



# MINI *Meadow*

*How one couple got  
the carefree yard of  
their dreams.*

*by catherine warmerdan*

Landscaping:  
Gary Kernick,  
Change of Seasons



### WHEN AMY AND RODD

**KELSEY** hired landscape designer Gary Kernick of Change of Seasons to completely overhaul the backyard of their Sacramento home, they had several goals in mind: Remove the thirsty lawn. Create a dedicated dining space with room for a barbecue. Carve out an area for growing vegetables. And choose plants and materials that make maintenance easy. The trick was fitting all of these requests into a yard that's only about 1,000 square feet. After sketching out several different concepts, Kernick designed a plan that incorporated all of the couple's wants and needs into a carefree, meadowlike yard where not an inch of space is wasted.



### *The layout*

Working within a small footprint was the most challenging part of the project. "We had to take all the puzzle pieces and make them fit together in an aesthetic way and a functional way," says Kernick, who divided the space in the different zones based on function. The dining area was kept close to the house for convenience. A lounge area was situated along the back fence to create a destination and a view from the patio. In between, a planting area gives definition to the two spaces. A metal trough adjacent to the house is where the compact herb-and-vegetable garden resides.

### *The materials*

Kernick got creative with hardscape and fencing materials to give the yard what he describes as an "urban-industrial farmhouse" feel. "In a small garden, I think it's important that every part of it—from the plants to the paving to the walls and fences—be a part of the visual experience," explains Kernick. For example, new and recycled woods alternate in a pattern that makes up a fence along the dining area. Corrugated metal sheets on the wall add interest and reinforce the farmhouse look. Bold terra cotta-colored paint transforms a neighbor's garage wall into a focal point.



### ***The plants***

Kernick used the meadow as inspiration for his plant selection, which includes yarrow, dwarf butterfly bush and different varieties of grasses. "It's a plant palette that I really enjoy," says Kernick. "The homeowners were very interested in having a natural, loose, organic meadow feel, as well as plants that were going to attract butterflies and hummingbirds."

### ***The maintenance***

Because the Kelseys don't have a lot of free time to work in the yard, they needed an unfussy plant selection that didn't need a lot of tending, and Kernick delivered. "He thought really hard about the plants that he chose," says Amy. Most of the yard's perennials and grasses require just a hard prune each year, usually in February. That's a maintenance schedule that this busy couple can live with. As Amy explains, "We can go for months without touching the yard and it still looks good."