

ORANGE COUNTY

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HOME

DECOR | FURNISHINGS | GARDEN | ENTERTAINING

Wet
& wild

WATER ELEMENTS UNITED WITH NATURE

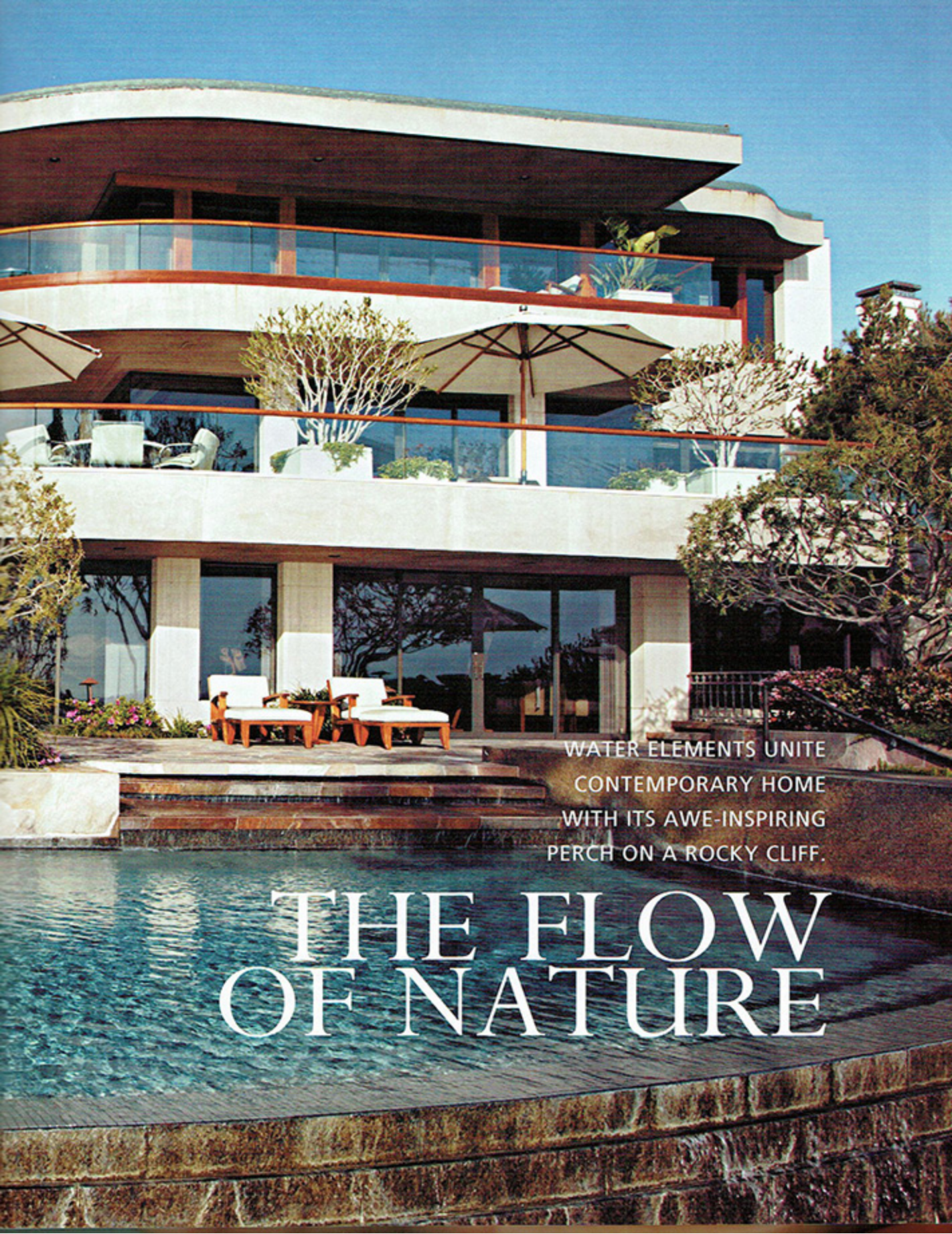
HOT NEW CHOICES IN BARBECUES

LIVING IN COTO DE CAZA

A photograph of a modern, multi-story house with curved architectural lines and a swimming pool. The house features large windows and a balcony with a glass railing. In the foreground, there is a swimming pool with a stone coping. A wooden deck with lounge chairs and a small table is situated next to the pool. The background is filled with lush greenery and trees. The sky is clear and blue.

Cover Story

Curved lines, water elements
and teak trim and furniture
evoke nautical images.



WATER ELEMENTS UNITE
CONTEMPORARY HOME
WITH ITS AWE-INSPIRING
PERCH ON A ROCKY CLIFF.

THE FLOW OF NATURE



STORY BY JENNIFER J. BUSH • PHOTOGRAPHY BY CHAS METIVIER

In traditional Japanese architecture, a home and its surrounding environment share an intimate relationship. Harmony between them allows for a smooth transition between spaces.

This design philosophy provided the foundation for a contemporary-style estate situated on a rocky cliff overlooking the ocean in Corona del Mar.

"There's a connection from the entry gate all the way to the ocean," said Daniel Stewart, landscape architect for the project.

Water elements, including a pool and spa set in a magnificent location, play an essential role in uniting the spaces and capturing the drama of the setting.

In the front courtyard, water from the fountain runs into an adjacent koi pond and stream that flows toward the home. Conceptually the water appears to flow under the house, then reappear in the rear, where it flows toward a terraced spillway into the pool, for its final journey over the infinity edge toward the vast expanse of the ocean beyond.

"The source of the water is at the fountain, a man-made sculptural element that ties in with the contemporary architecture of the home," Stewart said. The San Clemente-based landscape architect used back-lit stacked glass and flamed granite in a



The granite blocks in the spa waterfall, above, mimic the ocean rocks beyond, at top.

block pattern repeated from the adjacent Asian-influenced teak gates to create the fountain's form.

"The serenity of the garden has a Zen-like quality to it," he said. Water trickles along a stone path surrounded by bonsai juniper trees, bamboo, azaleas and camellias. Soft, feathery mondo grass contrasts with the natural stone.

The depth and care evident in the exterior design reflects the collaboration between Stewart and architect Fred Briggs. The Monarch Beach architect studied the relationship between Japanese



A tall ship sails outside Newport Harbor, punctuating the already spectacular ocean view.

gardens and architecture extensively during his 50-year career. His work has been influenced by American architects Frank Lloyd Wright and Charles Greene and Henry Greene, as well as Japanese architect Toyo Ito, he said.

His design for the Japanese-style garden in the courtyard at the Corona del Mar estate adds a sense of entry for the 12,000-square-foot home. Instead of immediately exposing the front door, he provided a teak gate, which opens toward the fountain. The garden prolongs the entry experience for guests.

The concept of water flowing toward the home follows the ancient principles of feng shui, Briggs said, by symbolizing prosperity flowing into the home.

"It's easy to be inspired by Fred's architecture,"

Stewart said.

Briggs' drawings reveal the complexity of the tri-level estate and guesthouse, located on the pie-shaped lot, which measures only 25 feet across at the street and spreads to 160 feet at the cliff's edge. Limited access added to the difficulty of building the home, which took almost four years to complete.

A specialist in "soft" contemporary architecture, Briggs rarely adds curves to his plans, but remains open to the influences of each homesite.

"The first curve I added in this plan was in the guesthouse," Briggs said. Curved, sliding glass doors extended the ocean view, he said. Soft curves were then repeated along the roofline, balconies and the infinity edge of the pool.

Stand on the upper balcony, your hands grasping



Curved lines in the landscaping, pool design and guest room below, at right, enforce the design theme.





From the third-floor terrace you can see Newport Harbor to the north and south to Laguna Beach.







Water cascades down steps into the infinity pool, which blends with the ocean at sunset.

the curved, gleaming teak railing, and you are transported to the cresting bow of a fine yacht at sea, your eyes searching the ocean beyond.

Careful choice of materials connects the water elements to the rocky horizon. A flamed granite monolith wall anchors the curves of the pool to the site, he said. A round spa with a block-patterned waterfall, situated on the opposite end of the pool, was elevated to capture the view.

"The pool is spectacular at night," Stewart said. "The reflection from a light inside the pool creates a line of blue fire where the water spills over the edge."

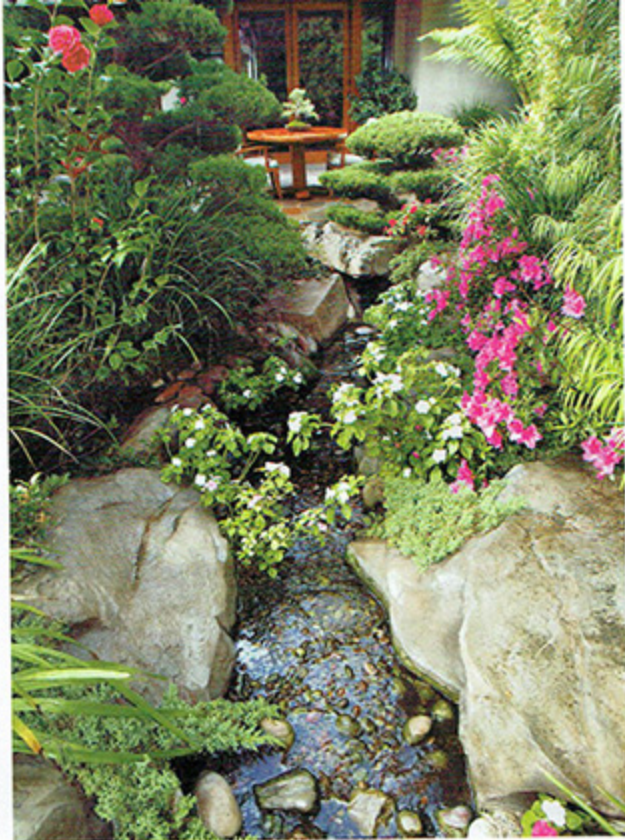
By day, the 1-inch-square mosaic tiles in a neutral gray add a shimmer to the infinity edge.

Briggs' unusual use of form was repeated again in the layers of honed and green granite, which serve as a backdrop for the 10-foot-long, outdoor gas fireplace. A 6-inch space between the fireplace and the backdrop allows the reflective stone to glow at night.

The homeowners chose to keep the existing trees on the property, including the eucalyptus trees near the cliff's edge and a giant New Zealand



The owner of this Corona del Mar home found this Asian carving, left, and a fitting spot for it was incorporated into the landscape. The beautiful teak furniture, opposite page, is set for sunset dining poolside.



Christmas tree on the side of the property. A barbecue unit was built around this tall, flowering tree. Australian tea trees with open, lacy branches were added to frame the ocean view on each side of the pool.

Careful plant selection enhanced the Japanese influence throughout the property. A 120-year-old, 3-foot-tall bonsai Japanese Mugo pine with a 20½-inch trunk, moss-lined steps and trained espaliered junipers that trail the wall of the private guesthouse carry the Japanese garden theme from the front courtyard to the rear of the home.

Briggs' subterranean placement of the guesthouse on the lower terrace allows guests to enjoy the ocean view without disrupting the panoramic views from the main house. Decorated with an Asian theme, the doors of the guesthouse open to a patio with teak furniture and a giant Buddha statue.

A lawn on this lower terrace provides a play area for the owner's golden retriever. Stepping stones lead down to a small hidden seating area, a vantage point for ocean viewing. There, the cliff drops sharply to the crashing waves and rocks below.

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The teak entrance, above, is made like a wooden mosaic and opens to the wall fountain, made with granite and glass.

Above left, water begins flowing from a wall fountain just inside the entrance gate and becomes a stream leading to the koi pond. At right, koi more than 2 feet long share the pond with smaller goldfish.



RESOURCES

- **Architect** – Fred Briggs, Monarch Beach (949) 499-8024
- **Landscape architect** – Daniel Stewart, San Clemente (949) 361-9388

