

Freshest **ASPARAGUS** ■ Blooming **WINERIES** ■ Furniture **CLASSICS**

GARDEN

DESIGN

■ DREAM GARDENS

Japan in New York

Morocco in LA

■ MAGNIFICENT TILE

Art You Walk On

Spring Beauties

Tulips ■ Primroses ■ Magnolias

A photograph of a banana bunch with green fruit and a string of blue beads hanging from it, set against a background of banana leaves. The word "BRINGING" is overlaid in large yellow letters across the bottom of the image.

BRINGING

HAPPY IN HOLLYWOOD

In mild Southern California's climate, bananas slowly ripen to the eat-with-a-spoon stage. Owner Laura Morton "jewels" the stalk with glass balls. Here: Fire pit in Moroccan-style patio, plate of home-grown 'Meyer' lemons, brass tray from Morocco, Nabeul pottery from Tunisia.

IT HOME

Love of travel fills a garden with surprising plants and treasures

Text by Christy Hobart ■ Photographs by Tim Street-Porter



Serious travelers don't always make the best gardeners. If they have gardens at all, they don't water them regularly, they let weeds go for long stretches, and they don't bother planting specimens that bloom when they might be away. They generally have mundane, low-maintenance backyards that provide little more than a place to relax between flights. That is hardly the case for jewelry and garden designer Laura Morton. Although she passed on planting a potager—knowing that she and her husband, Jeff Dunas, spend a large part of every summer in the South of France—Morton was able to use her love of travel to enrich and enhance her garden in Hollywood, California.

"The geraniums are an ode to Jeff. He loves Greece, and they remind him of the geraniums that grow wild there," she says, rubbing her fingers on the leaf of a rose-scented variety. Some are planted in the ground around a Morocco-inspired seating area, while others flourish in makeshift pots. "We hit the garbage cans behind restaurants in Greece," she says of her colorful finds, "and came upon these



AMONG THEIR SOUVENIRS

Laura Morton and Jeff Dunas outfitted their garden with ideas and salvaged containers from their world travels. Bananas, 'Intrigue' canna, and *Heuchera* 'Crimson Curls' border the pool. This page: Custom table by Catalonia Collections supports an explosion of *Foeniculum vulgare*—funny how common fennel in a flea-market pitcher can melt your heart.

Greece and came upon these interesting tins.”

tins. We thought the shapes were perfect for flowers.” Now, old olive-oil containers hold geraniums, and former tins for corn oil and feta cheese are home to succulents.

Hanging over the seating area with built-in banquettes are birdcages and lanterns that the couple bought in Moroccan flea markets. Now filled with flickering candles, they mimic the blue-flame fire pit in the middle of the Moroccan blue-and-white geometric-tiled patio. “We love the Mediterranean feeling of living outdoors,” says Morton, who entertains often. “I got the inspiration for the terrace area from a trip to Hammamet, in Tunisia. We don’t have the sea to look out over, but we do have the pool.” The classic blue-and-white ticking that covers the banquettes’ cushions, reminiscent of Greece, continues the Mediterranean feel, as do the creeping bougainvillea and pots of kumquats. But the little African stools? “Everything doesn’t have to be Mediterranean,” says Morton. “When I design a garden, I think of all cultures. The common thread in this garden is that it’s filled with things and plants I love.”

While she wasn’t able to have a potager because of her traveling schedule, Morton compromised by planting an herbal tea garden. And to make the most of the rich scents of the lemon verbena, bergamot, lavender, six varieties of mint, African blue basil, and rose- and nutmeg-scented geraniums, she placed the garden just to the side of the patio so the herbal fragrances can waft over to delight those relaxing around the fire. To make sure her herbs wouldn’t get an extra “watering” from her dogs, she planted them in raised chimney-flue tiles of different heights. And for fun, she hid elaborate ceramic teapots and cups amid the plantings. A ‘Rose de Rescht’, an old damask rose, also gets a spot in the herb garden. “I like to float the petals in my tea cups,” Morton says.

The view from the cool, shaded patio and tea garden reaches across a calm rectangular pool to a whimsical fountain area at the other end of the property. But the view wasn’t always so charming. When the couple moved into the house seven years ago, a termite-infested wooden deck sat where the fountain is now, and a garden area was situated where their new patio is. “It was all wrong,” Morton says. “When you were sitting on

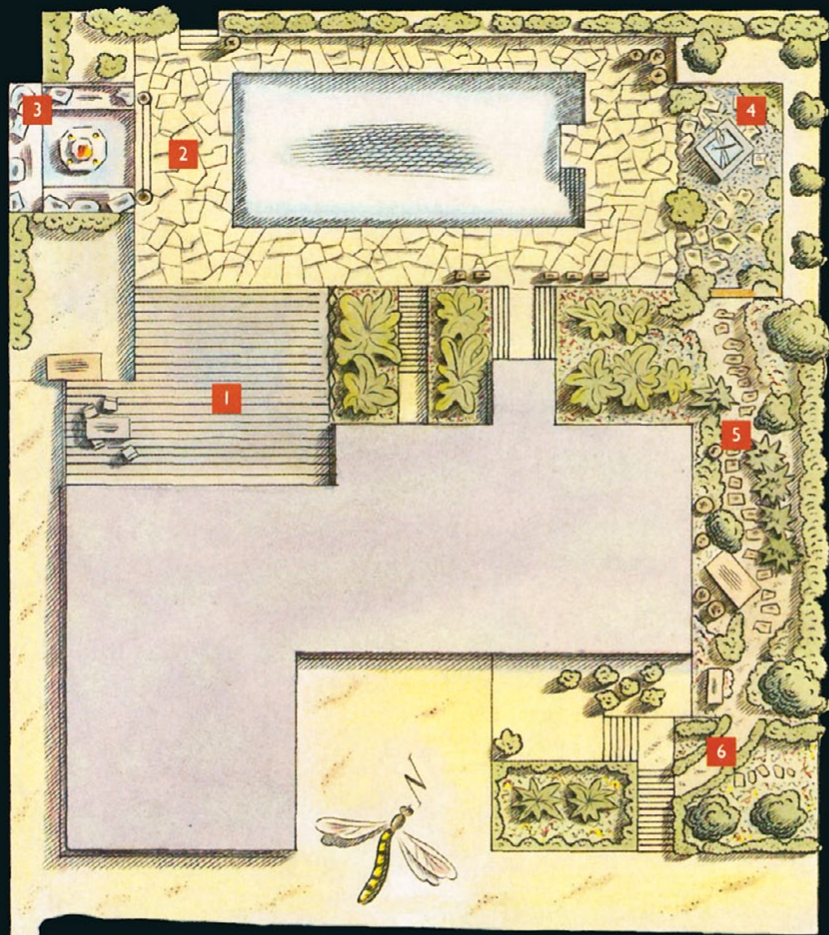


“I got the inspiration for th

NIGHT IN TUNISIA

Morocco inspired the blue-and-white tiled patio. Built-in banquettes around blue-flame fire pit provide seating for a gang of guests. Flea-market lanterns and birdcages light the evening. Plants in pots are variegated calamondin.

terrace from a summer trip to Hammamet.”



GARDEN PLAN

A painted redwood deck, **1**, on the northwest side of the Morton-Dunas residence overlooks a light flagstone patio, **2**, which surrounds the pool. West of the patio is the Moroccan-style tiled seating area and fire pit, **3**. On the east end of the patio is the tiled dragonfly fountain and koi pond, **4**, on the way to east garden, which is passable by staggered stepping stones, **5**. On the other end of the stepping-stone path is the front garden, **6**.



the old deck, you couldn't see up into the dark garden. You just looked into a black hole. So we swapped the two areas."

Morton designed the fountain using the same Moroccan tiles that cover the patio floor. She created jeweled edges by inlaying sea glass and cobalt marbles in the concrete. Butterfly koi swim around an old Moroccan pot fitted with a pump amid dwarf water lilies, water hyacinths, papyrus, and bulrush. Above them hovers a wire sculpture of a dragonfly that Morton designed.

Although her garden looks nothing like a typical orchard, a surprising number of fruit trees are planted about. An 'Anna' apple is espaliered to create a fence near the fountain, and a white fig decorates a wall in the herb garden. Pink grapefruit, 'Moro' blood oranges, limes, and tangerines dot the landscape, as do enormous banana trees and a persimmon. When the persimmon loses its leaves, geodes and crystals, hung by Morton, appear on its branches. "Adding jewels to the garden brings in good energy," she explains.

Follow the banana trees around the house to the side garden, and a

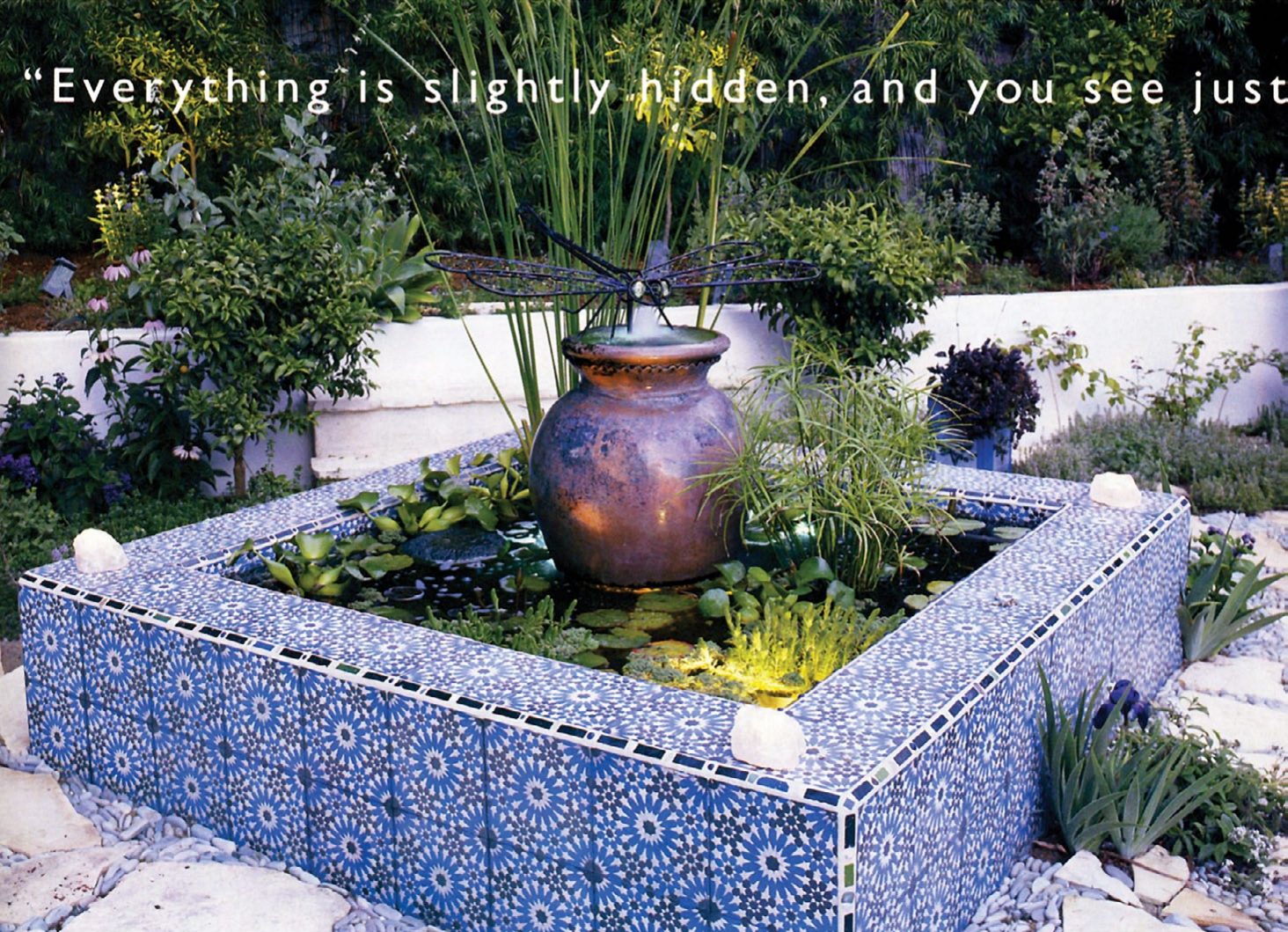


LUST FOR LIFE Fabrics from India, France, and Italy will lull you to sleep, Morton's prized Japanese maple and barrels of bamboo will rouse you from slumber, and the 19th-century Chinese opium bed will put ideas in your head. Opposite page: *Sempervivum* and *sedum* in mixed pots.



new world—or continent—opens up. “I based this area on Japanese gardens,” she says of the narrow slope. “I love how this type of garden reveals things little by little. Everything is slightly hidden, and you see just some things at a time as you move through it.” Follow the concrete pavers a few steps, and a Kang, a Chinese opium bed, appears. “We built a Plexiglas cover for the bed. You can see trees through the cover, and sun can come through, but when it rains you’re safe and dry,” Morton says. Follow a few more concrete pavers, and you’ll see more trees and other plants: Japanese maples, a diverse collection of bamboo (Buddha’s belly, black, square, and yellow groove), gardenias, a smoke bush, coleus, tuberous begonias, sweet olive, and violets, to name a few. Toward the bottom of the area, a double white brugmansia releases its rich, intoxicating aroma. “When we moved in, the brugmansia was a twig, and we didn’t know what it was. We dug it out, moved it, stuck it in a pot, then moved it to this corner where it bloomed and bloomed,” Morton says, still surprised. “It was our big hidden treasure.” And she found it right in her own backyard. ■

“Everything is slightly hidden, and you see just





some things at a time as you move through."

HIDDEN TREASURES

Brush cherry or eugenia (*Syzygium paniculatum*), pruned high to show off trunks and glass globes, opposite page, top. Left: tiled fountain chock full of water hyacinth, papyrus, parrot's feather, a Moroccan pot with a pump, and a metal dragonfly designed by Morton. This page: Purple- and burgundy-edged green coleus spill from terra cotta pot seated in wrought-iron chair.