



Outdoor Living



Original aluminum windows were replaced with antique windows. The abalone shells on the front of the cottage were collected by Rebecca Sweet's uncle on his fishing trips.



Rebecca Sweet's backyard home office was once an old shed. It has been on the property since the 1950s.

An old shed becomes a backyard haven and home office.

petite RETREAT

By Kathryn Bechen

When landscape designer Rebecca Sweet wants quiet repose and to feel like she's surrounded by loving family members while she works, she heads to her backyard in Los Altos, California, where her husband, Tom Urban, has lovingly restored their dilapidated shed into a cozy cottage-style home office. Rebecca feels like her family members are with her because every nook and cranny of her 12 x 18-foot space is filled with mementos and memorabilia from her loved ones and ancestors, including a pansy painting painted by her great-great grandmother when she was just 14 years old.

Harmony in the Garden

Rebecca says working where she can view her own lush gardens while she creates landscape designs for her clients is a perfect fit for her work style. Tom helped name her company Harmony in the Garden (*harmonyinthegarden.com*) and their kids, Emily and Michael, inspired her blog name, *gossipinthegarden.com*, because they like to take their friends to her cottage home office to hang out and talk.

To begin the renovation, Tom transformed the original flat roof into a peaked roof with rafters, making sure to match the roof to the siding. He tore out old walls, added Sheetrock to the new ones and installed electricity. Rebecca painted the new wood floor "pea soup green" so it would look rustic, and she chose sunny "Bicycle Yellow" from Behr paints for the walls. They used as many recycled

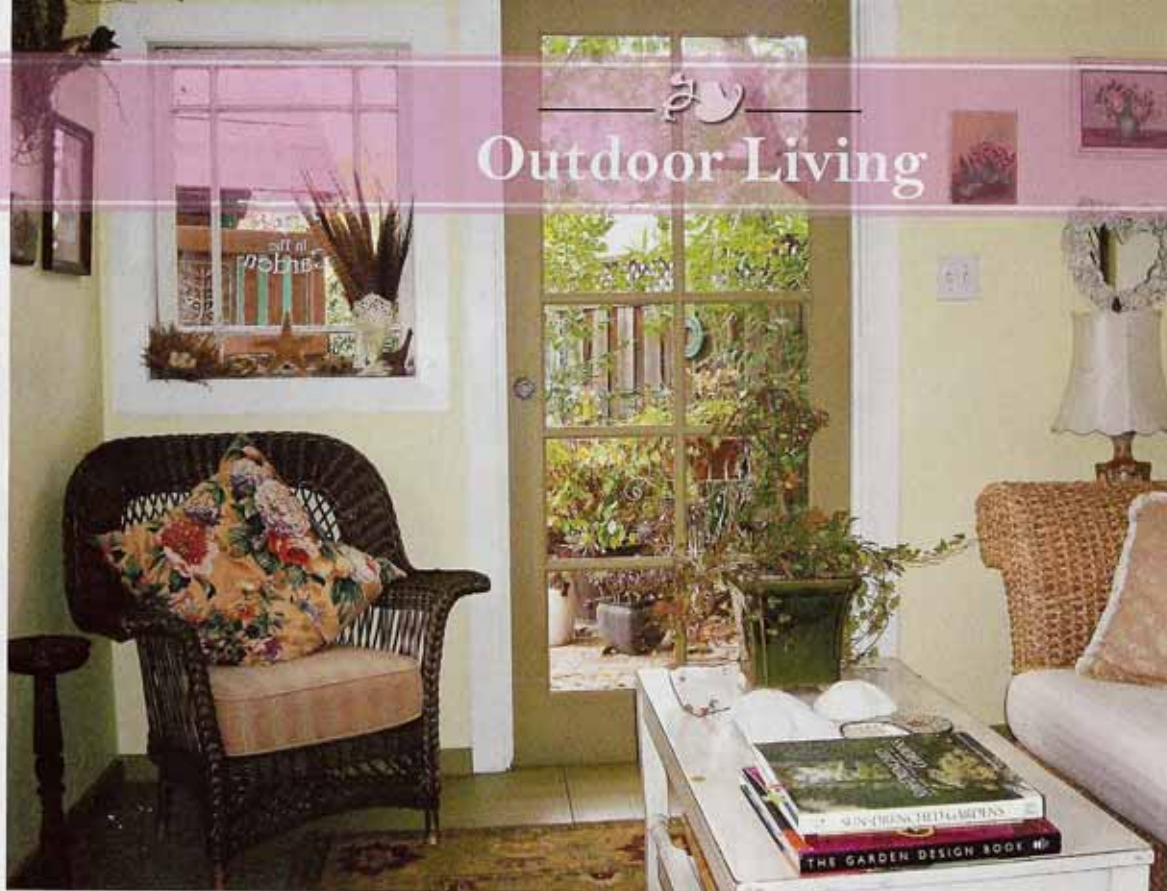


Top: An extensive variety of plants—all selected by Rebecca—graces her garden; the old pump was her wedding gift to her husband, Tom Urban.

Above: Rebecca created a meandering garden path using new tumbled bricks, which were made to look old.



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Left: Rebecca's favorite memento in her home office is the pansy painting her great-great grandmother painted when she was just 14 years old. The ashtray stand by the wicker chair belonged to her great-great-great grandfather in the 1850s.

Below: Tom designed antique chains for the windows so they could open, allowing Rebecca to enjoy the fresh Northern California air.

building materials as possible, many of which they bought from buildingresources.org.

"Installing the antique windows was very difficult," Rebecca says. She was thrilled when Tom placed an antique chain at the top of each window so it would open. He also designed and made the copper solar lighting on the side of the building. To age the copper, he mixed $\frac{1}{2}$ gallon of ammonia with a cup of regular table salt and placed the lights in the solution in a covered plastic container until the desired patina was achieved.

Happy Heritage

Rebecca and Tom found the front French door at Lowe's and distressed it to look old. The door's purple antique glass doorknob once belonged to her mother and was originally part of the Sacramento Hotel in the 1800s. Her "Harmony In the Garden" logo on the front window, which looks like etched glass, is actually cut vinyl.

The red pump in front of the cottage was a wedding gift from Rebecca to Tom. "He loved it," she says. The bricks lining the pathway to the cottage are new tumbled bricks that were made to look old, because Rebecca says new bricks fit together better. Adding to the look, two old minnow buckets that once belonged to her grandfather now serve as planters.

When guests visit Rebecca's home office, she says she enjoys watching the "lightbulbs go off" when they see her memorabilia and tell her it reminds them of something they have at home that once belonged to their own ancestors. "It inspires them to try and create a space like this for themselves," she says. Sweet harmony, indeed.



Right: The large twig wreath is from oakhillfarm.sonoma-sky.com, and the vintage fabric that Rebecca's mother sewed into a table skirt is from wisteriaantiques.net. The pheasant feathers belonged to Rebecca's father; the small flower container was her great-great aunt's; and the sewing notions drawers once belonged to her grandmother.



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