


 IDEA GARDEN

EASY BREEZY

An Orange County family brings the beach to the backyard. *By Johanna Silver*

WHEN YOU LIVE in Newport Beach, California, the ocean is a part of life. “We spend a ton of time in the water—either at the beach or on our boat,” says homeowner Dandy O’Shea. Back home, though, her family’s backyard—a bland patch of grass—didn’t reflect this lifestyle. So they hired garden designer Molly Wood (*mollywoodgardendesign.com*) to transform the spot into a beachy retreat.

With Wood’s help, the O’Sheas removed the grass (“We went at it with pickaxes!” says Wood) and poured slabs of light-colored concrete to make the narrow yard feel bigger. By leaving a 4-inch gap between concrete slabs, Wood created subtle room dividers between areas for barbecuing, lounging, or roasting s’mores. Smooth, dark river rocks fill some of the gaps between pavers, while cranesbill (*Erodium reichardii*), watered by drip irrigation, fills others.

A blue-on-blue color scheme—on cushions, an easy-to-clean polypropylene rug, and a collection of translucent glass vessels—references the beach and ties into the home’s color scheme. “I have blue in every room in my house,” says O’Shea. “Having it out here really makes it feel like a bonus room.”

Completing the beachy theme is a fountain that was modeled after one in Wood’s shop. O’Shea’s two sons helped mortar seashells to the backdrop, including several abalone shells their father found while diving. O’Shea can hear the trickling water from her bedroom, and at night, she says the sound soothes her to sleep—much like the breaking of the waves. →

▲ OUTDOOR LIVING

Sky and sea hues inspired the color theme. “I love every shade of blue,” says garden designer Molly Wood.



Concrete pavers make the space look larger—and give the family dog a warm surface for lounging.



▲ **TURN WATER INTO ART**

For the fountain Wood arranged shells in a pattern that lets water meander gently to the basin below. Shells and pebbles are attached to a masonry base with mortar. Some shells are planted with small succulents; others overflow, spilling water into the shell below.

➤ **REPURPOSE FOUND ITEMS**

An old wrought-iron railing, discovered at a flea market, serves as the backing for a concrete bench—the perfect pairing of O’Shea’s modern aesthetic and her husband’s more traditional one.



▲ **ADD A TOUCH OF GREEN**

“Irish moss is magical,” says Wood, who grew up in Oregon. She gets her lush green fix by confining the ground-cover to tabletop decor. Her tips for keeping it happy: Position it out of direct sunlight, keep it moist, and treat it as an annual—replace when needed.

▼ **KEEP MAINTENANCE EASY**

A tabletop planting of small succulents looks graphic while needing little water. Elsewhere in the garden (see page 40), larger succulents, including potted *Kalanchoe beharensis*, hold their shape, while low-water perennials, including *Pittosporum tenuifolium* ‘Silver Sheen’, offer a range of form and texture. 🌿

