

From coffee to concerts, this Los Osos garden was made for gatherings

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Six years ago, Bonnie Richan and her husband, Stephen Aiena, moved into a home on a one-acre parcel in Los Osos.

A brick walkway toward the back of the house led to a sea of green lawn, Algerian ivy, weeds and sand. There were two large pine trees and a seemingly ancient pear tree that still grows delicious pears.

The first step Richan and her husband took was to write down a general idea of what they wanted in their garden. Their second step was hiring [local landscaper Earthscapes](#) to help with the planning and implementing of the project.



Bonnie Richan's Los Osos garden features drought-tolerant plants such as succulents. Pictured are blue chalk sticks (*Senecio mandraliscae*), foreground, and *Kalanchoe fedtschenkoi* "Variegata."

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A small statue of an angel ponders your arrival, along with a simple grey stone painted with the word "peace."

As you walk to the north side of the house, a luscious green lawn surrounds a 6,000-square-foot raised concrete stage. An unassuming wood pergola, finished to appear weathered and aged, adds the perfect touch.

The stage has been used for small concerts and entertaining.

A small woodworker's shed to the back of the stage has been transformed into a guest house. Painted an olive green, it blends in well with the pergola and surrounding landscape.



Bonnie Richan's Los Osos garden features a fire pit surrounded by comfy chairs .

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A flagstone area connects the brick surround of the guest house and the concrete patio off the back of the house. A hammock on the patio gently sways in the breeze.

Adjacent to the back patio are two concrete circles. One has a small table and chairs, perfect for morning coffee. The second features a fire pit surrounded by comfy chairs for enjoying an evening glass of wine. To soften the grey of the concrete, potted succulent plants are placed throughout the space.

Richan originally planned to plant fruit trees, but the recent drought changed the focus of the garden to drought-tolerant and low-water plants.



A single succulent — *Aeonium arboreum* "Atropurpureum" — sits in front of flowering crassula in Bonnie Richan's Los Osos garden. The groundcover in the foreground is ghost plant.

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The backyard landscape is laid out in a wheel pattern with mulched planting areas and gravel paths to keep the organic feel of the garden.

Succulents, native grasses, rock roses and various shrubs are interspersed with unique garden art such as a collection of Star Trek garden gnomes. Most of their garden art has been collected on Richan and Aiena's travels.

A bust of their daughter as a child is placed prominently in a front plot, reminding Richan why she and her husband offered their garden to be featured in the [2018 Morro Bay AAUW Garden Tour](#). Their daughter was a recipient of an American Association of University Women scholarship.

You can see Richan and Aiena's beautiful garden, and four other wonderful backyard spaces, on April 29. For more information, visit morrobayaauw.blogspot.com/p/annual-garden-tour.html.



Bonnie Richan's Los Osos garden features drought-tolerant plants such as grasses, sedge and rush, as well as succulents.

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Tips

Get help from a landscaper to lay out a design. The landscaper may not need to do the work but you will have professional plans.

Keep plants' water usage in mind. There are many beautiful and unique drought -tolerant plants.

Add hardscapes over time. Examples include statues, rocks, and benches.

A garden is a work in progress. Don't be afraid to show off your garden even if it's "not done."

Tami Reece lives in Paso Robles and has been gardening and preserving its bounty for 30 years. Email her if you know of a unique, beautiful garden, garden show or celebration at rosetalranch96@gmail.com. Please allow a minimum of six weeks from the event.



Bonnie Richan's Los Osos garden combines drought-tolerant plants such as grasses, sedge and rushes, foreground, with spaces for socializing. **Laura Dickinson** ldickinson@thetribuneneews.com



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