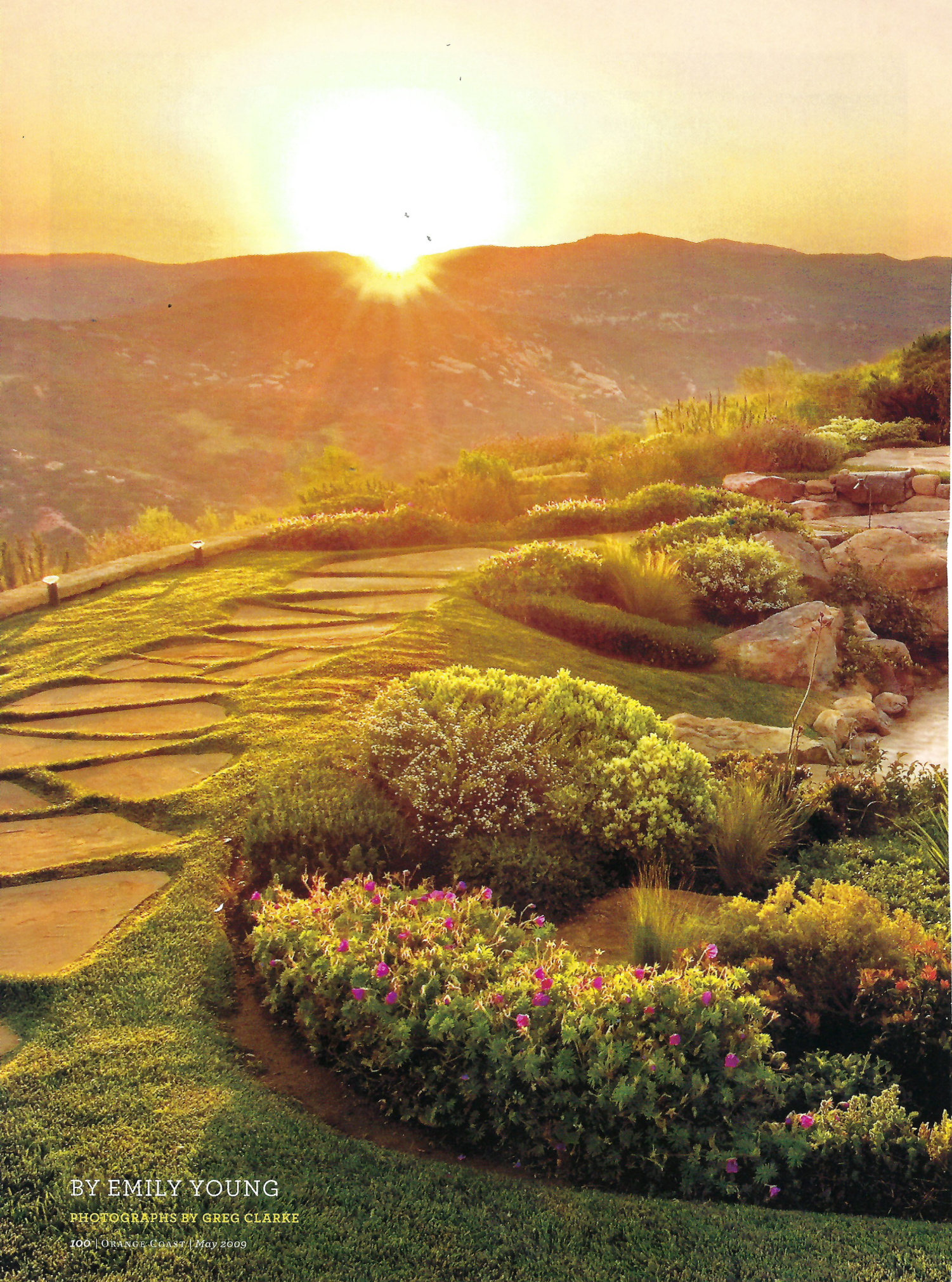


A photograph of a landscaped garden. In the foreground, there's a small stream or waterfall cascading over rocks. The garden is filled with various plants, including tall grasses, small shrubs, and trees with reddish-brown foliage. The background shows a hillside with more trees and a fence. The overall scene is peaceful and well-maintained.

By Way of *Provence*

Relaxing gardens bring French countryside to Irvine couple



BY EMILY YOUNG

PHOTOGRAPHS BY GREG CLARKE

100 | ORANGE COAST | May 2009



PREVIOUS PAGE: The backyard water-fall flows into a cobble-lined pond surrounded by red kangaroo paw, white breath of heaven, purple cranesbill, and a host of low-growing evergreens.
ABOVE: A thick slab of Oklahoma sandstone makes a sturdy bridge.

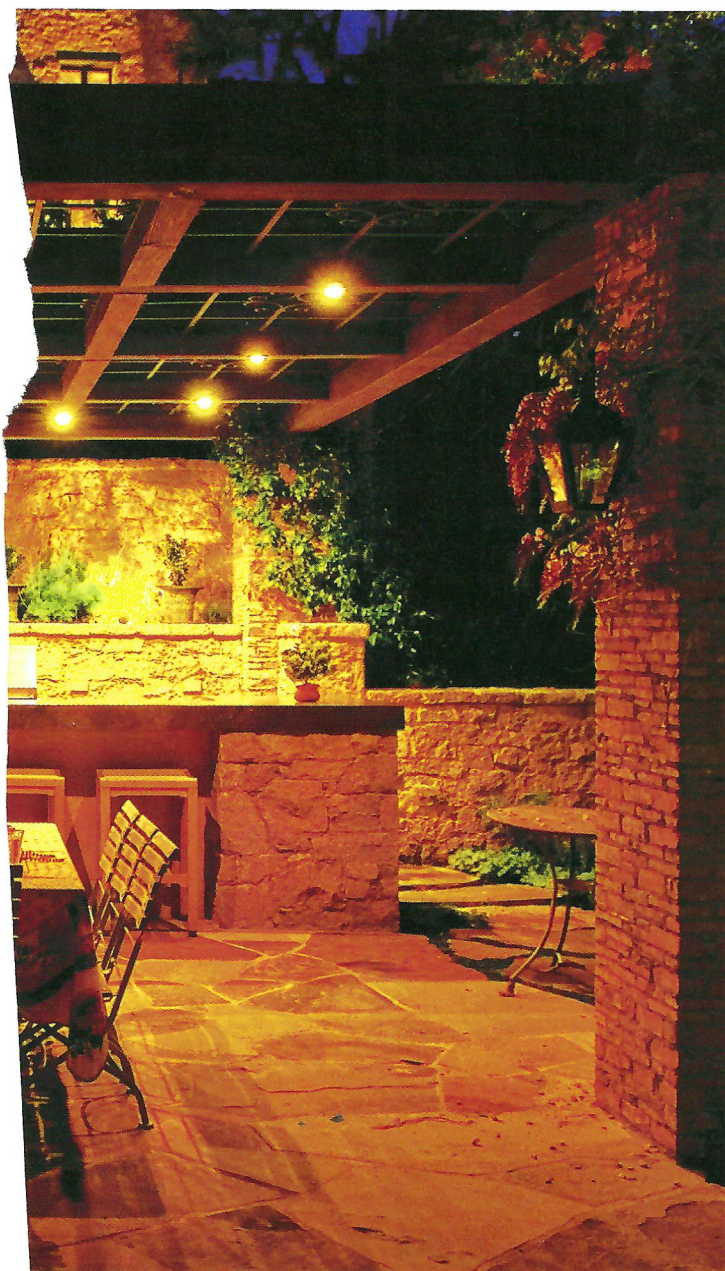


Designing a Provençal-style garden in Provence is easy. Designing one in Orange County, on a hillside lot scraped clean for the construction of a Provençal-inspired custom home in Irvine's Shady Canyon? Not so much. Still, landscape architect Daniel Stewart managed to pull off this feat two years ago, and to splendid effect. The key was borrowing time-honored traditions from the South of France and cherry-picking from the global influences that make up modern landscape design in Southern California.

"Plant-wise, the garden is a mix of different greens and grays, and fragrant herbs," says Stewart, who is based in San Clemente. "But it also has many localized versions of things found in a true Mediterranean garden."

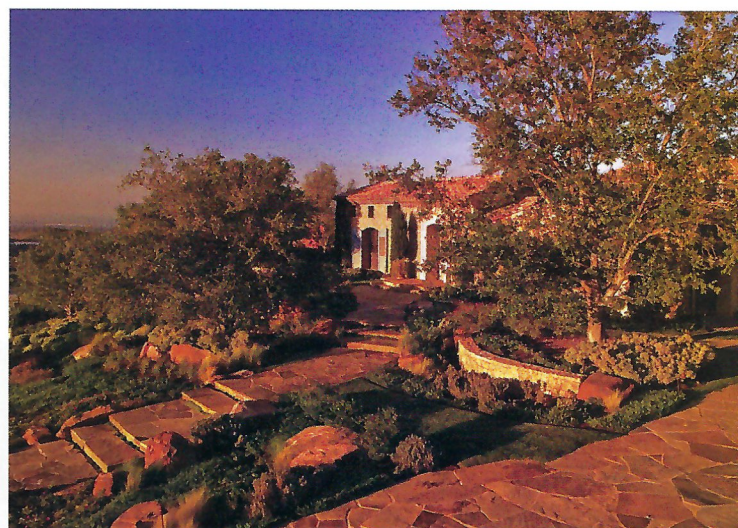
So while Stewart artfully dotted the property with the Italian cypresses, olive trees, lavender, rosemary, and geraniums so characteristic of the French countryside, he created a seamless tableau by adding drought-tolerant California oaks, Australian kangaroo paw, South African breath of heaven, and Japanese silver grass.

The homeowners—a co-founder of a Fountain Valley high-tech company and a homemaker—had a simple wish list: a rose garden and a soothing water feature for her, and a fire pit and a smoking terrace for him. They also wanted a place to cook



LEFT: Stone pillars draped with wisteria and a wrought-iron "ceiling" enclose the dining area and adjacent kitchen without obstructing views.

BELOW: Lavender, artemisia, rosemary, and sage flank the front steps leading to a courtyard filled with antique and reproduction Provençal pots.



and dine alfresco. "We're very casual, laid-back people," the wife says. "We just wanted a relaxing garden."

Stewart gave his clients all they asked for and more by laying out a progression of outdoor spaces that, like those in Europe, reward exploration and encourage contemplation. "Gardens in France and Italy inspire me, particularly those that are a series of rooms you can walk through and discover one after another," he says.

On slightly less than an acre, Stewart's sequence of spaces begins in the meadowlike front yard, leads to an intimate entry courtyard, winds past the rose and kitchen gardens in a side yard, and ends in the expansive back yard. There, a variety of vantage points, including a stainless-steel kitchen and a fire pit with gas jets, offers picture-postcard views of Saddleback

and the San Gabriel Mountains.

Perhaps most striking is the waterfall, a cascade of sun-baked Oklahoma sandstone boulders that landscape contractor Rene Grivel of San Juan Capistrano helped tuck into the slope amid tufts of cape rush and Mexican feather grass. It resembles a natural outcropping and fills the air with the peaceful sound of flowing water. "Getting the rockscape to look like it belonged was tricky, heavy work," Stewart says. "Instead of just dumping the boulders in a pile, we kept them pretty horizontal and nestled them in the ground."

The result is a rustic focal point worthy of this plein-air masterpiece.

EMILY YOUNG is an Orange Coast contributing editor.