

Sunset

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AUGUST 2007

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Paradise at home

For a pair of world travelers, the best vacation spot is the luxuriant landscape they've created in their own Hawaii backyard

BY KATHLEEN N. BRENZEL PHOTOGRAPHS BY LISA ROMEREIN

THE FIRST HINT of the remarkable garden behind the low-slung house on Oahu comes just inside the front door. Landscape architect Greg Boyer and his wife, Lynn, both barefoot, greet guests with hugs, Hawaiian-style, then lead the way downstairs through their two-story atrium. The space has a distinctly Balinese flavor—temple bells tinkle in the soft breeze that wafts through the atrium's screen roof, while fish swim lazily in an urn set among jungly plants.

Stepping outdoors onto the back deck, however, is like throwing open a hotel room's windows for the first time onto a

Pink-striped heliconia glows like stained glass. **OPPOSITE** Stepping-stones, raised above the shallow pool to give the illusion of floating, lead to the Rice House, which Greg Boyer built from a kit. Red-trunked sealing wax palms grow at left. Stone panels set into the rock wall were designed by Lynn Boyer.



much-anticipated tropical view. Verdant foliage carpets the slope below, and on the valley floor, palm fronds dance in the warm breeze. Spots of color from gingers and heliconias glow amid the greenery, while heady fragrances of plumeria and gardenia perfume the air.

"Welcome to the tropics," Greg says. "This is what you get with 365 days of sun."

From this vantage point, the luxuriant tapestry appears as thick as ancient rain-forest canopy. In fact, as Greg can attest, the garden is just six years old.

The garden evolves

Not too long ago, a silver-blue fan palm was the only plant on the Boyers' slope, and a neighbor's cow grazed the flat land at the slope's base. "I wanted to make the ultimate tropical garden," Greg says, "because I love palms and scented plants." Although bridging the slope presented challenges, he called upon the same innovative spirit he's used to design landscapes throughout the islands—including the Big Island's Kohala Coast, where he created palm-fringed Edens out of solid lava rock. To move plants and materials more easily at his own property, Greg carved a road down the slope. He built the deck off the back of the house to step down toward the valley floor. He used rocks gathered over the years to build walls and fountains, made concrete pavers (with help from his crew) for a "fan palm path" that leads to a streamside patio, and planted palms, gardenias, and gingers. Plus he assembled three garden pavilions to serve as inviting destinations within the garden, connecting them with paths, steps, and floating walkways.

Blend of South Pacific styles

Roaming the globe for inspiration comes naturally to Greg, who took off after graduating from college in Michigan and meandered through Mexico, Costa Rica, India, Greece, and much of Europe before settling in Hawaii, where he taught landscape architecture at the University of Hawai'i and met Lynn. So it's not surprising that treasures gathered during the couple's travels fill the garden, whose style Greg calls "Polyn-Asian."

Just below the house, on the deck's second level, is a thatched-roof *balé* (Balinese pavilion) that Greg built from a kit. "It's one of our favorite spaces to relax," he says. The Rice House, a two-level structure shipped in pieces from Indonesia, nestles among palms at midslope; friends sometimes stay overnight here following parties. A dining pavilion, built of local materials to mimic a Balinese pavilion, is nearby. And a circle of palms at the far end of a lawn, planted on a platform of soil and edged with stones, recalls the *heiaus* (ancient Hawaiian temples) still standing throughout the islands. The garden looks like Hawaii and lives like Bali.

Every year the couple travels to Asia to sketch, paint, and seek out garden treasures. But they come home to paradise. "It's a refuge, an escape from the outside world," Greg says. "It reminds us of places we've traveled to."

DESIGN Greg Boyer—Hawaiian Landscapes, Kaneohe, Oahu, HI (www.hawaiianlandscapes.com or 808/239-8264) >94





TOP ROW Lynn and Greg Boyer relax in their balé. Concrete stepping-stones flanked by fan palms (*Licuala*) lead to a small patio. A monkey statue from Sumba, Indonesia, rests among brushlike *Agave geminiflora* and sago palms. **BOTTOM ROW** Slow-growing palms (*Carpoxylon macrospermum*) from the South Pacific archipelago of Vanuatu form an outdoor room. A red ginger is crowned with a bloom. Greg designed the reclining-head statue on the far wall and Lynn designed the front wall panel; both were carved by Balinese artisans.





The balé has poles of coconut wood bolted to the deck; blue rocks dress the concrete that surrounds their bases. Downlights wash the interior at night.

OPPOSITE 'Heaven Scent' gardenia, variegated heliconia, and a knotty-trunked dwarf date palm flank a stream.

Bring your vacation home

INSTALL A RETREAT

A pavilion or daybed (called a *pune'e* in Hawaii) makes an inviting outdoor destination on warm days. Choose one that reminds you of a favorite place—whether it's a beach in Baja California or a Hawaiian *hale* (house). The Boyers' *balé* is from Indonesia, but you can custom-order a similar model from the Sacred Space in Summerland, CA (from \$4,300; www.thesacredspace.com or 805/565-5535). Set it away from the house so that getting to it feels like a journey.

USE EXOTIC WOODS

AND FABRIC Select furniture made of teak or rattan and add outdoor rugs of synthetic materials made to look like woven grass. Use Javanese batik or Hawaiian *tapa* for pillows and throws. Fill containers with bromeliads, *Caladium bicolor*, cannas, elephant's ear (*Alocasia*), or small palms.

DISPLAY SCULPTURE

AMID FOLIAGE Stone statues from Asia are meaningful garden accents in the Boyers' garden; they're tucked among foliage so that coming upon them is a surprise. One source for similar statuary is the Sacred Space (listed above), or shop import stores for reproductions of antique statuary or wood carvings. ■

