

Los Angeles Times | Home & Garden

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PHOTO GALLERY:

A Hollywood Hills sanctuary with a hint of India

By Debra Prinzing

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Christine Cotter / Los Angeles Times

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Laura Morton

Mala Vasan wanted to transform her small yard in Hollywood. Tucked behind a 1924 Spanish bungalow and hemmed in by her own garage as well as her neighbor's, Vasan's yard was attractive "only to a family of skunks that used to walk across the space," she says. She turned to landscape designer Laura Morton, and in their conversations they eventually discussed a lush oasis influenced by the home's Spanish-style architecture, Mala's Indian American heritage and the two women's mutual love of travel.

"She showed me a file of imagery she'd been daydreaming about, including exotic pictures of India with elephants," Morton says. In the end, the 16-by-32-foot patio was re-imagined as a two-level courtyard that feels far away from Los Angeles. "Enclosed spaces instill a sense of intimacy," Morton says, "and within that your own sense of paradise is possible."

This "before" picture shows the courtyard before Morton's transformation. Morton cleverly masked the back wall—the neighbor's garage—with a triple arcade of antique wood arches from India, visible in the previous photo. The center arch is aligned on axes with the fountain and fire pit; twinkling lights and a fragrant jasmine vine now give the space new life.

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Laura Morton

Another “before” photo shows how a second side of Morton’s courtyard was hemmed in by her own garage. For the same view today, see the next photo.

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Christine Cotter / *L.A. Times*

Designer Morton, left, and homeowner Vasan sit in front of an antique Indian double-door from Rajasthan that transformed the front of Vasan’s one-car garage. The existing plumbago, jasmine and morning glory that once sprawled recklessly over a muddy, uneven driveway have been cut back. They’re now trained on framework to create a flowering wall along the property line, where a chain-link fence once stood. A new permeable floor of decomposed granite and chocolate sandstone slabs accommodate a custom tile bistro table. At night, amber and purple carnival lights crisscross the space overhead, while citrus trees, rosemary and scented pelargonium lend fragrance to the setting.

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Christine Cotter / *L.A. Times*

Blue marbles in a succulent planter echo the colors of Mala Vasana’s new outdoor room.

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Christine Cotter / *L.A. Times*

Morton designed two terraces: The upper garden has a raised reflecting pool that cascades toward the lower level, where built-in chaises provide abundant seating by an elevated natural gas fire pit.

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Christine Cotter / *L.A. Times*

The lower terrace at night: The pool spills down toward the fire pit, the source of the flames hidden beneath layers of crushed white glass.

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Laura Morton

A curtain of water spills down toward the fire.

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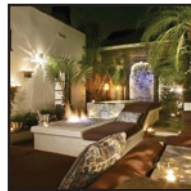


Christine Cotter / *L.A. Times*

“Small as it is, Mala’s garden is quite detailed,” says designer Morton, pictured here. “Like a little jewel box.” Her client Mala Vasan calls it her sanctuary, an antidote to the go-go schedule of everyday life. “When I’m at such a frenetic pace, this garden seems otherworldly to me,” Vasan says. “It’s somewhere I can come to be with my friends and a loved one and just relax. The word that comes to mind for me is ‘wonderment.’”

For a glimpse of the designer’s other work, go to Laura Morton’s website:

www.LauraMortonDesign.com



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