HOME&GARDEN

Cole Valley family enjoys all-season yard

Green spot: The colorful lawn is just one appealing element of this "indoor-outdoor" Cole Valley landscape.

By Elisabeth Laurence
Special to The Examiner

With a little imagination, anything can be converted into an extra room — even the backyard.

Landscape architect Janet Moyer's clients, the Savageauxes, have a growing family and wanted to expand their Cole Valley home's dimensions by using the outdoor garden and deck as extra recreational living space.

A contractor built out the basement into a family room, and Moyer created an innovative plan that brought the best of the indoor rooms outside.

The result is a charming confluence of elements — water, fire, earth and wood — that allows this family to enjoy their garden in all seasons.

The piece de resistance is a fireplace, hot tub and eating area on the deck that has become an outdoor living room. It flows down into a large lawn and slate patio for games and entertaining.

The garden is bordered by mature, established camellia trees at the rear of the backyard.

Along the side are redolent Cecil Bruner roses, vanilla-chocolate scented Azara microphylla tucked among azaleas, and clematis climbing the fence. More color is injected with fuchsia rooted in redwood mulch alongside a bench.

"I think our major goal was to get them a well-designed space," Moyer says. "We got in all the items on their wish list — hot tubs, fireplace, barbecue as well as creating nice clean lines that draw the eye to the backyard."

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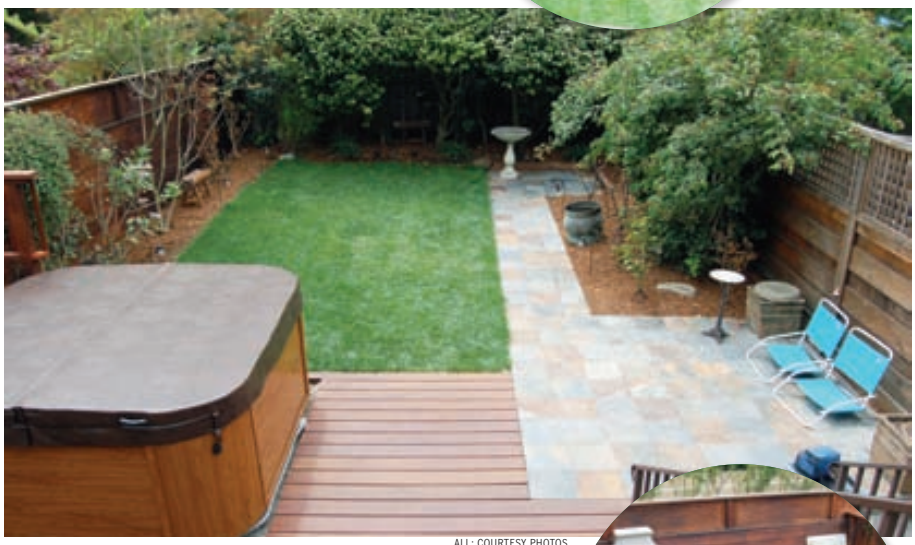
For the transformation, Moyer first installed a hardwood Ipe deck — so smooth it doesn't splinter when bare feet are running to the hot tub.

She put the tub on gravel, power washed and stained the side redwood fencing to match the Ipe and added China multicolor slate to deck areas and on the patio below.



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Multipurpose 'room': Designer Janet Moyer created a yard with plenty of space for eating, playing, entertaining and relaxing.

The slate's blue, amber and russet colors are a bright contrast with the green lawn.

The fireplace is fashioned like an indoor one, replete with mantle, and is powered safely by propane, to warm up cool nights. Moyer added low-voltage lighting.

"This changed our lives dramatically," Nicole Savageaux says. "We're out there rain or shine.

"What we wanted was to be able to optimize the backyard," she says. "This is better than my living room, better than our family room. It has all the comforts we want. We use it and so does the whole neighborhood."

An additional water-saving benefit is a new irrigation controller that adjusts flow up and down based on weather. The system gets satellite readings and records evaporation, adjusting moisture based on these factors and on plants' usage.

It's clear though, for the Savageaux family, every day on the deck and in the garden "room" is a sunny day.

Recreational opportunities: The home's living space was extended with the placement of an inviting hot tub and fireplace outside.