

▶ COOL TOOLS G2 ▶ THE DIRT G3 ▶ BIRDBRAIN G4 ▶ HOME ON THE WEB G6 ▶ RENT WATCH G6

San Francisco Chronicle

HOME & GARDEN

ONLINE: sfgate.com/homeandgarden

CONTACT US

▶ Lynette Evans
Home&Garden editor
home@sfgate.com
(415) 777-6247

NR
SECTION



Saturday,
March 2, 2002

stone soul



BRANT WARD / The Chronicle

Stone mason George Gonzalez has constructed numerous walls, fountains, bridges and staircases at Nan McEvoy's ranch over the past nine years. Gonzalez, who builds without mortar, carefully fitting the stones together, descended one of his staircases, above.

► STONE

From Page G1

ect in a quality way, it's better to cut back and spend the money on a smaller project, but one that is finely done," Gonzalez advised.

Sculptor Suzanne Biaggi creates custom installations, comprised of carefully placed arrangements of multiple large stones altered by carving. These sculptural landscapes, as Biaggi refers to her work, come to fruition after meeting with the client and studying the site.

"I do a series of sketches, beginning with concepts that work within the budget," Biaggi says. "I give my imagination free rein, allowing the client to experience the full range of possibilities."

Once client and artist agree upon a design, Biaggi selects and photographs the stones, submitting them for approval. There are numerous ways to alter stone. Finishes can be sawn, sand-blasted or hand-carved. "At this point the collaboration between the stones and the sculptor begins. The final piece is a result of this collaboration," she says.

If you should feel inspired to undertake a stone project, do you seek professional assistance or tackle the job yourself? Building a

stone boundary or retaining wall is complex, requiring the high level of skill professionals bring to the job. So if you can afford it, hire a designer. But there are ways to cut costs.

Studying with a stonemason or attending stone-building workshops can help you learn the tools of the trade and defray expenses. Information in books may hardly be adequate, but, if you're still keen to undertake a doable project sooner rather than later, the challenge is worth exploring.

In that case, if you're searching for ideas to animate the garden, consider foraging in the library's gardening stacks or browse local bookstores. You'll discover source-books containing unrestrained visions of stonework to spark your imagination.

Chockablock with photographs, both Hayward's "Stone in the Garden" and Kathryn Bradley-Hole's "Stone, Rock and Gravel" contain designs for utilizing stone, instructions to help show the way, and planting recommendations that complete the picture.

"Stone in the Garden" covers all aspects — from planning a design and choosing the stone, to creating a proper base for drainage and support and laying the stone. In Bradley-Hole's book,

you'll find variations on the theme of rock gardening.

How to get started

To begin, seek out a stone with presence. In creating my new garden I kept things simple; purchasing gravel by the bag to create a small patio and paths, and incorporating large rocks found scattered about the property to outline raised beds. You might want to bolster a formal layout by arranging large stone pavers geometrically.

Or you could introduce a standing stone to your backyard retreat to establish a focal point. Properly placed, a single large stone with potent contours brings a sense of mystery to the garden, and may also meld form with function. One option is to position a low, broad stone to serve as a sculptural bench.

Ideas for installing a scree, a habitat composed of sandy soil, stones and larger rocks, are also sketched out in "Stone Rock and Gravel."

For your own bit of Eden, you can combine stone with water to create an oasis. A modest water feature like a shallow basin or a trough can serve double duty: inviting birds to the garden and accenting a sequestered area.

Enlivening the garden "floor" is a satisfying way to increase a garden's impact. Picture a sinuous ribbon of gravel suited to a rustic house or cottage garden.

But a refined pathway or terrace of cut granite or slate calls for attention to detail. And maybe a little help.

Visiting stone suppliers in your area should acquaint you with the range of materials available. From pebbles to cobbles and boulders, suppliers like Wheeler Zamaroni in Santa Rosa furnish landscaping contractors, designers and general customers with materials for the garden. Marketing manager Scott Atkinson says they assist with stone selection and provide a full range of fabrication services.

If we think about the garden as a place to indulge our creative

yearnings, we can appreciate the obvious attributes of stone — support and strength — and embrace its intangible implications, too.

Resources

■ **Strybing Arboretum Society**, Designing with Stone Workshops; (415) 661-1316, Ext. 354; www.strybing.org.

■ **Suzanne Biaggi Sculptural Landscapes**, Petaluma; (707) 762-0753.

■ **George Gonzalez**, Gonzalez & Sons, Bolinas; stone-building workshops; (415) 868-1486.

■ **The Stone Foundation Society**, Santa Fe, N.M.; www.stonefoundation.org.

■ **Natural Rock Formations**, Valley Springs (San Joaquin County); (209) 772-1442. "Some Enchanted Evening," a garden with stone waterfalls, a pool and fountains, will be on view March 20 through 24 at the San Francisco Flower & Garden Show at the Cow Palace.

BOOKS

Books such as those listed here typically include how-to drawings or step-by-step guidelines for creating small fountains, stone-rimmed ponds, paths and rock gardens.

■ **"Stone in the Garden"** by Gordon Hayward (W.W. Norton & Company, 2001, \$39.95).

■ **"Stone, Rock & Gravel"** by Kathryn Bradley-Hole (Cassell & Co., 2000, \$19.95).

STONE SUPPLIES AND FABRICATION

■ **American Soil Products**, Richmond, (510) 558-7800; San Rafael, (415) 456-1381; www.americansoil.com.

■ **Lyngso Garden Materials**, Redwood City, (650) 364-1730; www.lyngsogarden.com.

■ **Wheeler Zamaroni** — Landscape supplies and stone fabrication, Santa Rosa; (800) 564-7680; www.wzsupply.com.

— A.J.



A worker positioned a large boulder being placed in front of a Chinese pavilion at the McEvoy ranch.