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REGIONAL: SARATOGA, CALIFORNIA

MEDITERRANEAN ODYSSEY

Designer Chris Jacobson took cues from Spain for the remodel of this Saratoga garden. Judges immediately appreciated his climate-appropriate design. Grasses, lavenders, rosemary, and other Mediterranean plants are particularly suited to Northern California's dry summers. And the stacked-rock walls, casual paths of decomposed granite and flagstone, and subtle use of water give the garden a soft and earthy look.

Before the redesign, a wide concrete path bisected the garden but led nowhere, plants hadn't been maintained, and the aqua-colored in-ground spa was deserted. Jacobson reconfigured the land into berms and turned the spa into a black-bottomed pond; water circulates from an urn fountain through a water course to the pond. Some of the existing plants were retained or relocated. Offering the ultimate compliment, one judge said, "Wouldn't you just love to be sitting there?"

Designer: Chris Jacobson, Gardenart, San Francisco and Los Gatos, CA (415/664-5913)



WATER TUMBLES from a terra-cotta jug embedded in a rock wall. Lush ferns surround it.

SAXON HOLT

PROBLEM SOLVING: CAMERON PARK, CALIFORNIA

GRAND ENTRANCE

Even royalty would feel welcome ascending the vast new walkway to John and Joyce Wilson's Cameron Park home. "The steps seem to sweep visitors right up to the front door," remarked a juror. "It's very gracious," said another.

Before the redesign, visitors had to ascend an 11-foot grade of multilevel wood decks to reach the front door—if they could find the entrance, that is, since the door wasn't visible from the driveway and the decks didn't look as if they led to an entry. To hide the magnitude of the grade, landscape architect Gary Orr offset the walk and created patio-size pads with low steps. Handsome stone retaining walls line one side of the walk and a grove of 30 birch trees softens the 20-foot-tall house wall. At the top of the walk, an impressive arbor covered with lush vines directs visitors to the front door. When does the prince arrive?

Designer: Gary Orr, Orr Design Office, Sacramento (916/441-4500)



JAY GRAHAM (2)