

GARDEN NOTEBOOK

BY JOAN WATERS

PHOTOGRAPHY BY GABRIEL TEAGUE

change of scenery

Marcie and Gary Paolinelli's landscape renovation began with a bang. About four years ago, a winter storm blew through the front yard of their East Sacramento home, taking the top one-third of a 70-plus-year-old cedar tree with it. That was their first clue the tree was dying and had to be removed. But if you think having a massive tree lose its top in a storm is scary, think about trying to figure out what to do after the tree is gone and there's a gaping hole in the scenery.

Good thing some clouds have silver linings. Turns out the Paolinellis' landscaping never fit the style of the house, anyway. "Everyone in the neighborhood calls it the Hansel and Gretel house," says Marcie about their coral-colored, stucco-and-beam two-story home. And the old garden of timeworn azaleas, camellias and boxwoods wasn't doing a thing for it. So the Paolinellis grabbed their chance to solve a few landscaping problems and redo the front and side yards.

"I always look to the house for design cues so the garden and the house match," says landscape designer/contractor Gary Kernick of Change of Seasons. "This house has a strong presence, and the English cottage garden really works with that style." Kernick installed a small red maple tree where the giant cedar had been and laid a pathway of crushed limestone from one side of the yard to another pathway in front. He replanted the rest of the yard with trees, shrubs and swaths of English garden mainstays, strategically planning his choices so there's always something in bloom.

In a bold design stroke, Kernick took some flat-topped stones that circled the yard's remaining big tree—a redwood—and created a very low dry-stacked wall by the sidewalk. "This is a busy street for foot traffic and a lot of dogs," Kernick says about the corner lot. "The dogs made [the corner] one of their favorite stopping spots, which meant there was recurring plant damage. The wall provides enough of a barrier to keep people and dogs from coming up into the garden, without having to put in a big 6-foot fence."

Which works out quite nicely for Gary Paolinelli. "I spend a lot of time out here," he says. "It's a great way to meet the neighbors."

"This house has a strong presence, and the English cottage garden really works with that style."

—landscape designer Gary Kernick

