

HOME+GARDEN

# DESIGN

WINTER 2023



Meet the company  
turning recycled steel  
into custom-built homes

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Grow a garden like  
the pros at Filoli estate

PAGE 21

The perfect  
**backyard  
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Palo Alto senior  
designs ADU to  
age in place

PAGE 6



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# DESIGN

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## ON THE COVER

Judy Ousterhout, left, stands in the kitchen of the accessory dwelling unit, designed by Stephanie Batties, right, on her property in Palo Alto. Photo by Magali Gauthier.



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# Old Becomes New



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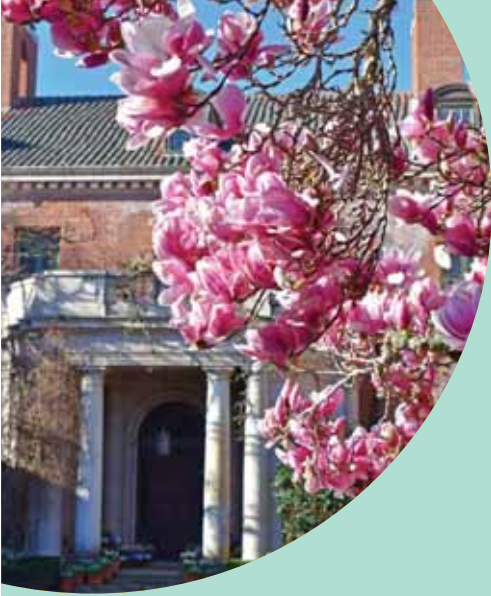
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## A retirement home for **aging in place**

*Palo Alto ADU provides income, accessibility*

STORY BY  
ELIZABETH LORENZ

PHOTOS BY  
MAGALI GAUTHIER

Over the past few years, Judy Ousterhout had been pondering her future as a healthy older adult: Where would she retire? How could she generate extra income? Would she be willing to leave her Palo Alto home?

The longtime Palo Alto resident, who bought her two-bedroom home on Channing Avenue in 1975, decided that building a home in her backyard was the answer.

Working with Stephanie Batties, her former business partner from The Right Touch Designs, Ousterhout custom-designed her perfect “retirement” home tucked behind a garage at the end of her long driveway.

In August 2022, the city did its final inspection on her

472-square-foot ADU and adjacent new one-car garage, which took two years to complete.

“One of the things I wanted was privacy for myself and privacy for the tenant,” said Ousterhout, who plans to rent out the backyard home. Her design allows her and her labradoodle to use her backyard and pool without being visible from the new unit’s living area.

Because a garage was included in her project, she was able to position the new unit along the fence line, maximizing space for a private-access gated walkway leading to the home, which matches the property’s main gray stucco residence.

Clerestory windows let plenty of light into the living space, without

sacrificing Ousterhout’s privacy. At the back of the home’s living room, a large sliding-glass door opens onto an ample wood deck, extending the living space outdoors. The floors throughout the unit are synthetic material designed to look like wide-plank weathered wood. Oil-rubbed bronze door and cabinet handles and fixtures offer rich contrast to the bright white walls throughout the home.

The kitchen is cleverly simple, with dark charcoal quartz counters, a four-burner Wolf induction cooktop, an under-counter refrigerator and a separate under-counter freezer. Ousterhout sacrificed an oven, but installed a microwave and toaster oven.

For such a small home, there

is a deceptive amount of storage with cabinets tucked neatly into nearly every space. There’s even a specially designed desk nook off the kitchen.

Many of her ideas came from attending open houses for local homes with guest properties. She took pictures of things she liked and began curating her plan. Designer Batties was able to draw and submit elevations to the city for the permitting process.

Throughout her project, Ousterhout replicated things from her own home, including appliance brands and fixtures she liked, and created spaces like a desk nook that she thought she would use.

“My decisions were made on what would I want if I lived here,” she said.





Facing page: Clerestory windows provide lots of natural light and privacy for Judy Ousterhout's backyard accessory dwelling unit.

Left: Ousterhout, left, discusses the small space in which the washing machine fits in the accessory dwelling unit, designed by Stephanie Batties, right.

Below: Pull-out kitchen shelves and a built-in desk and cabinetry provide plenty of storage.

Just past the desk down a short hallway lies the minimalist bedroom. The high ceilings continue here, along with an ample closet.

The bathroom has a high window, streams of light and a glass-enclosed shower. The sink is one piece of white quartz on a custom-designed cabinet with two drawers cut around the under-the-sink pipe to maximize storage. A stacked Miele washer and dryer are tucked next to the shower with storage above. There's also a white screen that can be pulled down to conceal the laundry nook. Again, Ousterhout made decisions by

asking, "Who will be living here? What do they want when they come home?"

Ousterhout said she zeroed in on the idea for a living unit on her property several years ago, around the same time the city of Palo Alto was making it easier for property owners to build extra living space.

"As I was embarking into my older years, I had two thoughts: I might eventually need help living close by, and I might need the additional income," she said.

(continued on page 8)





Left: This entrance leads into the accessory dwelling unit on Judy Ousterhout's property in Palo Alto. Right: Sliding glass doors lead to a deck that expands the home's living space. Below: Tall trees are visible through a small, but high, window in the living room of the accessory dwelling unit.

**'I MIGHT  
EVENTUALLY  
NEED HELP  
LIVING CLOSE BY,  
AND I MIGHT  
NEED THE  
ADDITIONAL  
INCOME.'**

— Judy Ousterhout,  
Palo Alto resident

(continued from page 7)

"As life goes on, it's not a bad idea."

Ousterhout isn't alone in utilizing her property for additional living space. Local interest in accessory dwelling units has surged in Palo Alto in recent years. In 2015, the city received only 10 permit applications for these structures. The number climbed to 75 in 2019 and to 78 in 2020. In 2021, it soared to 136, according to a 2022 city report.

Ousterhout said she did her

research, meticulously reviewing each requirement in the city's ADU handbook.

The ADU, however, didn't happen without challenges, she said.

Ousterhout said she started the project in early 2020, just as the world shut down because of the pandemic. That meant she could only meet with city planning staff by phone or over Zoom rather than in person.

Another early hurdle was complying with state and federal flood zone restrictions, and relying on

the planning staff to discover and correct a surveying error, which would have mistakenly required her new dwelling to be higher than her original home.

After the plans were approved, the permit issued and the unit nearly complete, the city overlooked an installed utility box that was placed outside the unit. It turned out the box needed to be placed inside to protect it from the weather. Hence, the box was reinstalled inside, on the back bedroom wall, covered by a colorful quilt.

Ousterhout said despite a few unexpected challenges, building a secondary housing unit on her property has been worth it.

Her next task, she said, will be carefully advertising her unit to the right tenant. ■

*Elizabeth Lorenz is a  
freelance writer.*

**Designer:** Stephanie Batties,  
The Right Touch Designs,  
righttouchdesigns.com;  
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# HOMES OF STEEL

*Meet the family business manufacturing net-zero houses strong enough to withstand termites, mold, fire, quakes*

BY DAVID GOLL

It was the aspiration of Stanford's Atmosphere and Energy Program director to live in a net-zero home that was "strong, durable and could withstand a major earthquake, as well as termites and mold," that brought Canadian homebuilder Marc Bovet to Stanford in 2016 to build his first home in the state made of recycled steel.

The prefab steel frame pieces arrived in one truckload from Canada and were snapped together in less than a week, creating the shell for Mark Jacobson's new 3,000-square-foot home, which reportedly cost an estimated \$1.5 million. Solar panels coupled with Tesla Powerwall battery packs were installed to produce enough electricity to power the entire house plus two cars.

Since then, Bovet has exhibited steely determination to shake up the North American home market with steel frame, custom-built homes manufactured by his family-operated business, Bone Structure.

Bovet now employs a staff of 40 architects, engineers, technologists and urban planners and operates a satellite office in San Francisco in addition to the company's Laval headquarters in Quebec, Canada. He has built hundreds of homes coast to coast in Canada and throughout California, including about two dozen along the Midpeninsula in Palo Alto, Menlo Park and Atherton.

Bovet, who founded Bone Structure in 2005, said the company's steel construction system "just made sense." The goal, he said, is to create "homes that are not just energy efficient, but comfortable."

The company's homes are built from steel tubes manufactured in factories and designed to be attached together on-site. The framing system used in the homes is 88% recycled steel, mostly made of smashed cars.

Each Bone Structure house is custom-designed and built with modular components, with no interior bearing walls. Bovet said homes range in size from 600 to 22,000 square feet.

Bone Structure designs and plans homes for its owners, who then work with local builders and contractors to construct the homes, Bovet explained.

Assembled in pre-built sections and then delivered to the construction site, Bovet likens the building process as similar to using such toys as erector sets or Legos.

The horizontal steel pieces snap into place and are strong enough to support the interior finishes, including Sheetrock or tile, he said.

Bovet said the pre-assembled sections have clear connections for specialists like plumbers and electricians to follow for their part in the construction.

The pieces are "heavily engineered. All components are laser cut," said Bovet's son Charles, who received his master's degree in civil and environmental engineering and construction from Stanford University in 2013 and now serves as the company's vice president of business development. He noted that they use a patented "ankle" that allows some wiggle room in fitting those precisely cut components into the poured-concrete foundation.

While the homes lend themselves to modern designs with long beam spans, the company's homes can be finished in stucco, brick or wood siding. The insulation, a combination of polystyrene panels and spray foam, are applied



Marc Bovet

Left: Steel support beams can be seen during construction of the Bone Structure home built in Stanford in 2016. Photo by Veronica Weber.





Left: The framing system for Bone Structure homes is made of steel tubes manufactured in factories and designed to connect together on-site. Courtesy Bone Structure. Right: Bone Structure built its first California home, shown here during construction, in Stanford in 2016. The home's frame was built using laser-cut steel and spray foam insulation. Photo by Veronica Weber. Bottom: Local residents had an opportunity to tour this home under construction in Palo Alto in late 2022 during an open house highlighting the company's framing system. Courtesy Bone Structure.



to the outside steel frame of the home and then covered up with whatever material the architect calls for. The plumbing and electrical infrastructure can be “threaded” through the steel frames through pre-cut holes.

Bovet said he didn't start out using steel when he first entered the homebuilding sector. When he founded Bone Structure, Bovet used conventional building materials in his first project, but an unsuccessful launch led him to seek inspiration from above — literally — to move forward with his fledgling business.

“I was driving near the (Montreal) airport when a jet thundered overhead,” Bovet said, recalling his trip down a highway past Trudeau International Airport. “It occurred to me as it successfully took flight that the plane was not made of wood, but steel.”



He seized upon that inspiration.

After “a lot of trial error,” Bovet said his company settled on the use of steel-frame residential structures, which he says avoids such wood structure deterioration problems like termites and mold, is more seismically safe, fire and flood resistant, and sustainable. Since the “bones” of his homes contain 88% recycled steel, the construction process does not create mountains of waste typical of conventional building sites, he added.

Superior levels of energy efficiency are achieved through airtight insulation by combining rigid and foam insulation materials that can reduce heating and cooling costs by up to 90% compared to traditional construction, according to company information.

Another distinctive feature of Bone Structure homes are

floor-to-ceiling windows that afford sweeping views and accentuate the soya-based polyurethane insulation “thermal envelope” that reduces energy use, Bovet said.

He views the Bone Structure process as a simplified one that makes the home-building experience a less stressful one for homeowners.

Over the past seven years, Bone Structure has seen demand for their homes increase along the Midpeninsula. The company recently revealed its newest local structure to the public on Wilson Street in Palo Alto this past November. During the three-day open house for the two-story home, Bovet said about 350 visitors stopped by for a look, including former Mayor Patrick Burt, with whom he had a lengthy chat, he said.

Jacobson, the Stanford University professor who commissioned Bovet to build the first Bone Structure home in California, said as a professor of civil and environmental engineering, he has focused his academic career on finding large-scale renewable energy solutions to problems posed by air pollution and the climate crisis. That is why he turned to Bone Structure.

The two-story four bedroom and three-bath home that Bone Structure designed for him on the Stanford campus is completely self-sufficient, Jacobson said.

“I have been able to sell electricity

back to the grid, to Silicon Valley Clean Energy,” said Jacobson, who also charges his electric vehicles at his residence. “I have not paid an electric, gasoline or natural gas bill in five years.”

Jacobson said he had a positive experience working with Bone Structure on the design and planning of his home. From that initial contact through today, the Stanford professor said he remains impressed with the company's process and results.

“The construction process yields reduced waste compared to traditional construction,” Jacobson said. “And then there are the big savings on energy.”

Though it may only represent a small part of the Midpeninsula market at present, Palo Alto Realtor Brian Chancellor sees growth potential for this selective, high-end residential segment.

“There is a well-informed, cutting-edge segment of the Midpeninsula luxury market very attuned to the issues of energy efficiency and sustainability,” said Chancellor, who works in the Palo Alto office of Sereno Group.

“I think the Midpeninsula market is ripe for this type of home for the right type of homebuyers,” he said. “There is absolutely a market for this here.” ■

*Email Freelance Writer David Goll at david.w.goll@gmail.com.*





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# Eichler's 1954 'suburban utopia' remains virtually intact nearly 7 decades later



*His iconic flat-roofed, single-story glass houses still define Greenmeadow's streetscapes*

BY BO CRANE

From the ornate Victorians to the early shingle-style Craftsman to the California Colonial look championed by homegrown architect Birge Clark in the 1920s to the midcentury modern Eichlers that began popping up in the 1950s, Palo Alto boasts a hodgepodge of architectural styles that span more than 100 years.

This column takes a look at the history and significance of Joseph Eichler's Greenmeadow subdivision in south Palo Alto that the famed builder developed in 1954 as a place where average middle-class families could live in a tight-knit community of affordable luxury homes.



Joseph Eichler's work in Palo Alto's Greenmeadow neighborhood was unlike most other subdivisions in the city at the time: He developed the south Palo Alto neighborhood with 270 similarly styled midcentury modern homes (now known as "Eichlers") built around a centrally located community center that would serve as the core of neighborly activity.

Situated between Alma Street, East Charleston, Middlefield and San Antonio roads, the 22-block neighborhood is listed on the National Register of Historic Places for its prevalence of pristine Eichlers, providing visitors a good look at the suburban utopia the builder envisioned when he developed the area nearly seven decades ago.

The Eichler style is immediately recognizable: clerestory windows (often triangular) at

the front, vertical exterior redwood siding, concrete fireplaces, post and beam interior construction, open living spaces with high ceilings, and full plate-glass rear walls. All of his homes from this era were single-story to provide privacy to back-to-back homes while keeping flat or slightly sloped roofs.

The homes in Greenmeadow represent Eichler's early venture into a more upscale market for middle-class families. Designed by the architecture team of A. Quincy Jones and Frederick Emmons, homes in the Greenmeadow subdivision came in six different floor plans, including a larger four-bedroom model that featured a double garage and

a separate family room. Other features included kitchens with built-in appliances, modern laundry rooms and a second bathroom with its own exterior entrance so children could enter without tracking dirt into the home. Eichler's T-shaped floorplan also provided a view of the outdoor space from the kitchen, allowing women to keep an eye on their children while preparing dinner.

The homes felt bigger inside than their square footage and more modern than other subdivision houses, which enabled Eichler to charge a little more while still keeping prices affordable. Homes in the neighborhood sold for an average of \$17,000. Today, the average home value in Greenmeadow is \$1.4 million, according to real estate site Trulia.

Along with his modern architecture,



Joseph Eichler. Courtesy Palo Alto Historical Association.





Homes in Joseph Eichler's Greenmeadow subdivision were offered in six floorplans. They all shared similar exterior features, such as clerestory windows, as show in both photos above. Courtesy Bo Crane. Facing page, bottom: The community center, built as part of the planned subdivision in the 1950s, remains the center of neighborhood activities. Courtesy Bo Crane. Facing page, top: Even remodeled homes in the neighborhood, like this one, have retained much of their original features. Photo by Veronica Weber.

Eichler strategically located the neighborhood in close proximity to five schools and Mitchell Park. He also established a swim club and mini-park in the center of the neighborhood that he sold to the homeowners' association at half his asking price. The center still serves as the neighborhood's primary facilities today.

Because of Eichler's fair housing policies, Greenmeadow also played a historic role in opening the door for Black and Asian homeowners in Palo Alto. Eichler was the first local builder to proclaim that he favored selling houses to buyers of various racial and ethnic backgrounds. The Greenmeadow tract welcomed Eichler's first Black homebuyers.

Eichler was not an architect and never swung a hammer, yet he built more than 11,000

homes throughout California, including 32 projects in Palo Alto, totaling 2,700 houses.

The former San Francisco dairyman decided to become a merchant builder after moving to Hillsborough in 1942 with his wife and two sons into a home designed by famed architect Frank Lloyd Wright. Eichler was reportedly taken with the home's innovative and open design. He first built in Sunnyvale in 1949 with purchased flat-roof plans. He continued building custom homes until his death in 1974.

Greenmeadow, which has been virtually preserved in time, remains a pristine example of Eichler's vision to create a utopian community for middle-class families in the post-war era. Those visiting the neighborhood can enjoy street after street and cul-de-sac after cul-de-sac of iconic Eichler homes. ■

## HOW TO IDENTIFY CLASSIC EICHLERS

Developer Joseph Eichler built more than 11,000 homes in California, with most located in the Bay Area, between the 1940s and the 1970s. His midcentury modern homes, noted for their sleek lines, open floor plans and emphasis on indoor-outdoor living, became known as "Eichlers" early in his career. Most of his homes, but not all (he did build a handful of two-story homes in Palo Alto and in Ladera near Portola Valley, as well as barn-style homes with pitched roofs in Los Altos), share similar features. Here are features commonly found in a "classic" Eichler:

- Single-story
- Flat or slightly sloped roofs, as well as some chevron-shaped roofs in Greenmeadow
- Typically small clerestory windows (often triangular) at the front
- Often vertical exterior redwood siding
- Garage, carport located on the front façade
- Full plate-glass rear walls
- Concrete fireplaces
- Atriums
- Post-and-beam interior construction
- Open living spaces with high ceilings
- Living spaces located at back of house

*Bo Crane is a Palo Alto native and graduate of Stanford University. As secretary of Palo Alto Stanford Heritage, he organizes and leads architectural/historical tours of Palo Alto neighborhoods. He also is a board member of Palo Alto Historical Association and historian for the Menlo Park Historical Association.*





## Retreat to a place of tranquility

Remodeling a bathroom is one of the best ways to fall in love with your home again. A relaxing retreat just steps away from the hustle and bustle of a busy home life is a great way to reduce stress and maintain a happy family.

This bathroom was designed to be especially luxurious, complete with a large ofuro, a classic Japanese soaking tub. An ofuro is deeper than a traditional bathtub, allowing for a full body soak. The temperature of the bath can be regulated to create just the right environment for relaxation. Ofuro soaking tubs have great ergonomics and can even be used for an ice bath after a marathon or long bike ride.

Executing a bathroom remodel of this nature can be daunting,

especially for busy professionals who don't have a lot of time to spare. Therefore, it's important to find a team you can trust before starting this kind of project. The team you collaborate with can either save you time and money or cause time-consuming and expensive headaches.

Michael Mok is one of two co-founders of Bridges MR, the firm hired to help with the bathroom remodel. Mok specializes in working with busy individuals to minimize the amount of time required of clients. He led the Bridges MR team as the general contractor along with a professional interior design partner, C&C Designs.

"My parents had a project done 25 years ago when I was in high school. This year I realized the wall

was primed and not painted, so I know why it's important to do the job right until the very end," Mok said. "We took particular care to be aware of the details, down to the building codes and methods used at the time the house was built."

This deep knowledge of the industry gave the owners and the remodel team a firm understanding of the logistics and risks of the project. They needed to determine how they would lay out the tile, reroute plumbing and obtain the proper permit — all while ensuring the project met or exceeded current California building codes.

If you're looking to remodel a part of your home, Mok suggests that you start by contacting an experienced contractor and sharing





your vision with them.

“Getting started is really as simple as picking up the phone. We would love to listen to your vision. We listen intently and bring the experience needed to create a customized plan that will make that vision a reality for you.”

Schedule a free consultation with Bridges MR by calling 650.204.5644, or emailing [info@bridgesmr.com](mailto:info@bridgesmr.com).

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*“Bridges MR was amazing to work with to remodel our master bathroom, master closet, and hall bathroom. They were on top of everything, from the big picture to the tiniest details. Bridges MR gave us such peace of mind and a sense that everything would be executed correctly and safely throughout the project.”*

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# Winter garden events

Peninsula offers plenty of opportunities to enjoy local blooms, hone harvesting skills online or in-person

Winter along the Peninsula is traditionally marked with plenty of class offerings to help home gardeners get the most out of their cool-season harvests. Here's a list of online and in-person winter garden events:

## ONLINE CLASSES

### Monthly plant clinic

Saturdays, March 11, April 8, May 13, June 10, July 8; 10 a.m. to noon

Free; [mgsantaclara.ucanr.edu/events-calendar/](https://mgsantaclara.ucanr.edu/events-calendar/)

UC Masters Gardeners hosts a monthly online plant clinic via Zoom for gardeners who want to chat with a Master Gardener to diagnose a plant problem or listen and learn while other people ask questions. Advance registration is required. Priority will be given to questions that are emailed in advance; instructions are in the Zoom registration confirmation.

### 'Preventing Pest Problems at Seeding'

March 16, noon to 1 p.m.

Free; [mgsantaclara.ucanr.edu/events-calendar/](https://mgsantaclara.ucanr.edu/events-calendar/) (registration required)

Lauren Fordyce, urban and community Identify & Manage Pests educator with the Statewide UC IPM Program, will talk about how to prevent and manage pest problems, like damping off and fungus gnats, at the time of seeding new plants during this Zoom presentation.



Courtesy Getty Images.

### 'Growing Fabulous Citrus'

Feb. 9, 6:30 - 7:30 p.m.

Downstairs program room, Mountain View Public Library, 585 Franklin St.

Free; [mgsantaclara.ucanr.edu/events-calendar](https://mgsantaclara.ucanr.edu/events-calendar/)

UC Master Gardener Candace Simpson will talk about how to care for citrus trees to get the best harvest. She will discuss planting location and method, pruning, fertilizing and watering, frost protection, and identifying and managing pests and diseases.

### 'Morning Meander: Up for the Flowers'

Feb. 22, 9 a.m. to noon

Pulgas Ridge Preserve, Redwood City

Free; [openspace.org](https://openspace.org) (advance reservations required)

Join Docent Naturalists Laura Levin, Emma Finter and Marie-Anne Neimat for a wildflower treasure hunt. This preserve is known for its rich display of wildflowers. Hiking at a leisurely pace along the Cordilleras, Polly Geraci, Dick Bishop and Blue Oak trails, participants can search for early spring blooms and other things of interest with frequent stops to share discoveries.

## IN-PERSON CLASSES & EVENTS

### 'Gardening Notebooks with Books Arts Roadshow'

March 4, 10 - 11 a.m.

Gamble Garden, 1431 Waverley St., Palo Alto

Members, \$44 (adults)/ nonmembers \$55 (adults); [gamblegarden.org](https://gamblegarden.org)

Join instructors from Book Arts Roadshow to welcome spring by making and decorating your own set of four pocket-sized Gardening Notebooks with pockets for holding dried blossoms, leaves and seed packets. Participants will leave this workshop with gardening notebooks to use for writing their garden observations or sketching their garden inspirations. All materials included, plus a handmade linen pouch to store garden journals and a starter packet of flower seeds.

## GARDEN & NATURE TOURS

### 'A Walk in the Garden'

Feb. 9, 10 a.m. - 1 p.m.

Windy Hill Preserve, Portola Valley

Free; [openspace.org](https://openspace.org) (advance reservations required)

On this moderately-paced hike, participants will explore a chilly evergreen forest that alternates with dry open chaparral terrain and observe the native flora that grow in these different habitats. Docent naturalists Susan Bernhard, Maureen Draper and Noa Doitel will talk about the water cycle and how the trees and fog help 'water' the surrounding garden of native plants. Participants can observe how many native plants get a jump start on growing quite early in the year.

### Filoli's 'Bring the Garden Indoors'

Now-Nov. 6, daily, hours vary by season

Filoli, 86 Cañada Road, Woodside

\$23-\$33; [filoli.org](https://filoli.org)

Admission to Filoli includes a free, 15-minute talk, about how the Bourn and Roth families, who once owned the property, blurred the lines between indoors and outdoors through the house's architecture, decorative mezzotint prints and floral arrangements. Visitors can walk with staff and learn how the garden's design relates to the interior spaces. As you explore the house accented with colorful plants and flowers, experience in their own words how Filoli's past residents brought the garden indoors through floral abundance and botanical decor. No reservations needed for talk. Topics vary by day and season. ■

— Linda Taaffe

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# How to grow a bountiful veggie garden like the Filoli estate

Horticulturists share planting secrets from Woodside's historic property

BY KATE NOWELL

As the local, seasonal and organic food movement continues to grow in the Bay Area and worldwide, the Filoli historic estate in Woodside is digging into the site's history and horticulture to share a long-time love for vegetable growing. Since Filoli became a public garden in 1975, the historic Vegetable Garden has remained a hidden sliver of the garden. Concealed by a large hedge on the east side of the rose garden, the space had been quietly cared for by staff as a cooperative vegetable garden. Following a significant renovation funded by private donations and funding from C. Preston Butcher in honor of Carolyn Fulgham Butcher, Filoli's Vegetable Garden reopened in summer 2022 and is now a year-round celebration of abundance for all to enjoy. This column is intended to help garden enthusiasts plant and grow vegetables in their own backyards that are as bountiful as those at Filoli.



Vegetables grow in beds at Filoli's Vegetable Garden, which is open for the public to explore. Courtesy Jeff Bartee Photography.

also are good candidates for direct sowing with large easy-to-handle seeds. Some of the best greens for the direct sow method are arugula, mustard greens, bok choy and broccoli raab. Bachelor's buttons and Love-in-a-mist are easy to sow flowers to brighten your patch and charm you in arrangements.

## Prepare the soil for seeding

Delicate spouting seeds will struggle to compete if aggressive weeds are present. Weed your sunny planting area thoroughly, and try to remove weed roots. Then amend the soil by spreading a few inches of compost over the planting area and mixing it into the soil. As you loosen the

soil, how deep you need to go will depend on how hard the soil is and what crop you are planting. If your soil is very compacted or you are planting a root vegetable like carrots or turnips, fork the soil to at least 12 inches. This is also a good time to



ARUGULA

Courtesy Getty Images.

add an organic, slow-release fertilizer, following the rate indicated on the label.

## Plant your seeds

Create a very shallow furrow to mark where you will sow your seeds. Before you sow the seeds, moisten the soil in the furrow. If you have a drip irrigation system set up, pin the irrigation tubing into place along the furrow and run the system for a few minutes — then use the wetted spots as markers for where to sow the seed. Read the information on your seed packet closely to learn how deep to plant your seeds and how widely to space them. A general rule is to sow the seed at a depth approximately 2-3 times its width. Sprinkle or drop the seed into the furrow, cover to proper depth and tamp lightly with your palm so they are snugly in place.

## Water your seeds

After planting, thoroughly saturate the soil, watering lightly to avoid washing away your seeds. Until the seeds germinate, water regularly — when sowing in summer, it is especially important to keep the soil from drying out.

## Thin and defend your seedlings

Once your seeds sprout, you'll likely find you have more tiny vegetable plants than space in your row. You can use scissors to carefully thin your seedlings without disturbing the roots of their neighbors. Pull weeds as needed to give your seedlings a leg up. Look for signs of slugs, snails and birds, and defend your seedlings from harm!



BACHELOR'S BUTTONS

Courtesy Getty Images.

Filoli's visitors are invited to step inside the Vegetable Garden's edible landscape as the plantings continue to grow and flourish in 2023. The season's harvest will be used in products for Filoli's Clock Tower Shop, shared in public programs and donated to local food banks. For more information, go to [filoli.org](http://filoli.org). ■

*Kate Nowell is horticulture production manager at Filoli.*

While eating your own home-grown vegetables can be the ultimate luxury, you don't need an estate or a fortune to produce them in your yard. Behold the power of the seed! Sowing seeds directly into the soil can be a low-cost and effective way to grow abundant flowers and veggies in your garden. Some crops even prefer to be started from seed in the ground and do not do well when transplanted from pots.

Here are some direct sowing tips from Filoli's horticulturists for best results:

## Choose your seed

Many crops can be grown directly from seed in the garden, but some are better suited than others. There are many crops that can be sown in early spring and summer. Root crops such as carrots, beets, parsnips, turnips and radishes are best grown by direct sowing. Peas, beans, corn and winter squash



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*Kate*  
Editor, Peninsula Foodist

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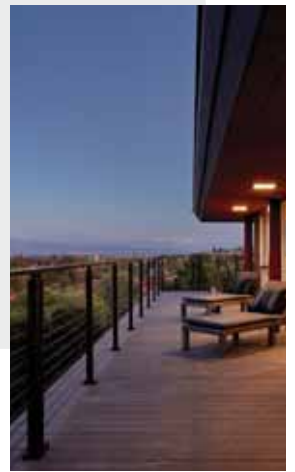


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