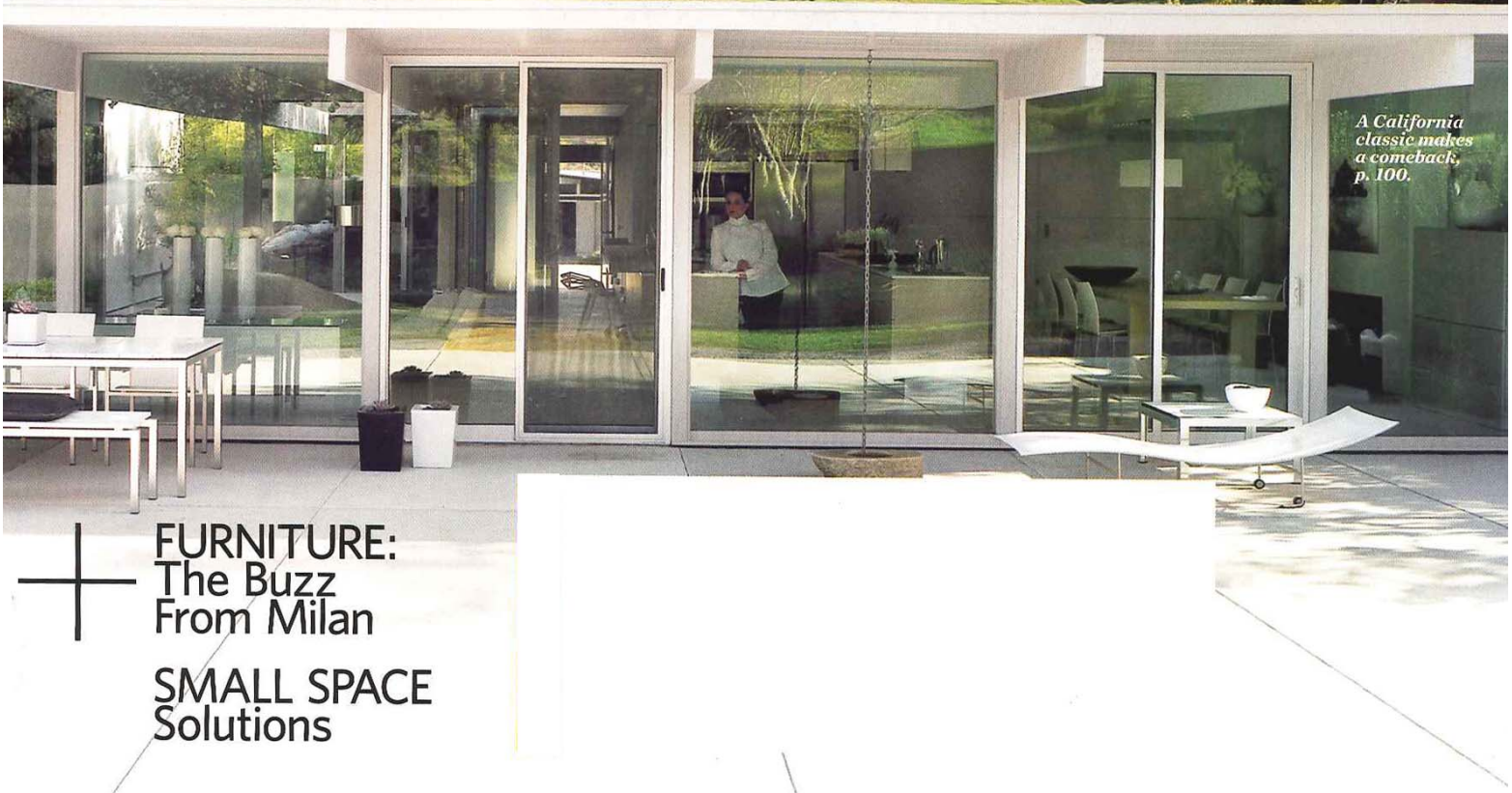


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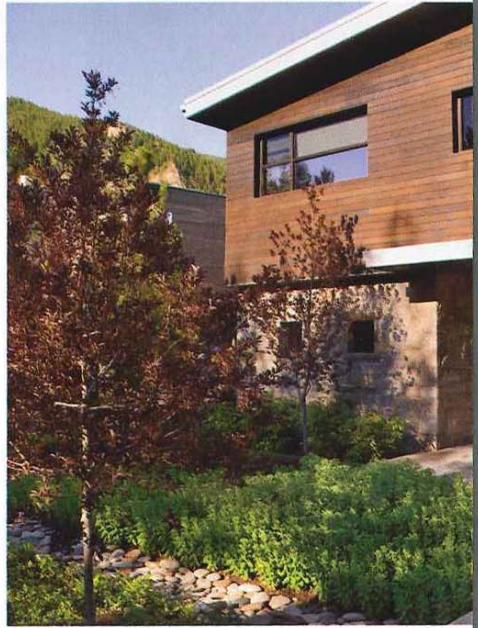
A California classic makes a comeback, p. 100.

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SMALL SPACE
Solutions



Weekend Garden



A natural-looking cobblestone stream, flanked by perennials and chokecherry trees, filters storm water flowing past this Aspen house en route to a river.

A Swale Solution

In search of fixes for a problematic site, an innovative landscape architect created a California-style setting for a Rocky Mountain house.

By Susan Heeger

Six years ago, a young financier from California moved to Aspen, Colorado, hoping, despite the switch to a mountain zone, to live as if he'd never left the Pacific coast. Envisioning a house open to the outdoors, with a pool and spa he could enjoy in three seasons, he bought a lot in the city's east end—below Aspen Mountain, near the Roaring Fork River—and hired a neighbor's design team. "He and his neighbor share the same clean, contemporary taste," says landscape architect Sheri Sanzone of the Aspen firm Bluegreen, who collaborated on both projects with architect Bret Thoeny of Boto Design, based in Santa Monica, California.

Wanting a seamless living space that extended from the indoors out, the owner also needed privacy, a challenge in a setting where homes crowd

onto small lots and municipal codes limit fence and hedge heights. There was another hitch too: His front yard—mostly city-owned parkway he's obligated to maintain—had unresolved drainage issues.

Once part of a large property now subdivided into three lots, his yard lies at a neighborhood low point. During hard rains, water rushes here from adjacent gardens, dumping chemical pollutants before draining into (and further muddying) the river. "At first, the city wanted us to route the water into a below-ground pipe linked to the storm drainage system," recalls Sanzone, who, with her partner, Valerie Alexander Yaw, had helped plan the property's subdivision and now proposed a greener, more inviting fix for the problem. Instead of the city-sanctioned drainpipe, the usual lawn carpet and the permitted four-foot fence (none of which would adequately curb pollution), she created a striking

tapestry that the city—and her client—likes better: The cobblestone streambed and planted swale she designed slow the storm water—thereby eliminating the danger of erosion—and filter out chemicals and debris before the water drains into the ground and the river.

Along with using carpet-forming shrubs and perennials such as sedum 'Autumn Joy', *Mahonia repens*, *Vinca minor* 'Burgundy' and *Heuchera* 'Palace Purple', Sanzone accented her swale with city-approved chokecherry trees (*Prunus virginiana* 'Canada Red') in two staggered rows that screen her client's new three-level house from the busy street. Since the trees are irregularly arranged and don't form a solid wall, their mature, 25-foot height is exempt from local restrictions.

In the rear garden, where sliding glass doors turn the living room into an airy

pavilion, Sanzone designed a spa and plunge pool with dark, plaster walls to hold heat and a simple wall fountain that masks traffic sounds. To connect indoor and outdoor spaces, the pool patio is flush with the interior floor and not, as is common in snowy climates, at a lower level than the house. With her client's input, she chose 24-inch-square tiles of *Sebastian Gray* paving stone, which is so hard that it's impervious to the moisture that heaves and cracks hardscape in wildly fluctuating winter conditions.



The cobblestone streambed and planted swale slow the storm water—thereby eliminating erosion danger.



Clockwise from top: Cobblestones reappear in the rear garden, edging blue oat grass near the spa; red-twig dogwood, planted throughout the garden, grows by the path linking the raised deck to the pool; framed with bristlecone pine and Colorado spruce, the landscape pleases from many angles.

To make the patio usable during cool months, Sanzone added radiant heat from warm water piped beneath the stone, a system similar to one inside the house. Next, to screen out neighboring homes, she layered in plants, edging the paving with blue oat grass and a low dogwood hedge and working out toward the property line with mugo pines, sumac, aspen trees and towering bristlecone pines and spruce. "My palette leaned toward shades of green more than flowers," says Sanzone, who picked varieties that stand up to the harsh climate with little care.

Their naturalistic tones shift subtly with the seasons: In fall, the aspens flush gold and the sumacs orange-red, while the sedum bursts into rusty, succulent bloom. Spring coaxes purple from a Japanese lilac and snowy petals from the chokecherries. Meanwhile, thanks to the picturesque and accommodating swale—which now extends in front of three houses on the street—Aspen is revising storm-water control guidelines to allow others to re-create it. ▣

See Resources, last pages.

