunteers trained to share their knowledge with the community.

They come from all walks of life. “My class had students just out of UCSB and retirees in their seventies,” said Master Gardener Amy Mayfield. “We all loved our crash course in all things related to plants from top professors from UC Davis and Riverside.”

Once they’ve gained some garden knowledge, helping others is a key component of the Master Gardener program. “Volunteering in our community is a great connection to people and plants,” said Mayfield. “My go-to place to volunteer is the community helpline because every question makes me use my brain and research skills to find an answer. I love helping at Harry Potter night at the Public Library, too.”

While the group is currently observing physical distancing, they are also “encouraging the public to prioritize mental and physical health by gardening, and volunteers are still standing by to answer questions through helplines,” said Danica Taber, the Master Gardener Program Coordinator. Volunteers are available to help by phone ([805] 893-3485) or email ([anrmgsb@ucanr.edu](mailto:anrmgsb@ucanr.edu)), and Taber suggested submitting photos along with questions. “Pictures of the problem and details about your plant’s history and environment, like watering and fertilizing schedules, daily sun exposure, and location on your property, are helpful.”

Not all problems are easy to solve: Earlier this year, the Santa Barbara Zoo’s ponytail palms (which are more closely related to yuccas than palms) turned black at the tops. “The problem? Sprinklers in the field behind them would hit them with water on windy days,” said Taber. “This was not an obvious diagnosis to make for the zoo horticultural staff, because sprinklers weren’t aiming at the ponytail palms, and wind is an invisible, irregular force.”

The program, which is part of the UCSB Extension Program and is for anyone interested in a thriving garden, is designed to “empower home gardeners to help themselves by sharing knowledge and resources that are important for their particular gardening challenges,” said Taber.

Currently in the process of adapting to providing online education, the Master Gardeners offer intensive, practical courses on horticulture, soil and plant nutrition, pests and diseases and their control, plant management, and diagnosis of plant problems, as well as various public outreach events. Said Mayfield, “It’s the best bang for your buck if you like people, plants, and knowledge!”

See [cesantabarbara.ucanr.edu/Master\\_Gardener](http://cesantabarbara.ucanr.edu/Master_Gardener).

For a complete list of what to plant now, see [independent.com/hg2020](http://independent.com/hg2020).

# Big Ideas for Small Spaces

**G**ardens are magical in any season, but during this seemingly endless season of COVID-19’s “sheltering in place” restrictions, there’s never been a better time to have a garden to escape to in Santa Barbara.

No matter how much space you have to work with, authors Isa Bird Hendry Eaton (a landscape designer) and Jennifer Blaise Kramer (a lifestyle writer) have collaborated on a book that’s here to help. *Small Garden Style: A Design Guide for Outdoor Rooms and Containers* is an excellent resource to help you create a design framework to bring your garden dreams to life.

“It’s all about being really encouraging, really accessible no matter what size space you have,” said Eaton. “Even if you’re doing just a couple containers by your front door or your porch, everyone deserves to have a little garden in their home, and why not make it something that really feels like you and bring your individual aesthetic?”

A key component of the book is helping you figure out what your individual aesthetic is. There’s a really fun quiz that kick-starts the book with a series of questions that help you define your style.

Are you a Clean Minimalist who starts your morning routine with black coffee and a cold shower? Or is your style more Bold Eclectic, with a black leather Eames lounge chair as your favorite place to relax at home? Perhaps Organic Modern is more your vibe if your ideal mode of transportation is hiking shoes, as you head for the mountains. Or is it a Jeep Wagoneer with wood paneling that reflects your New Traditional style?

“Then we walk you through these different gardens,” said Eaton, acknowledging that many have crossover styles. “We take you through the design framework behind how to put a container together, how to design an outdoor room, so you can understand the design theory behind doing a really dramatic container.”

By the time you’re at the nursery picking plants, the vast choices are not so overwhelming. “It’s like a little mini design school for the reader,” said Eaton.

The authors embarked on the project when they wouldn’t find another garden-meets-design book. “We wanted this to feel like a design book for your outdoors,” said Kramer. Her own garden was designed by Eaton, who focuses on layering. “But not just in a pot and not just in a garden,” said Kramer. “It’s the whole look, it’s the whole room, and it’s thinking about your outdoor space just like you would your indoor space.”

Their goal was to make the book be “fun and beautiful and inspirational, but also very practical and useful,” said Eaton. “A container is a miniature garden; it’s the best place to start. There’s a little bit of trial and error. Read the book, then go to the nursery on Saturday morning and try it out — you don’t have to start designing the entire garden; you can start with a couple of containers. Now’s a great time to plant!”

*Small Garden Style* can be purchased at Chaucer’s Books (3321 State St.) or [amazon.com](http://amazon.com).



LEE LA CYD

### Authors

Isa Bird Hendry Eaton  
and Jennifer Blaise Kramer  
Discuss *Small Garden Style*



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# Premier Party Planner's Home Entertaining Tips

**W**hile wow-worthy fundraising events may be in our rearview mirror for a while, anyone who's ever attended the Pacific Pride Foundation's Royal Ball, the Community Environmental Council's Green Gala, or the Bellosguardo Foundation's inaugural *Great Gatsby*-themed soiree knows what a thoughtful, creative touch that Merryl Brown and her team bring to every event. While we're all so eager to have our friends and family once again able to join us in our humble abodes, here is some entertaining advice from the expert.

**How do you plan a small house party?** I sit and I think about who is coming and who I want to be there and who will interact well with whom. Then I think about the flow of the party and what it's going to feel like.

It starts with the invitation: What's it going to tell you? How are you supposed to dress? Is it going to be a dinner? Are you

(so people aren't sharing germs). If you go online, there's a million different recipes.

If you are limited in your budget, you can have custom cocktail napkins done very reasonably. Have some little quote or some funny little saying, or some sort of image. I did a memorial one time, and there were lyrics from a song that the person loved on the napkin, and it was meaningful.

**What if I don't have a bar?** You can create a bar. You can take a six-foot table and put a linen on it; you can get some PVC and you can cut four pieces exactly the same size, and you raise that table up a little bit so that the front bar's a little higher; you put another six-foot table behind it. And then you display your bottles; you display your artifacts; you make some cool things. Everybody should have a hot-glue gun — what you can do with a hot-glue gun is a beautiful thing. You can find fun stuff [Michaels, Art From Scrap, and Art Essentials are her go-to places] and make cool things that are in the theme of the party.

You have to get creative and have fun with it, and don't be so nervous that it's not going to be good enough. When you make an effort and you have fun with it and are not all nervous and stressed about it, people are psyched. They just want to have a nice time and they want to have a new experience and they want to be a part of something meaningful.

I think people really want to connect. The more that you give people things to connect about, to talk about, the more fun people are going to have.

**What about the tablescapes?** I try to layer things. For example, if you're setting the table, it's not just about the china and the linens and the glassware and the flatware and the floral. Those things are part of it, but there has to be something more, those little lovely surprises that make things pop. Have the beautiful calligraphed menu tucked into the napkin and this beautiful flower, and then they lift the napkin up and there's a lovely little fortune or some little surprise, some little special poem or whatever it is.

**What's your most critical piece of advice?** The single most important thing when you do an event is just to do it with love, infuse it with love.

**I can't wait to go to your coronavirus containment party.** I want to throw that party. You're going to have to come with your own hand-painted mask and your own gloves that you created yourself. We'll all carry a six-foot scepter pointed out, so that everybody is six feet away from you, and then it's a dance party in a great big space where everybody is far apart. And there's no buffet at all; everybody gets their own individual food when they walk in the door.

**See you there!**

See [merrylbrownerevents.com](http://merrylbrownerevents.com).



COURTESY PHOTOS



Jill and Michael Murray

## Solarizing Made Simpler

**A**s everyone shelters in place, our home energy use is going through the roof. Why not use that roof to harness the power of the sun to create energy?

If the nuts and bolts of researching, purchasing, and installing a solar panel system seem overwhelming, the Community Environmental Council (CEC) offers a group purchasing model to help homeowners install solar electricity through a streamlined and hassle-free process, at a discounted price.

As of March, CEC programs have served almost 800 homes, according to April Price, the organization's renewable energy program senior manager. The programs run for a limited time to make sure that the recommended vendors and products are fully vetted.

"In this ever-changing market, we want to make sure that we're working with companies that are currently doing well financially and offering solid services and products," Price explained. "Every time we run one of these programs, we will negotiate a discounted price. A local committee reviews the vendor applications, and each time we run

### CEC Makes Sun Power Easy and More Affordable

a program, we come at it with a clean slate to determine who we're going to partner with."

This summer, CEC will run a Solarize Ventura and a Solarize Santa Barbara program for residential customers

and is also relaunching the Solarize Nonprofit program, which helps nonprofit organizations install photovoltaic solar systems, free of charge.

Pairing your solar power with energy storage is becoming a trend and is an option that is also available through the CEC programs. "There are two reasons why people consider pairing their solar with energy storage," Price said. "The most straightforward one is you want to have power when the electricity goes in the event of a public-safety shutoff or for any other reason. The second is there's a definite financial savings for most customers that pair their solar and storage."

If installing solar is on your wish list, the federal tax credit available for residential solar systems provides a great incentive to do it sooner rather than later. Systems installed before the end of 2020 have a 26 percent tax credit, which goes down to 22 percent in 2021 and disappears in 2022.

See [cecsb.org/go-solar](http://cecsb.org/go-solar).

### Dishing With Merryl Brown, Event Designer Extraordinaire

and that everything is clean and tidy. Make lots of space on your counter if you're having a caterer. I'm a big believer in that it's really hard for people to cook, make food, and be able to entertain their guests simultaneously.

If you want to cook, then have some extra help in the house. You can always enlist people who can take some of the burden off of you, so you aren't stressed. That's probably the single most important thing: The host or hostess really leads the mood. If a person is really stressed out when they're entertaining, I think it really kills the mood of the party.

**And when the party starts?** It's important to have a bar that people can get to right away and get their drinks. I think it's really fun to have a couple of fun, interesting drinks and create a drink menu that you can put on your bar. Get interesting glassware and have interesting things that you can put in the drinks: edible flowers and interesting ice cubes where you invent something inside of them, glowing straws, or metal straws.

There's all different kinds of things that you can use to make your drinks look and feel great — and it becomes a point of conversation.

You want to make sure to give that to people, particularly people that don't know each other. You can also have a person with a tray passing drinks if you have a bigger party, to take pressure off the bar.

My favorite way to entertain is to tray-pass hors d'oeuvres and keep everything really neat and tidy





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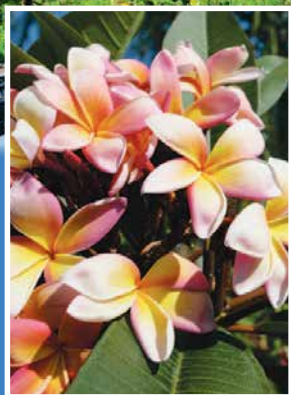
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JIM BARTSCH PHOTOS



## Is an ADU for You?

**W**ith people spending more time working and schooling at home these days, adding an accessory dwelling unit (ADU) is definitely something to consider. The process got even easier in 2020, when new California laws went into effect to allow small second residential units on single-family lots and on multifamily zoned lots.

"We are seeing a trend of more new home projects, including ADUs, as part of their master plan," explained Ryan Cullinen, director of pre-construction at Allen Construction, which has several such projects in the works. "We have not seen any dramatic changes in demand recently, although I expect a larger demand for home offices and general home refreshing now that so many are spending more time than ever in their homes." He explained that the standard ADU can either be detached, attached, or repurposed existing space in the home and can be up to 1,200 square feet in size.

"Most units are being designed for family or rental units with an end goal of retirement living," he said. "I find many longtime homeowners who decide to build an ADU treat it as

the miniature version of the dream house they wish they had. This is often because they plan to retire into it or have other family members live in it. When you have limited space, it forces creativity to be able to accomplish the needs you take for granted in your larger house."

### Allen Construction's Ryan Cullinen Discusses Granny-Flat Rules

Originally known as "granny flats," today's accessory dwelling units take different structural forms. They can be garage conversions, units placed over the garage,

stand-alone units, attic or basement conversions, or units otherwise attached to the main house. They are allowed to have full kitchens and bathrooms and will not be required to have a utility hookup separate from that of the main house. They can be rented, and most likely will be, but cannot be sold separately from the main dwelling.

The first step is to identify if it's feasible to build an ADU within your zoning restrictions and whether the investment makes sense for you. "An architect or planning specialist can verify your zoning restrictions and help play out a concept to get preliminary pricing," said Cullinen. "You can understand costs by speaking with a contractor who has a résumé building multiple different types of ADUs."

ADUs do still need to go through Santa Barbara's design review and permitting process. "There are many nuances to what your structure will be required to have, such as fire sprinklers, set-back requirements, and off-street parking," said Cullinen. "The best thing you can do to expedite the process is get a professional with experience involved early. This limits your chances of any delays from incomplete submittals and keeps the building departments happy when they are very busy."





COURTESY PHOTOS



## The Original Garden Wise Guy

**"N**obody ever says it's too easy to take care of my garden," laughed landscape architect Billy Goodnick, host of City TV's popular *Garden Wise* series.

His approach to working with clients is straightforward. "I'm a service provider," he said. "My attitude is not that you've hired some high-end person and you're lucky to have me. I try to design as egolessly as possible. If I step over the bounds and they need to rein me in, that's fine because I'm just there to provide a service. I know about this stuff, and they don't."

After working for City of Santa Barbara Parks and Recreation for more than 20 years, Goodnick learned that "most park planting is about getting the most cluck for your buck out of the site." He applies that same philosophy to working with clients and teaching classes for home gardeners, which he does around the country. "I always start with a slide that says we have three goals: Make it beautiful, make it useful, make it sustainable — and those are the three touchstones for me."

A natural entertainer and raconteur, Goodnick began his career as a musician and still performs as the drummer for King Bee. His sense of humor is evident from his lecture titles: *Life After Lawns*; *How to Kill Your Lawn Without Using Napalm*; *Gone with the Wind: What to do with Your Drought-Stricken Lawn*; and *Crimes Against Horticulture: When Bad Taste Meets Power Tools*.

"I have a monstrous ego, and I like to see people nodding and laughing because it's edutainment," said Goodnick. "Somebody once said, 'You could charge a two-drink minimum for your lectures.'"

After some initial conversations with clients, Goodnick uses a website called PlantMaster to provide a big list of plants that meet their criteria. "You're stocking the pantry," he tells them. "You don't know what the meal is — you just went to Whole Foods with a \$500 gift card and threw everything into the basket that you like. I'll figure out how to turn it into a meal."

It really comes down to what the customer likes and what will work with the site. Though he recognizes most clients don't have Oprah's budget, he does ask them to pretend they won the Publishers Clearing House sweepstakes in the beginning. "Let's design as if money is no object, and let's explore all of the different things that could happen here," he explained. "There may be a great idea, without being too terribly constrained at first, that we can simplify or downsize to make it less expensive later."

He sees his role as a problem solver, and he is happy when gardens are being used as designed a year or so later. He's also satisfied when plant choices succeed. "There's that whole biological side of landscape architecture and not mixing it with other plants that want twice as much water and spacing them properly so you don't end up with plants colliding into each other," he explained. "I'm trying to make it easy on them, make it fit their lifestyle, and also be drop-dead gorgeous."

See [billygoodnick.com](http://billygoodnick.com) and [waterwisesb.org/gardenwise.wwsb](http://waterwisesb.org/gardenwise.wwsb).



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