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Dream Makers

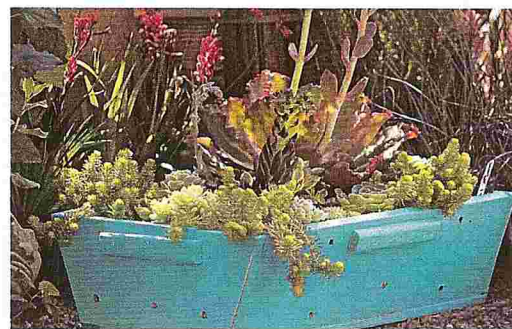
Plus:

- Ever-blooming Roses
- Holiday Feasting
- Cooking With Steam

- In Encinitas: Compound Charm
- In La Jolla: Canyon Inspiration
- In Eastlake: Garden of Delights

AENNE CARVER

A blue planter filled with a variety of succulents tempts shoppers at Cedros Gardens.



NANCEE E. LEWIS / UNION-TRIBUNE

Organic Elegance

Cedros Gardens is an oasis of green in busy design district

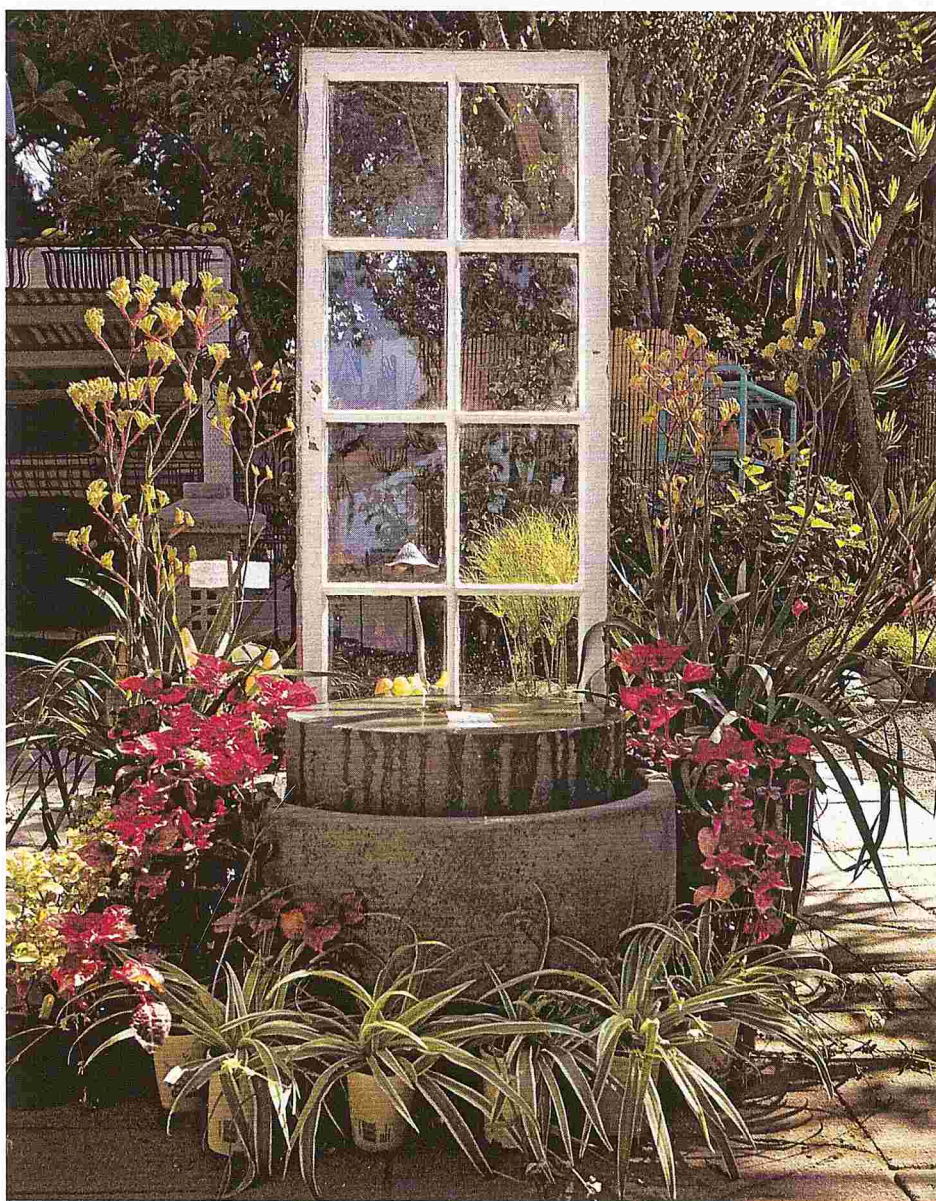
The Cedros Design District in Solana Beach bustles with shoppers exploring its many boutiques.

One destination, since it opened in 1993, is the charming nursery Cedros Gardens.

Its owner, Mia Yamada McCarville, recognized the neighborhood's potential, and rented a 1926 bungalow made by the aptly named Carpenter Bros.

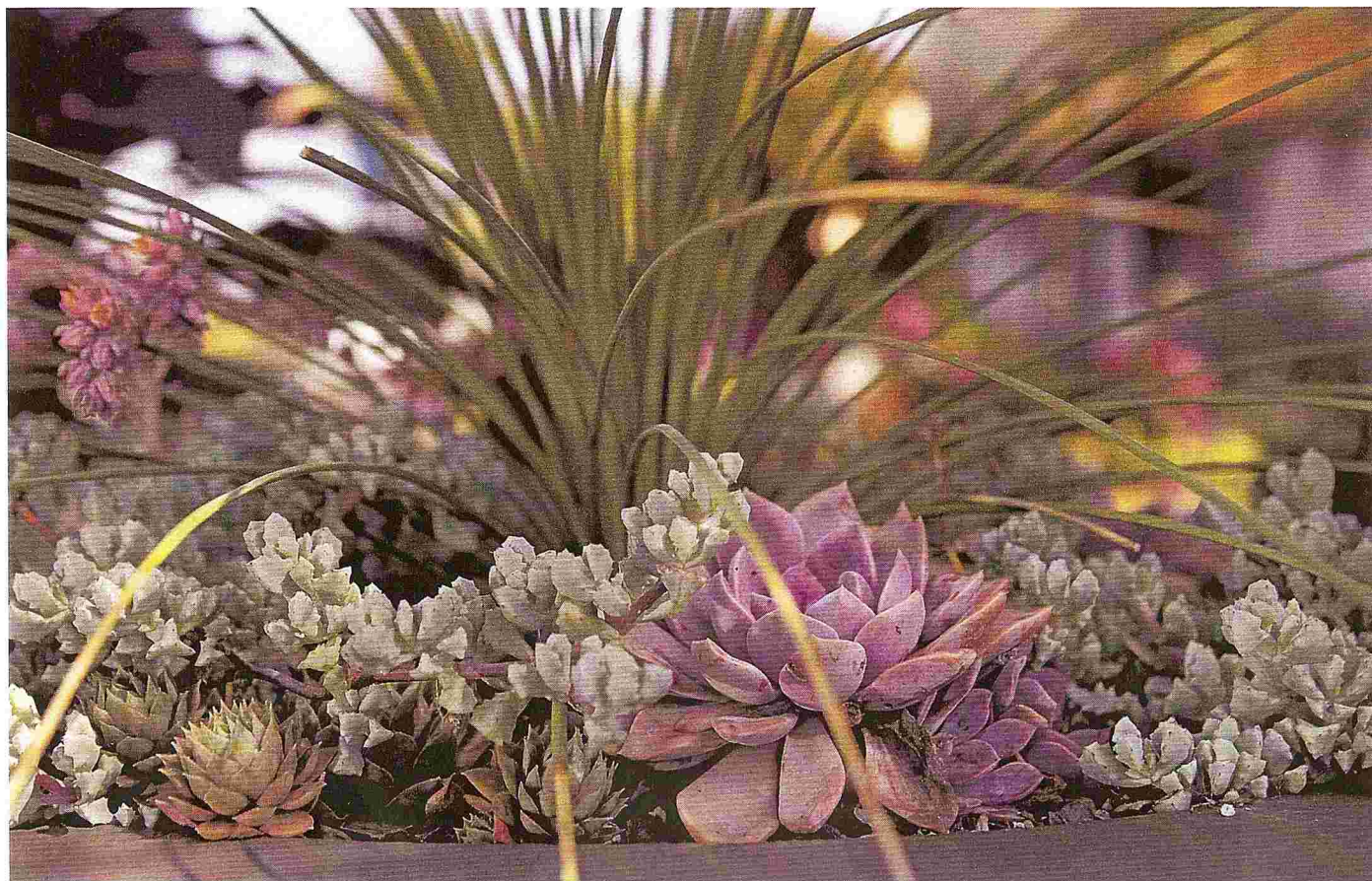
Today, a long border that slopes from the house to South Cedros Avenue brings out the plant hunter in every gardener. Mermaid, a yellow antique rose, flows over a wooden fence and mixes with the lavender flowers of a fountain butterfly bush (*Buddleja alternifolia*). A mouth-watering assortment of sages (*Salvia*) march alongside large clumps of tansy, echeverias, black-eyed Susans, globe amaranth, sea oat grass and cannas.

An open gate in a fence facing the busy street frames a glimpse into the nursery grounds adjacent the bungalow. Barrels, impeccably filled with lush plantings, line a walkway. Long triangular sky-blue flags dangle from poles, fountains bubble, and eclectic music drifts to the street. It feels as if you're walking into a party.



Owner Mia McCarville (right, with Daisy the cat) is a self-taught gardener, a fact she believes liberates her from convention and inspires creative displays like this one with an antique window in her Solana Beach nursery.





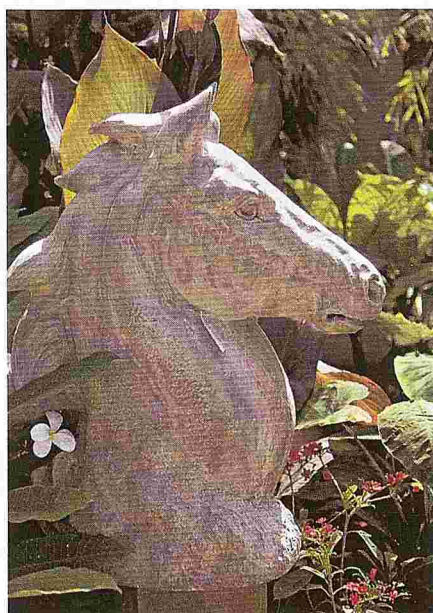
"High-contrast plantings" like this one feature bold textures and complementary colors. Many are done by nursery manager Julia Roach, who begins her container designs with a color scheme.

ELEGANT — AND ORGANIC

Before she opened Cedros Gardens, McCarville honed her retail skills at two other stores. The first enterprise was in La Jolla during the 1980s. Called Chou-Chou, which means butterfly in Japanese, the store featured gifts and household items imported from Japan. After five years, when the exchange rate became unfavorable, McCarville took time out to reinvent her business.

While shopping at Encinitas' Sunshine Gardens nursery, McCarville noticed a small, empty spot inside. The area she ultimately rented and turned into Mia's Corner was only 250 square feet. This wee shop focused on gifts and items related to gardening. Soon, success encouraged her to expand, and she found the right location to start Cedros Gardens.

In addition to being a savvy business woman, McCarville is a self-taught gardener. As a child in Japan, she grew up helping her parents tend vegetables, fruit



Garden decor, including sculpture, planters, fountains and furniture, is among the nursery's offerings.

trees and herbs. Learning on her own, she believes, liberated her from set ideas about gardening and landscaping. Her original

and elegant vision continues to shape the nursery and inspire creative gardening.

A recent development further sets this nursery apart. "We care for our plants completely organically," McCarville says. In practical terms, this means that as soon as a plant comes in, it is treated with only natural, organic fertilizers and pest control products. Indeed, the nursery is well-stocked with every kind of organic product imaginable.

Her favorite products are worm castings, E.B. Stone's Sure Start and HB 101. The last product is a liquid made from cedars, pines, cypress trees and plantains said to be a tonic for all phases of plant care.

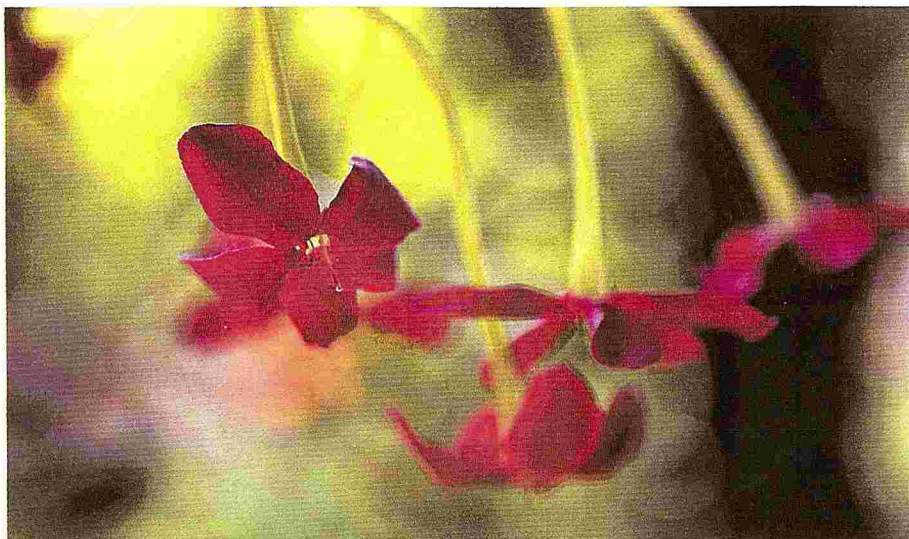
BOLD, UNEXPECTED COMBOS

Attention to details large and small starts with labels on every plant. Helpful "Did you know" signs offer facts about specific plants. Besides having beautiful examples of annuals and perennials, this

BEYOND THE USUAL: CEDROS GARDENS' RARITIES



'Teague's Blue' Bamboo



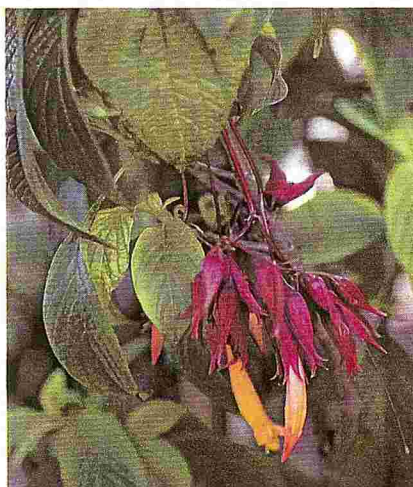
Rangoon Creeper

• **'Teague's Blue' Himalyan Blue Bamboo**
(*Himalayacalamus hookerianus*)

Bamboo choices are abundant at Cedros Gardens, but McCarville particularly likes this clumping variety because its dark green leaves don't fade to a washed out yellow-green as do those of many bamboo varieties. Named for local landscape designer Bill Teague, its stems have a subtle blue coloring. Plant this bamboo in morning sun and provide afternoon shade. Soon it will form an attractive clump about 20 feet tall. With well-draining soil, bamboo does well in most locations, as well as in large containers. Water frequently after planting, but once established, the plant becomes fairly drought-tolerant.

• **'Cristobal' Golden Fuchsia**
(*Deppea splendens*)

Native to the cloud forests of Mexico, and related to coffee, this plant is extinct in the wild. It is commonly called golden fuchsia because its pendulous red and yellow flowers look similar to the familiar favorite. McCarville also points to its intriguing puckered and pleated leaves. As with fuchsias, give this plant plenty of water and food to keep flowers coming. Expect this shrub-like plant to get about 8 feet tall. Grow golden fuchsia in shade except on the coast, where it enjoys morning sun. Because it is sensitive to frost, inland gardeners may need to overwinter this special plant in a sheltered



'Cristobal' Golden Fuchsia

spot. McCarville, who is excited to offer this rarity, says "you get an incredible plant and get to keep something from going extinct."

• **Coffee (*Coffea arabica*)**

While you won't get pounds of quality coffee, McCarville thinks it is novel to grow some in your yard. After two or three years, the trees produce fragrant white flowers, then coffee cherries that change from green to yellow and finally to red. Each cherry contains two coffee beans, which can be dried and roasted at home. However, it takes 1,700 beans (gulp!) to make a pound of coffee. To grow coffee, plant it in rich soil, provide

ample moisture, and give it afternoon shade. Trees can grow to 20 feet tall.

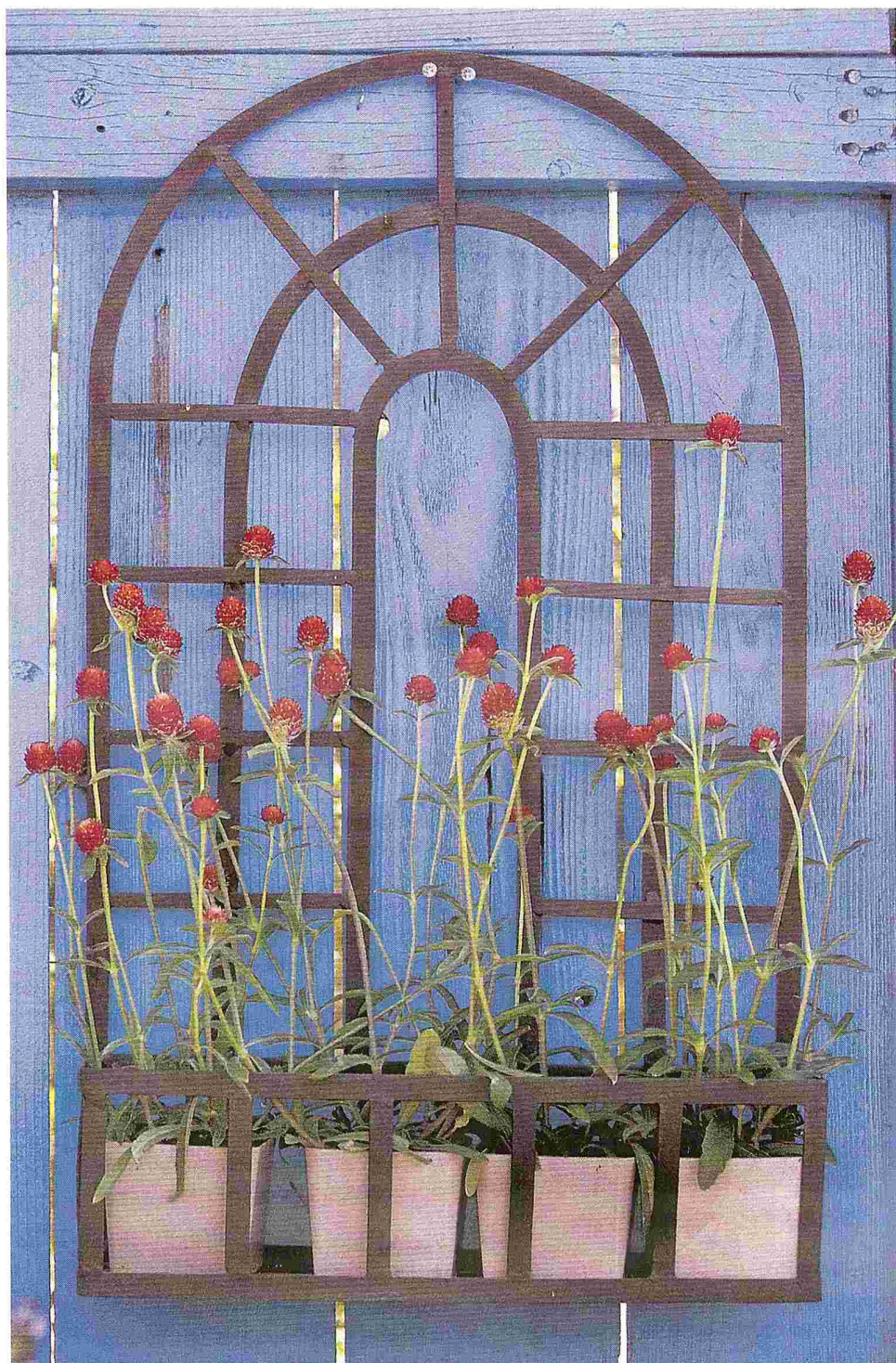
• **Rangoon Creeper (*Quisqualis indica*)**

The flowers on this perfumed vine bloom white the first day, then change to pink, and finally turn apple-red on the third day. It's a suitable finish for a plant known in Spanish as "jasmine apple" for its scent of freshly sliced apples and jasmine. A native of Africa and Asia, this plant takes off in the heat. Moreover, it flourishes on neglect, and rabbits ignore it. Trim this vine yearly, after it blooms, or it will become lanky. Additionally, give Rangoon creeper regular watering and mulch it with aged compost for optimum flowering.

• **Madagascar Jasmine or Bridal Veil**
(*Stephanotis floribunda*)

Stephanotis is also found in Africa, as well as Madagascar and Asia. Surprisingly, it is a member of the milkweed family, *Asclepiadaceae*. So expect to see this family's distinctive, milky sap when you prune. Used in many cultures for bridal bouquets, the exquisite flowers have a heady fragrance. The dark, leathery leaves perfectly show off the white blossoms, which seem carved from porcelain. Grow this tender tropical out of the wind and in bright light, but avoid direct sun. Make sure to plant it in a well-draining location because these vines are sensitive to overwatering.

— AENNE CARVER



Hot red blossoms of globe amaranth (*Gomphrena*) are a vivid contrast to the royal blue fence behind this iron planter.

well-kept nursery has some unusual gems as well.

Rare begonias, like 'Bonfire' (*Begonia boliviensis*), and unusual perennials such as cardinal flower (*Lobelia cardinalis*) abound. This perennial *Lobelia*, unlike the common blue-flowered annual, grows about 3 feet tall and sports burgundy foliage and red flower spikes.

In fact, if you want something uncom-

mon to replace a run-of-the-mill plant, just ask, and McCarville readily offers choices. Moreover, she knows regular customers by name and also uncannily recalls plants already in their gardens.

Cedros Gardens' manager, Julia Roach, helps create the nursery's signature container plantings and incredible plant displays. Roach, like McCarville, has a knack for creating eye-catching combinations.

NANCEE E. LEWIS / UNION-TRIBUNE



She calls their technique "high-contrast planting," which mixes bold textures and complementary colors. She begins with a color scheme, but there is much more to these artful arrangements, like choosing the perfect pot and throwing in unexpected touches, such as a tiny trailing sedum, blowsy grass or spiky New Zealand flax.

Any one of the nursery's practiced staff can fill a container for you or will come to your house to plant large containers. Both McCarville and Roach provide on-site landscape consultations to tweak your garden into surefire beauty.



Colorful annuals and perennials, including brilliant fall mums, sages and black-eyed Susans, pack the broad benches inside Cedros Gardens. The nursery also sells furniture, fountains and other garden decor.

GROUNDING GARDENING

The nursery is large, and the plants are varied, ranging from Australian natives to tiny succulents to large, exotic fruit trees. But the expert and helpful staff is on hand to guide you.

As you tour the nursery, look at the impressive shade plants, scented geraniums, exotic vines, vegetables, ornamental grass, succulent plantings and favorite and unusual herbs. Trellises, hanging baskets, outdoor furniture and fountains ring the quaint shed in the center of the

nursery where Daisy the cat curls up by the register. Go inside the house and discover large houseplants, wind chimes, gardening attire and tools, books, seeds and organic products. Notice the handsome hand-picked Japanese furniture that is made to be moved quickly in case of fire or earthquake. McCarville points out the convenient handles on the sides of even the largest chest.

Behind the house, McCarville has begun to offer classes on cooking and all aspects of gardening. "Cooking what you

grow truly grounds gardening," she explains. "Harvesting and eating from your yard is part of the wonderful cycle of gardening." Look for the current brochure, or check online at cedrosgardens.com, for upcoming classes taught by McCarville and visiting experts.

Walking across the parking lot from the main house, you hear a bevy of birds. An aviary filled with society finches, button quail and doves adds movement and joy to the space. To the left are lines of bamboo, cedar, juniper and fruit trees.

CEDROS GARDENS: THE INSIDE DIRT

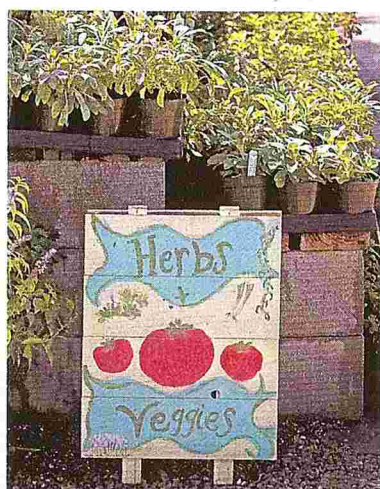
• **Got to have it:** Pick up a container artistically filled with jewel-like plants. Longer lasting than cut flowers, these plant-filled containers will add style to your garden. Prices vary depending on the size of the pot, but you can pick one with plenty of oomph for as little as \$25.

• **Dirt cheap:** Get a six-pack of unusual plants for only \$3.79. Choose from perennials rarely found in six-packs, like Serbian bellflower (*Campanula poscharskyana*), lamb's ears (*Stachys byzantina*), Mexican heather (*Cuphea hyssopifolia*), and creeping St. Johnswort (*Hypericum calycinum*).

• **After a good harvest:** Look for one-of-a-kind statues, like a classic woman's torso with an area on top of her head to plant for \$325. Or, grab a dramatic planter imprinted with the lower half of a face for \$102.

• **Gardening tips:** "Don't overlook the importance of negative space. Empty space in the garden is vital because it offsets your plants," says McCarville. This tenet of Japanese gardening is often overlooked by eager homeowners who want to fill every inch of soil. But allowing plants space to shine makes for a good-looking garden.

The phrase "borrowed landscape" is often connected to Asian-inspired gardens. McCarville explains, "This simply means, if the adjoining land has an attractive feature, use it to your advantage." For example, if a neighbor has a lovely tree, don't hide it with a fence. Instead, show off the adjacent tree by framing it with symmetrical pillars or containers. Or, if you can see a church or moun-



tains from your garden, make the most of that view.

In addition, McCarville advises, "Avoid putting plants in containers that are too large. So go up only one size when transplanting." She says this is especially important for small trees, like citrus, and for large shrubs. Too much empty space in pots leads to soggy roots and disease.

Finally, McCarville notes that most problems in container gardens are caused by improper watering. Remember, the longer a plant has been in a pot, the more the container will be filled by its roots. Consequently, there is less soil left to hold water. Thus, older plantings need watering more frequently. McCarville suggests watering until the bubbles stop coming up from the soil. Conversely, newly planted containers need less water because the soil has not been filled by roots.

• **Practical dirt:** Cedros Gardens is at 330 S. Cedros Ave., Solana Beach, in the Cedros Design District. For directions, visit cedrosgardens.com. Phone is (858) 792-8640. The nursery is open daily 9 a.m. to 5 p.m.

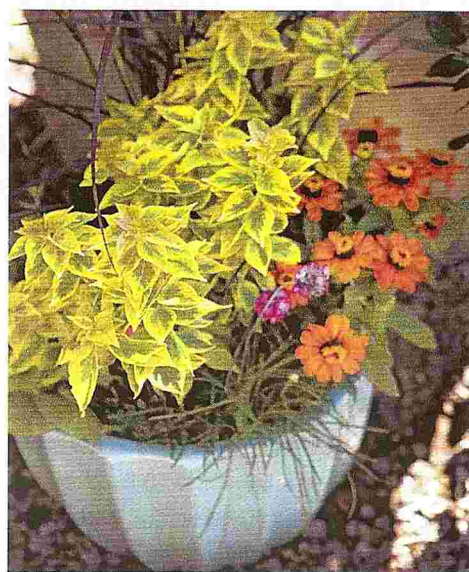
— AENNE CARVER

Crowning the lot, above the parking lot, is a host of diverse plants like succulents, roses, Australian natives, hardy geraniums, climbing vines and more. There is even a display vegetable garden brimming with edible inspiration.

Some aspects of gardening are easy to learn, like growing veggies, while other things are harder to grasp. This nursery stretches a gardener's aspirations with its minute detailing, polish and superb plant placement and selection.

Roach, the manager, says McCarville accomplishes this effortlessly. She likens McCarville's ability to the fifth taste or *umami* (pronounced oo-mommy) in Japanese cuisine. Identifying *umami* takes practice because it is not as obvious as other tastes, such as sweet and bitter. Likewise, McCarville's flair for design and plants is easy to see, but hard to duplicate or put into words.

Spending time near the sea in this exquisite nursery leaves you invigorated and filled with ideas to incorporate. You leave Cedros Gardens believing some of its unusual elegance and exuberance can be transplanted into your garden.



The Cedros Gardens staff designs custom plantings for containers selected by customers.

AENNE CARVER is an instructor at the San Diego Natural History Museum and a San Diego freelance writer.