

Project Description

Lilac Drive Residence

Montecito, California

Located on a 1.3 acre lot in the foothills of the Santa Inez Mountains in Montecito, California, the 3,600 square foot Lilac Drive Residence is nestled within a grove of old-growth Coast Live Oak trees. The strategic siting of the new, contemporary residence ensures the preservation of the existing trees. The landscape design also carries out the modern aesthetic of the architectural design. The way the volumes of the home weave through the landscape creates a visual paradox: the modern residence appears to have always existed within the established landscape.

A winter retreat for a Midwestern couple, the design maximizes opportunities for use of the outdoor spaces and views of the verdant landscape. The outdoor rooms closely relate to the residence and include areas for outdoor dining and cooking, swimming, and exploring the property through meandering natural stone paths. The surroundings further integrate with the house through the mutual use of local Santa Barbara sandstone, much of which was uncovered during the construction process onsite. The stone forms the dry-stacked site walls and architectural façade. Similarly, the design team preserved large native boulders, keeping some in place and repositioning others throughout the site to naturally retain slopes. Three large extensive green roofs, planted with grasses and succulents, further connect the residence to the landscape below. These connections emphasize nature and the landscape native to the southern end of the central California coast.

Serving as design architect, landscape architect, and general contractor on this project, the firm took an integrated design approach with a unified vision of a home that equally values the landscape and environment. The project team also collaborated with the Santa Barbara South County Board of Architectural Review to include a number of sustainable design solutions to minimize the impact in this environmentally sensitive area. In addition to preserving the Coast Live Oaks, the team protected and enhanced the plantings of an important creek and riparian zone which crosses the property line. Permeable surfaces on the majority of the landscape include gravel, decomposed granite, natural leaf litter, and mulch, allowing rainfall to recharge the aquifer. Green roofs add to the permeable area of the site, naturally insulating the residence while capturing rainwater for irrigation of the landscape. Plantings, visually dominated by species like Pheasant's Tail Grass (*Stipa arundinacea*) and Catalina Perfume (*Ribes viburnifolium*), have exemplary adaptability in low water conditions.