

# Artistry in the garden

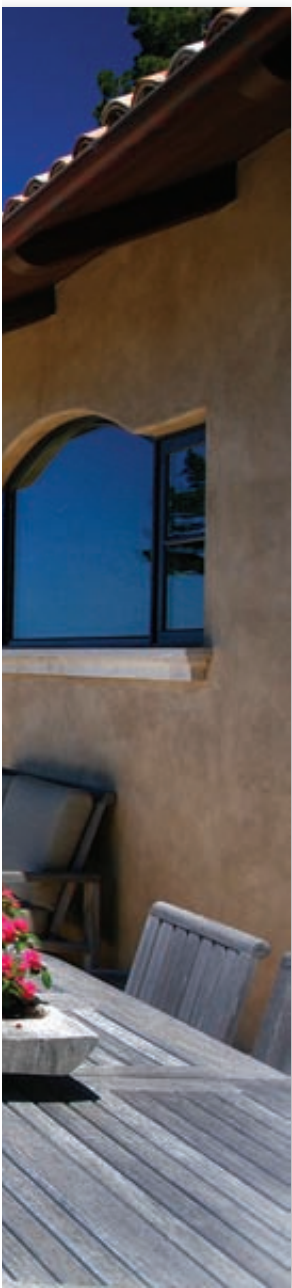
By Michael Chatfield  
Photos by Rachael Short



Marion Weaver—  
EPD—Environmental  
Planning & Design

“FOR ME, ALL PROJECTS START WITH A BIG IDEA. I LIKE TO HAVE A THEME,” SAYS LANDSCAPE ARCHITECT MARION WEAVER. “ONCE I HAVE THAT, IT GUIDES ALL MY DECISIONS.”

In the case of the inspired creation featured in these photographs, Marion spotted a painting near the client’s dining room table. The piece had been purchased by the couple during their first trip to Italy together as newlyweds and was a focal point of their home and life together. The designer immediately picked up on the importance of the object and knew that this was her inspiration—her “big idea.”



“I looked out on the property and in my mind saw nearly an acre of clean canvas,” Marion recalls, “and decided in this case that ‘painting the landscape’ made sense.”

Lavender and other drought-resistant plants of contrasting colors bring practicality as well as beauty to this coastal garden. “My client is a very happy and positive person, so I concentrated on upright, joyful architectural forms such as a bright green Ginkgo tree and Italian Cypresses.”

She feels that her role should be transparent. “It’s not me that should be reflected in the end product,” she says. “The client’s vision is paramount.” And within that statement is the key to Marion’s approach to her work—perhaps more properly called her *art*.

That commitment to the client is central to the philosophy of Marion’s company, Environmental Planning & Design (EPD). In business for only two years, EPD has already finished 12 projects, with several others on the drawing board and in various stages of completion.

A native of Konstanz, Germany, Marion came to Salinas as an exchange student. She fell in love with the landscape of California—and also with the man who is now her husband, Bill. Returning to the area after earning a degree in computer science at a German university, she married Bill and had two sons.



“When my boys were older, I felt I needed to do something fulfilling and meaningful professionally,” she says. Marion discovered the world of landscape architecture.

“It’s not always clear to people what a landscape architect does,” she muses. As an example, she cites the groundbreaking work of the late-19<sup>th</sup> century trailblazing urban park designer Frederick Law Olmsted (whose creations include New York’s Central Park, the grounds surrounding the U.S. Capitol building in Washington, D.C. and the landscape of the famous 1893 Chicago Columbian Exhibition) as a role model. “Making parks and

landscapes for people to enjoy is truly an important profession,” she says. “The environment has a real ability to enhance people’s lives.”

The work of a landscape designer is not confined to the placement of flowers, shrubs and trees. An overall plan for a landscape environment has many facets that need to be taken into consideration—soil types, drainage, the slope of the land, the proximity of structures and even other installations such as trees, all come into play. Careful thought must be given to how the space will be used by its inhabitants, leading to the layout of retaining walls, walkways, courtyards and patios.

Working for Bellinger, Foster and Steinmetz Landscape Architecture, Marion contributed to projects such as the giant slide at Monterey’s Dennis the Menace Park, the Morgan Hill Water Wise demonstration garden at City Hall, and Franich Community Park in Watsonville. While EPD has focused primarily on residential work, Marion seeks to perform more commercial and public work. “When you see kids having a great time at Dennis the Menace Park, that’s a real high. The design of public spaces is very satisfying.”

That’s not to say that she doesn’t find residential work fulfilling. Marion brings a very thoughtful and insightful





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*Aloe polyphylla (Spiral Aloe)*



One stunning feature is the enclosed courtyard, formerly the site of a swimming pool. Italian limestone flooring and custom-made columns frame this inviting space, while a fireplace on one end and firepit on the other enable gathering for intimate conversation.

The backyard is perfect for an active lifestyle, with a basketball court just outside the home's game room and an inviting, expansive lawn of soft green grass perfect for lying on while stargazing on a summer's evening.

Guiding Marion's hand was the idea of an Italian renaissance country home and surrounding gardens. The home evokes the custom of the Italian gentry of going to a country house garden to escape the summer heat of the city. The temperate Pebble Beach climate allows that gracious style of living year-round. ■

philosophy to her work. Whether it's public or residential, "You have to know the user and how they plan to use the space you're creating," she says.

Marion Weaver truly loves what she does, improving the world one small patch at a time. "The more beautiful places there are in the world, the better."

### A Living Canvas

The painterly approach Marion Weaver took with this Pebble Beach project is evident in the shapes, colors and flow of the one-acre lot. She and collaborator Tony Jaurique of Sandcastle Development created an organic, highly livable design that utilizes walkways, retaining walls, fireplaces, decking and patios.

#### RESOURCES...

Marion Weaver  
 Environmental Planning & Design  
 455 Canyon Del Rey Blvd. #312  
 Monterey  
 (831) 484-1426  
[www.epd-landscapearchitecture.com](http://www.epd-landscapearchitecture.com)

Tony Jaurique  
 Sandcastle Development  
 Pebble Beach  
 (831) 601-8182