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A Cut Above

A floral designer in Aina Haina benefits from the natural beauty of a yard full of renewable, usable plants.



By Lance Tominaga
Photos by David Croxford

Featured Landscape Designer:
Steve Dewald of Steve's Gardening Service

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This achievable green home was built with reclaimed materials!



The oceanfront yard utilizes El Toro zoysia grass, which is hardy enough for kids as well as for entertaining. It is also an "unthirsty" grass suitable for its coastal environment.



Right: Coastal plants serve as a buffer to protect the more delicate plants from the prevailing winds.



Left: Dewald installed low-voltage lighting fixtures throughout the property to promote energy savings.



The owner of this new Aina Haina residence had two directives for landscaper Steve Dewald: First, the landscape had to be organic and natural-looking. Second, being an avid flower arranger, the homeowner desired a lush assortment of foliage that could be cut and used for her creations.

Following the design plan mapped out by landscape architect Stephen Mechler, Dewald and his staff at Steve's Gardening Service rolled up their sleeves and went to work.

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A lot of material had to be brought onto the property and that presented a challenge for the environmentally conscious Dewald.

"We were working right on the ocean with an existing sea wall," he says. "We wanted to make absolutely sure that we didn't spill anything into the ocean. Also, we made sure that there wouldn't be any runoff into the ocean from drainage and other things."

Consideration of the environment is evident throughout the project. Dewald installed a high-efficiency irrigation system that minimizes water waste. "There's some really heavy wind out there and [the system] allows the water to stay down low instead of getting blown all over the place," Dewald explains. "In terms of irrigation systems, this is probably as 'green' as you can get."

Dewald also put in El Toro zoysia, an "unthirsty" grass that fares well in a coastal environment. Extremely durable, El Toro zoysia is also ideal for high-traffic areas. "It's great for



Above: To achieve a natural, organic look, Dewald eschewed concrete whenever possible in favor of river rock and gravel, adding to the sheer natural beauty of the property.

1. Tropical plants, protected from the ocean elements, provide a nice border alongside the home and shield the home from the sun.
2. The dragon's egg lily pond is situated near the shoreline, nestled among coastal plants such as naupaka and akia.
3. Varieties of tis, ferns and other tropicals adorn the perimeter pathways. A garden gate beyond separates front yard from backyard.
4. The ape plant, sometimes called "elephant's ear," is a cousin to the native Hawaiian taro plant.
5. Large plants provide afternoon shade as well as privacy.

entertaining and for kids," says Dewald.

For outdoor lighting, Dewald installed low-voltage, energy-friendly fixtures purchased from Beachside Lighting.

Certain plants were set up near the ocean to slow the winds down, including autograph trees, wax ficus and akia plants, spider lilies and naupaka. These are hardy coastal plants that thrive in a beachside setting.

Delicate tropical plants were placed along the sides of the home, where they are more protected from the elements. Here, Dewald planted white bird of paradise, gardenia, red and green tis and varieties of heliconia, ginger and ferns, most of which can be cut and used for attractive flower arrangements.

The end result is a clean, eye-catching outdoor oasis that satisfies the needs and wants of the homeowner – and a landscape that is suitably environment-friendly.

"The most green aspect here is that we didn't do a lot of hard concrete," says Dewald. "The entryway uses Nature Stone, and even the side walkways are stone, river rock and gravel. We took a very natural and organic approach." **HHR**