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GARDEN

AND OUTDOOR LIVING

DESIGN

Vacation at home

A tiny beachfront lot
accommodates plenty
of outdoor living

BY NAN STERMAN
PHOTOGRAPHS BY
STEVEN GUNTHER

In the courtyard, baby's tears edge a walkway's sinuous curves.

On a warm summer evening, Bruno and Dawn Büchler gather with friends on the intimate patio outside their home in Cardiff-by-the-Sea, California. A salty breeze blows up from the ocean as the sun sets, turning the sky pink and orange. Dawn Büchler opens a bottle of wine at the table beside a crackling fire, while Bruno heats up the grill and friends hang out at a counter that the couple

call their Caribbean bar. With tiki torches glowing among tropical plants that fringe the patio, the stage is set for a casual gathering that's perfectly matched to the Büchlers' island-style house and garden.

Finding space for outdoor living and entertaining is always a challenge on tiny beach lots. But the Büchlers (he's a master builder, she sidelines as a colorist and designer), working with architect Kevin Farrell and garden designer Debora Carl, made every inch of the narrow lot count.

Entry courtyard

A waterfall and pond lined with black Mexican beach pebbles greet guests arriving at the entry courtyard. To give the area a lush tropical look, Carl planted in vertical layers around the perimeter, relying on leaf color and texture rather than on flowers for interest. She underplanted palms with magenta- and wine-foliaged bloodleaf (*Iresine herbstii*) and black-leafed mondo grass (*Ophiopogon planiscapus*). Lacy tree ferns, bronze-leafed cannas, bright green *Blechnum* ferns, and variegated coleus fill in among them.

Patio

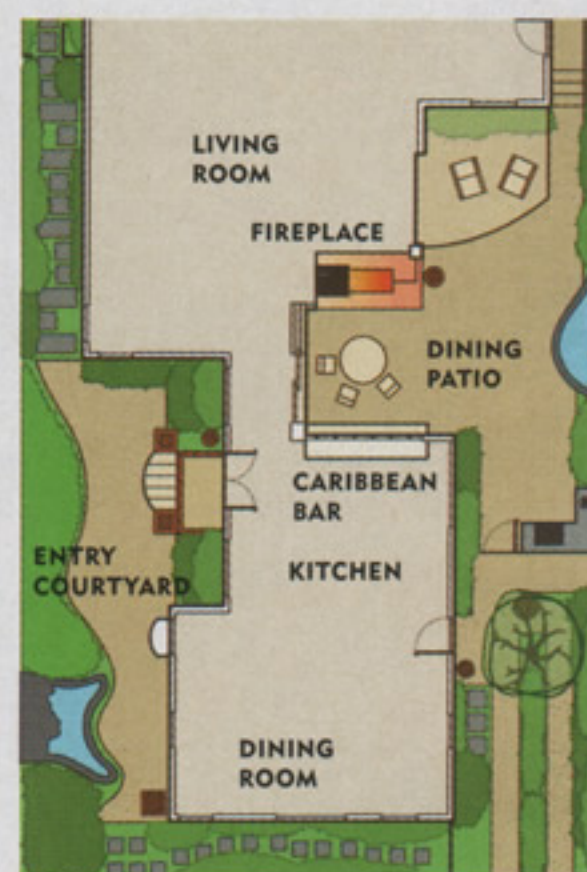
Though small, the patio has all the amenities of a resort: a dining area, fireplace, pond, outdoor kitchen, and the bar, which was inspired by the casual lifestyle of the tropics.

A queen palm in a small circular planting bed near the dining area presides over the patio's tropical plantings. Shorter palms mixed with tree ferns form a lacy midstory, while passion vines cover the walls and fences. Cycads, *Blechnum* ferns, and tender baby's tears fill the garden beds.

On chilly evenings, when most locals have moved indoors, the Büchlers' party keeps on going. "If we have the fire going and the heater on," Bruno says, "we're cozy all night."

DESIGN: Debora Carl Landscape Design, Encinitas, CA (760/212-8819); Büchler Construction, Cardiff-by-the-Sea, CA (760/473-8039) ▶ 53

A glass fire-box is open to both the living room and patio; the concrete floor is embedded with pebbles. Below left, coral pillows dress the chairs.



BOTTOM RIGHT: DAMIEN SCOGIN

Living the tropics

Within their small lot (just 120 feet long by 50 feet wide), the Büchlers' garden flows seamlessly from the house, thanks to space-enhancing features that suggest a breezy island style.



Clockwise from top: Framed by palms and cycads, a waterfall near the patio fence is built of the same slate used in a nearby fireplace; topped with black slate, rough side up, the "Caribbean bar" counter can be used from both the kitchen and patio, thanks to windows that open accordion-style; a bright bromeliad; a window behind an indoor garden frames a patio view. 🌿