

Backyard Edens

A WELL-DESIGNED HAWAIIAN GARDEN IS A PRIVATE PARADISE

Text by/ Marcus Webb

Photography by/ Greg Boyer, Barbara Pritchard, and Jeanne Marie



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ALL OF HAWAII COULD BE described as one big garden—although not in the sense of a cultivated plot of ground. Hawai'i-As-Garden belongs more to the “Garden of Eden” tradition: a lush, fertile, idyllic display of nature at its most enchanting.

When 21st century human habitats are built within Hawai'i's island-gardens, something ironic happens. Great care and planning must be invested to preserve Hawai'i's seemingly effortless harmony of humankind and nature. Doing so requires talent, skill, and sensitivity.

These qualities are strikingly on display in residential Hawaiian gardens created by landscape artist Greg Boyer and his team at Hawaiian Landscapes (Kahalu'u, O'ahu). In addition, Island nature and Asian tropical culture happily coexist in gardens created with the assistance of two highly professional Asian garden art supply firms: Nevara International (Barbara and Neville Nevara, propri-



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etors) and Jeanne Marie International (Jeanne Marie, proprietor). Both are located in Kona.

Greg Boyer has been designing Hawaiian residential projects and home gardens for 30 years. His prestigious client list includes Hollywood celebrities and Fortune 500 CEOs. Boyer's “dreamscape” designs have always included sculpture, pots, stone lanterns, and boulders. “The need for garden art in projects has always been necessary, as accents, focal points, or simply a place to add interest in the garden,” he explains. “When designing places in the gar-



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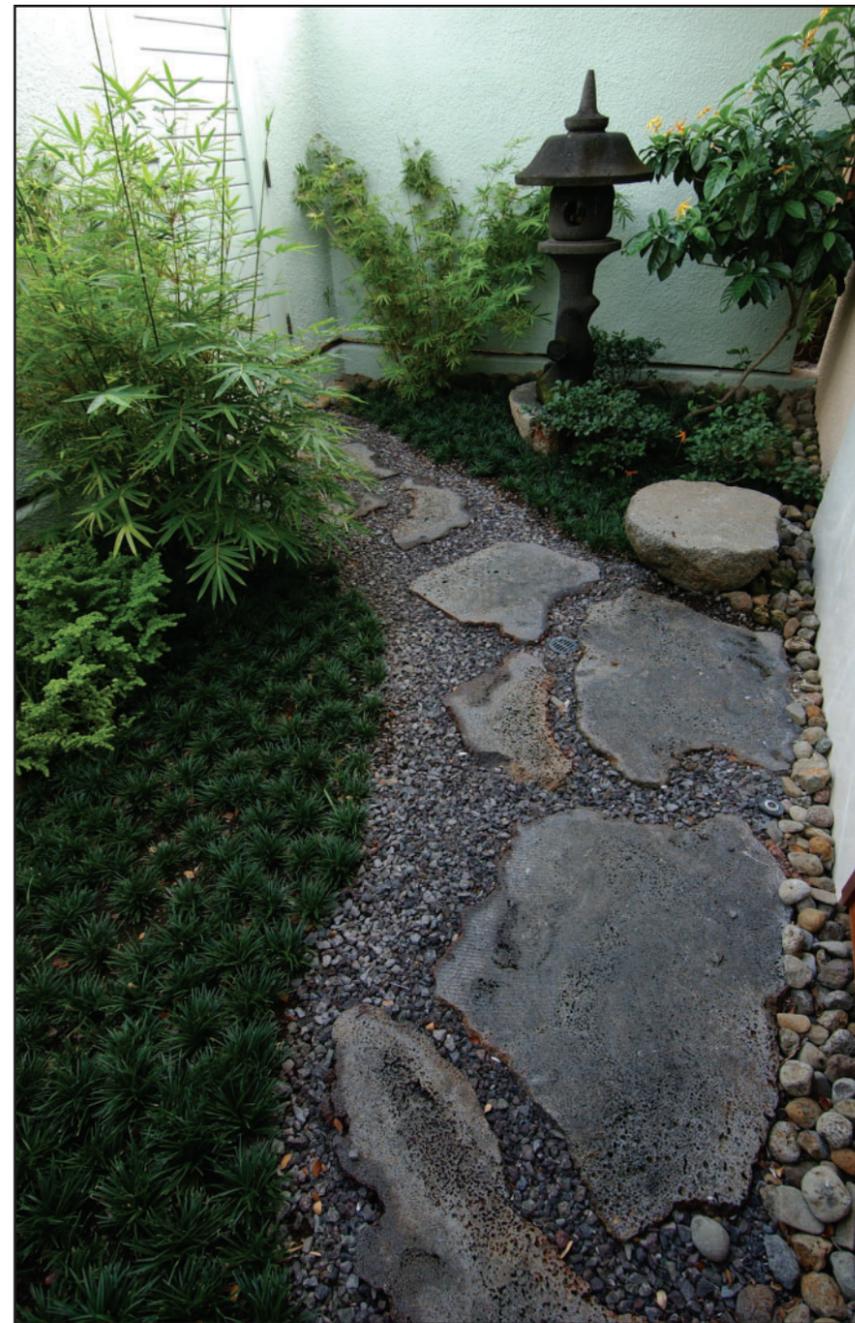
den to sit, I'm encouraging people to come out of the house and go to outdoor spaces.

"I have always felt that one of the main functions of the garden was to encourage people to come out into a natural sitting and spend some time," Boyer adds. "In my heart I have always felt garden settings materially help my clients...that plants, sky, birds, and nature have the power to heal."

Enchanting "Boyer-scapes" include designs inspired by naturalistic Japanese gardens, in which rocks are arranged as if by happenstance. In more stylized designs, inspired by Zen gardens, boulders stand like islands surrounded by seas of raked gravel, inviting visitors to contemplation.

"In entry gardens the Japanese used lanterns carved out of stone as focal elements and as a means to add light to the garden, and to light garden paths," Boyer recounts. "Today the use of stone lanterns is very popular, even in gardens just leaning towards an Asian flavor." Boyer's most recent trip to Bali yielded stone lanterns in all shapes and sizes. Recently he used several new carved stone lanterns in a Hawaiian residential garden for Hollywood producer Steven and Dayna Bochco.

Boyer also likes carved stone panels from Bali, which range from small blocks of simple geometric shapes, just one foot



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square, to entire wall units. These can help define the space of a garden. Water features, fountains and stone walls can evoke powerful yet tranquil sensations. Boyer's personal garden includes a large, carved stone head that seems to be dreaming as a small waterfall emerges from between two carved stone hands.

At Nevara International, Barbara and Neville Nevara focus on Asian antiques from China, Burma, Laos, Thailand, and beyond. Their ever-changing inventory is acquired during personal shopping expeditions to places they learned about during 27 years in the Orient.

Supplying garden art to Hawai'i since 1993, one of Nevara's specialties is large, one-of-a-kind, ceramic urns and pots, mostly from Thailand. Sporting very high glazes, these wonderful hand-thrown artifacts range up to five feet high and five feet in diameter. Many glazes have striking brown and beige striations;

some are deep blue.

"These urns have been made the same way by traditional Thai artisans for centuries," says Barbara. "They offer spectacular additions to a Hawaiian garden in themselves, or used as the basis for a bubbling fountain so that the lip of the pot is perpetually overflowing and water runs down the sides." Fountain sprays can barely bubble above the surface, or shoot up two and three feet high for a more dramatic look and sound.

Other types of fountains supplied by Nevara include self-contained, huge bronze structures, some resembling leaping sailfish or other marine life or land animals. A recent fountain utilized monkey sculptures; water supply tubes were squeezed tightly so that the animal's mouths emitted mist—as if you could see their breath. One of the Nevara's most striking fountains was a six-foot-tall bronze fish sculpture. A large fish had an Art Deco tail; smaller fish streamed off it. "It was one of a kind," says



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Barbara. “We feature single, unique pieces so that our customers will know they won’t see the same thing popping up all over the Islands.”

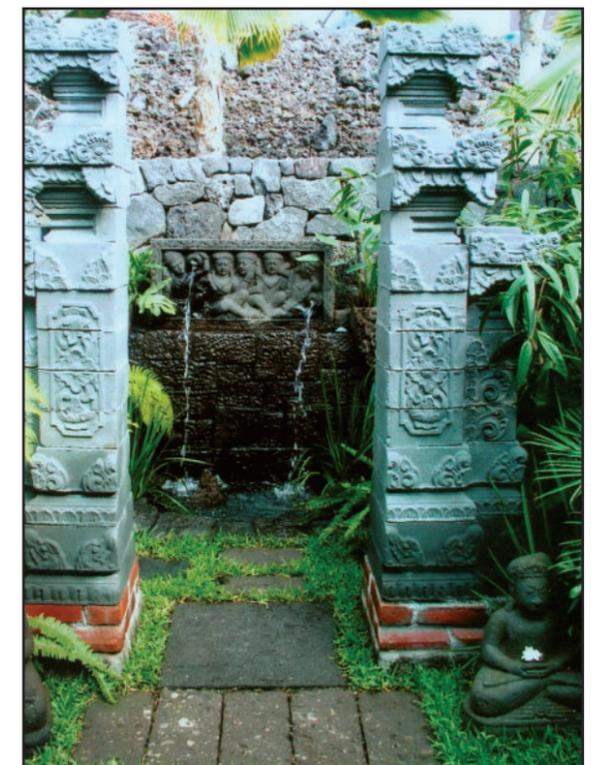
A ceramic tea caddy serves as a fine ornamental piece, usable for garden flower arrangements or as the foundation for a table. Popular accent pieces include

bronze Thai traditional flute players, Buddha heads, and sculpted animals and fish. Ancient and traditional gongs are very popular with Nevara’s clientele these days but wind chimes are out.

Stone faces are yet another Nevara specialty. A spectacular recent example: a five by six foot freestanding giant Buddha face. Water trickling down its surface and a bamboo curtain stood behind it.

Jeanne Marie Imports also understands how water motifs add appeal and life to a garden. “The sound of water brings life and tranquility into a garden setting says Jeanne Marie, who has been offering imported artworks and artifacts from Indonesia for 15 years. “Water plants are very popular,” she adds, “because they are low-maintenance and add life and color to a garden.” Antique drinking urns—over 400 years old—that were originally used for water storage in an Indonesian village can be converted to beautiful planters in a water garden, housing lotuses and water lilies.

JMI’s finds come from 18 different islands—from Sumba to Sumatra, Borneo, and Bali. “These are the largest jungles in the world, and each island has its own dialect and culture,” Jeanne





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Marie shares. “My visits there are a never-ending voyage of discovery.”

Archways, gateways, antique doors, and antique porcelain are among the “finds” at JMI. Visitors can also select from a wide variety of antique musical instruments. Bronze gongs, bamboo flutes, teak drums, and even gamelung (a traditional Indonesian zylaphone-type instrument) make wonderful garden accent pieces.

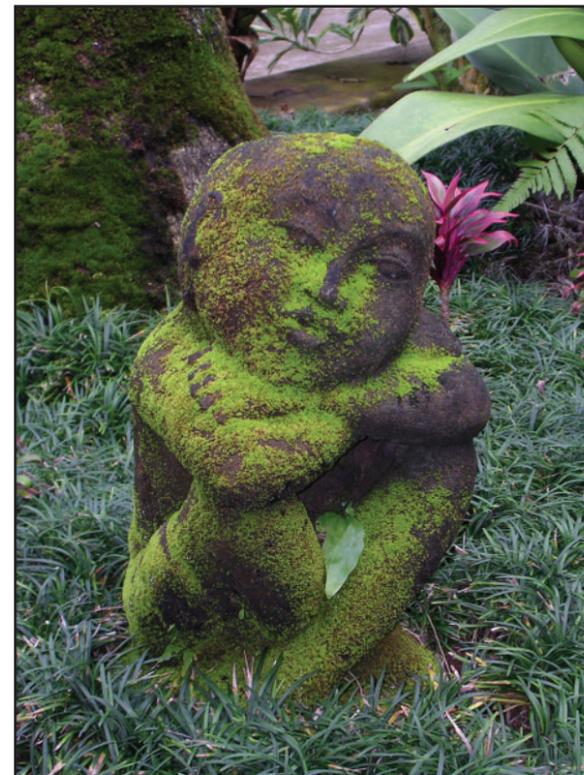
“In Hawai’i we live outside as well as inside,” says Jeanne Marie. To encourage outdoor activity, weather-friendly furniture is a must. JMI imports teak furniture that is already weathered, patina’ed and distressed over hundreds of years. Benches, armoires, tables, councils, chairs, lounges, and even day beds are popular garden accessories. All hand-carved from different stones or woods. “We can put a thatched roof on top of the day beds to protect from sun and rain,” the proprietor chuckles.

Stone is an entire category of delights at JMI. Ancient reliefs for rock walls in a garden tell a story; many feature images of Indonesian deities, mythic heroes, or legendary characters as well as monkeys, lions, and mythical beasts. Additional imports include new stone carvings that are fashioned in traditional ways. Says Jeanne: “It’s really a pleasure to meet artisans who are creating works using techniques that have been passed down in their families for generations.”



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Possibly the most impressive stones in JMI’s collection are geodes from Madura. Geodes are a natural rock formation from a volcanic explosion. Hundreds of thousands of years olds, JMI’s geodes range in size from 18 inches to five feet. Since they cool in the ocean, geode colors include terra cotta, russet, and coral colors.

Entire antique buildings—such as heavily carved teak rice houses on stilts, usually 175 years old or even older—are also available from JMI to complete a garden’s exotic Asian tropical look.

The Boyers, the Nevaras, and Jeanne Marie share a common love and respect for Hawai’i’s natural beauty. They also possess deep knowledge of the Asian arts and artifacts that can transform a garden-variety vista into a private Hawaiian paradise. ❁