

More is More: Designer Roger Raiche's Personal Garden

 succulentsandmore.com/2016/10/more-is-more-designer-roger-raiches.html

Last weekend, I attended the Pacific Horticulture Society's Summit 2016 held at the Luther Burbank Center for the Arts in Santa Rosa, CA. Under the motto "Changing Times, Changing Charges: Shaping a New Environment," the two-day event featured a series of diverse presentations exploring "how gardens are evolving in the face of climate change, with inspiration coming from our natural surroundings as well as from innovations in water conservation and land management." The speakers ranged from landscape architects with experience in private and public projects (Thomas Rainer, Michelle Sullivan) to garden designers (Bob Hyland, Marilee Kuhlmann) to nursery owner and plantsman extraordinaire Phil Van Soelen, owner of Cal Flora Nursery in Sonoma County.



Roger Raiche's house: subtle clues notwithstanding, it's often difficult to know what treasures might be hiding behind fences and gates

Sunday's program included a self-guided driving tour of Sonoma County with more than 30 stops—everything from private gardens, public gardens and spaces, nurseries, wineries, and even "on the road" attractions such as bakeries, cheese, and ice cream shops. Knowing that the public places are open and accessible year-round, my partner-in-crime Kathy Stoner of Garden Book and I decided to focus on the private gardens. Sonoma County is large (1,576 square miles, 4,080 km²) and driving between the gardens took time. In the end, Kathy and I

managed to visit three of the five private gardens. As is so often the case, we underestimated how engaging gardens can be and how easy it is to lose track of time when you get lost in plant-related reveries.

Our first stop was the private garden of Roger Raiche, a well-known Northern California landscape designer and 2011 California Native Plant Society Fellow. This is how it was described in the 2016 Summit program:

This relatively new garden—planted September 2013—is located in a sunny part of Armstrong Valley near the Russian River. It was designed by Roger and David McCrory, partners in Planet Horticulture Garden Design, and includes many large plants moved from previous gardens around the San Francisco Bay Area. You’ll see how they provide a thread of continuity, but reimagined. The compositional framework is bold with ebullient foliage plants and large urns, reflecting some of the best work of this design team. A plus: This garden backs into the Armstrong Redwood State Natural Reserve, giving you an opportunity to see well-preserved acreage of coastal redwoods.

And this is how I experienced it.



A long and narrow side yard lead to the back garden. Spaces like this are challenging to landscape. Robert and David have done a masterful job creating vertical interest by espaliering or severely trimming shrubs and even trees like yews.

Great use of tall vertical containers to create different planting levels





The backyard was surprisingly small—quite a bit smaller than my own, which isn't big by any standards. What it lacked in size, it more than made up for in plant volume. Clearly, Roger and David are proponents of the “more is more” school of design.

Strappy and spiky, what's not to love?





Agave xylonacantha



LEFT: the most purple *Yucca* 'Blue Boy'
I've ever seen

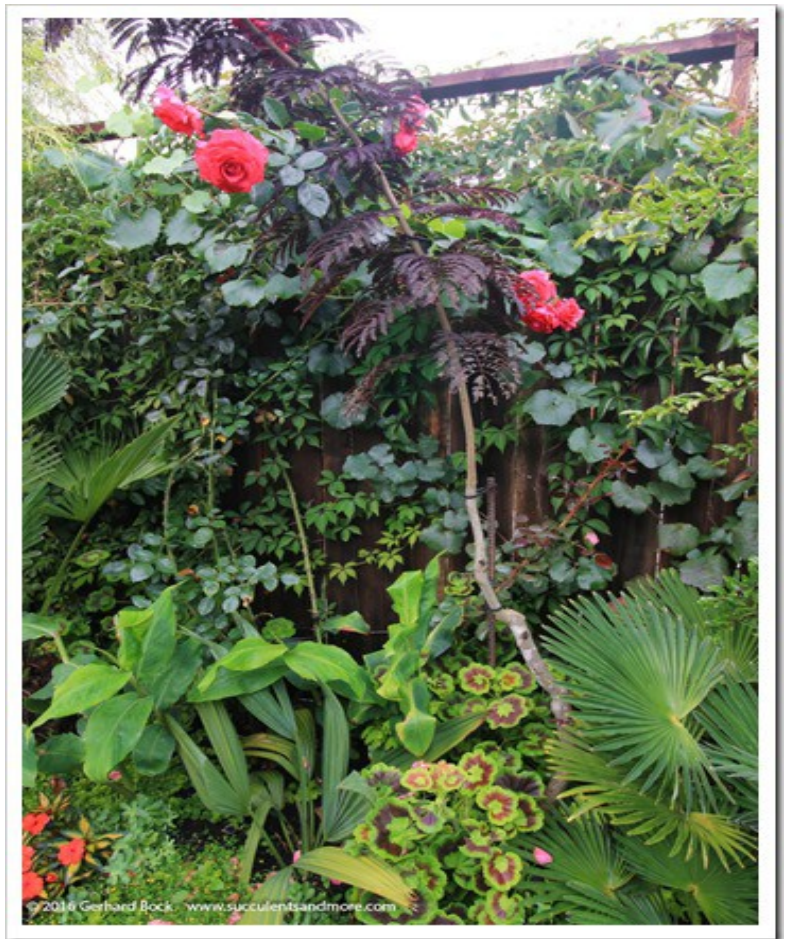


This groundcover attracted a lot of attention. Most people (myself included) had no idea what it was. It turns out it's variegated St Augustine grass (*Stenotaphrum secundatum* 'Variegatum').



More *Stenotaphrum secundatum* 'Variegatum'

This purple mimosa (*Albizia julibrissin* 'Summer Chocolate') caught quite a few people by surprise. Planted right next to the fence, Roger clearly intends to keep it small. It's normally a 20-foot tree with a wide canopy.





Deuterocohnia-like terrestrial bromeliad (no idea which genus or species) and variegated soft-leafed yucca



Heuchera and *Brunnera macrophylla* 'Jack Frost', two plants that have a hard time surviving in Davis (too hot and dry) but seem to be doing OK in the gentle climate of Guerneville, just a few miles from the Pacific



This is the first of several enormous urns in this garden. I have no idea how you move something this large (and no doubt heavy).



This is an olive oil urn from Portugal called a *tijana*.



Fatsia japonica 'Spider's Web'. Doesn't it look like it accidentally got paint splattered all over it?



Mahonia 'Soft Caress' and a cool lantern

We're in the corner of the property now where the (narrow) backyard we just walked through meets up with a much larger space. I believe the house is a duplex and the space we just entered is technically the backyard of the 2nd unit. I must admit I was a bit perplexed by the layout—but who cares when there's more room for plants!



Roger Raiche talking to visitors. I had a whole slew of plant ID questions but never got a chance to talk to him.



Variegated *Yucca aloifolia* There's that 'Spider's Web' again!





One of my favorite vignettes. I'd take this planter in a heartbeat and put in my own garden. I think the spiky beauty here is *Yucca linearifolia*.



Begonia boliviensis 'Santa Cruz'—time to try it again



Seen outside the back deck



More is more is more! Another masterful combination of texture, color and height

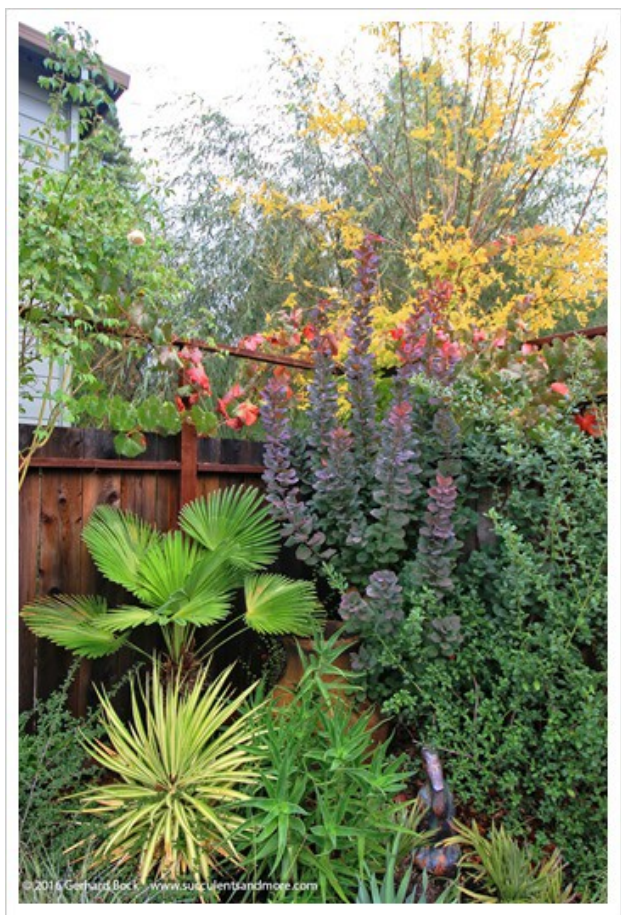


And another olive oil urn. I wonder if the blue rocks are glass.





Urn # 3. To the left is a small vegetable bed with veggie starts from Annie's Annuals (I recognized the tags immediately, LOL).



I always find it interesting to see what professional landscape designers do in their private garden spaces. Based on the photos I see on [Planet Horticulture](#), this garden seems very true to Roger and David's design aesthetic. The main takeaway for me is this: It's OK to pack them in tight. Dense plantings suppress weeds and reduce the amount of water needed. That's all the incentive I need to [buy more plants!](#)