one shot

COPPER TONE

In a San Francisco garden, a wall of woven metallic strips doubles as screening and sculpture

STORY BY JENNY ANDREWS

Think your tiny backyard is too small for big drama? Then take a peek at this private garden, designed by San Francisco–based landscape architect Randy Thueme, only 550 feet square and tucked behind a classic Victorian house in Pacific Heights. What really makes the space sing is a stunning 10-foot-tall, 32-foot-long fence of 12-inch-wide bands of perforated copper, clad over a supportive structure of cedar slats and steel. Undulating like an oversize detail of basket weaving, the fence was sculpted to allow three whitebarked Himalayan birch trees to interlace through the copper strips. Up-lit at night by low-voltage bulbs, the fence fairly glitters. As the homeowner says of the space at night, "Sheltered from the wind, with a soft glow illuminating the garden, I feel as if San Francisco has retreated and I am at peace."

Before the new garden was installed the space was dank and dark, with unsightly views of neighboring fences, decks, railings, and walls. Thueme's goal was to block out the surroundings and create an inviting spot that extends the homeowners' living space out of doors, both physically and visually (the patio can be seen from multiple rooms through French doors and floor-to-ceiling windows).

The warm tones of the cedar slats on other outdoor walls now coordinate with the copper, but Thueme anticipates that over time the materials will change and continue to harmonize, as the copper turns verdigris and the cedar mellows to gray. In expectation of this metamorphosis, the Chinese-limestone patio flooring incorporates bands of pale green, which is continued in a row of succulents at the base of the fence. SEE SOURCEBOOK FOR MORE INFORMATION, PAGE 70

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