



upper roof succulent garden

mirador view tower

lower planted roof meadow

COYOTE HOUSE

Welcome to Coyote House. When it comes to environmentally friendly architecture, there's green and then there's GREEN, and this home's state-of-the-art environmental design is but one of the many elements that makes it a home sweet home.

BY JANE ELLISON • PHOTOGRAPHS BY TYSON ELLIS

Here you will quickly discover an appreciation for a highly efficient yet casually elegant Montecito home that is anything but humdrum. No detail has been overlooked at this canyon homestead.

Contemporary, by all means, but playful as well in many ways, the 2,600+ square-foot home allows its owners and designers—architect Ken Radtkey and landscape architect Susan Van Atta—to fully enjoy a living experience that invites the outdoors in at every turn.

Coyote House emerges from its natural surroundings, playing a key role in the landscape with green roofs that are both visually stunning and useful—providing insulation that cools during summer months while retaining heat during winter.

The large, arced upper roof is covered in succulent plants (Sedums and Dudleyas). The gravelly soil in which the plants grow acts as a sponge, retaining water and slowly releasing it. From here, rainwater flows to gutters, as well as to the garage's green roof, planted with grasses and wildflowers. All roof water is channeled to a catch basin that feeds underground cisterns capable of storing as much as 10,000 gallons of rainwater.

The upper roof is more than functional as Van Atta notes, "For views of the ocean, our favorite spot in the garden is this upper roof. We place two chairs at its peak, and go there to watch the sunset."

A lawn, planted with native grasses adapted to different seasons, occasionally serves as a surface for badminton, croquet or playing catch. The grasses grow in an extended cistern system containing 14 inches of sand that supports storage chambers where water circulates. "In the end, it's all a lab for our work," she explains.





A terraced garden just beyond includes natives, fruit trees, vegetables, herbs for the kitchen and French lavender, all culminating in a bocce ball court. Water from the cisterns also feeds this garden, as does gravity-fed grey water from the house.

Sharing the site are bees that pollinate an orchard of citrus, peaches and figs, which is also irrigated by grey water. Honey from the hive is another cause for celebration. Who doesn't like honey with tea and toast?

It comes as no surprise that sustainability is the key to the success of this home and garden, where not only fruits, vegetables and lavender are harvested, but fresh eggs—provided by five pet hens—are collected every morning.

Colorful and drought-tolerant native plant materials—including toyon, native cherry and berries of every color and for every taste—grapes, bush poppies, tequila agaves and coastal bluff plants each have their place in the garden.

Winding your way through the property is made easier by recycled sandstone curbs, once used on Santa Barbara city



streets, now functioning as stairs.

“The ‘permanent’ landscape includes native woodland on the north and riparian woodland along the drainage,” Van Atta points out. “These plants are more lush and native to our region and provide an attractive backdrop for the house and edible gardens. The woodland strawberries that we’ve planted throughout are delicious and plentiful. It’s another reason to look forward to spring.”

Step inside Coyote House and you’ll find interiors that are a study in serenity—colorful, yet restrained. There are no painted surfaces or volatile compounds. Integral colored plaster throughout the home is shaded to reflect the natural landscape.

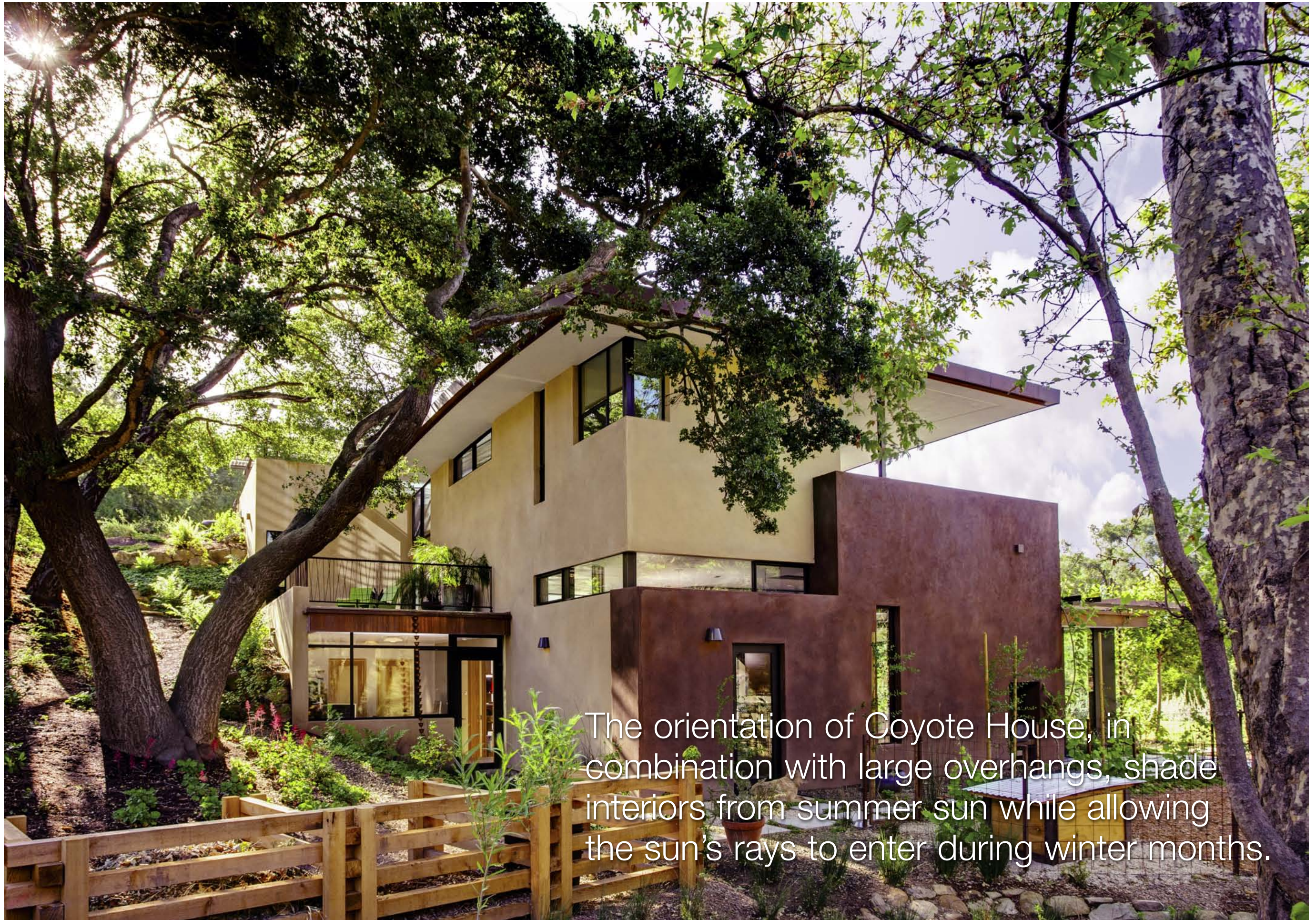
It is a home that demonstrates how to live sustainably in beauty and comfort. The open floor plan of the first level combines kitchen, dining room and a relaxed seating area. Bright colored accents add a light-hearted feel to the wide-open spaces. A large study is located just beyond the kitchen.

Recycled or sustainable materials are used throughout and include bamboo cabinets and kitchen flooring made from recycled tires, while cork flooring adds subtle warmth and texture to other rooms. Eucalyptus trees, removed from the site because of their flammability, provide the wood for the dining table, bookcases, stairs and banister.

The staircase is set off by an exposed concrete block wall, blasted and sanded to achieve the finish appropriate for the interior. It is playfully adorned with air plants that survive without soil. LED lights illuminate the staircase with shades made from Japanese lanterns, modified by Radtkey.

“Inventions like LED lights come on-line so rapidly that the design field has yet to catch up with affordable fixtures,” he points out.

Santa Barbara sandstone flooring, warmed by radiant heat, marks the living



The orientation of Coyote House, in combination with large overhangs, shade interiors from summer sun while allowing the sun’s rays to enter during winter months.

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View from the master bedroom

and entertaining areas and continues through the 380-square-foot veranda. Pulling a 32-foot, glass pocket door across the outer edge of the veranda, Radtkey explains, "There are two sets of doors and one sliding screen door that make the veranda flexible space, changing it from an extension of the living room into a sun room or a covered porch, depending on the weather."

On the second level, a large master bedroom and bath with terrace has stunning ocean views. Floor to ceiling windows, here and throughout the home, are south-facing, assuring light-filled rooms that offer a variety of perspectives on the surrounding natural landscape.

Two additional bedrooms and baths reserved for the couple's sons, Kellen, 12, and Ian, 22 (a recent graduate of the UC Berkeley, who now resides in San Francisco) offer similar views.

A unique experience awaits anyone who visits the outdoor room above the second level, offering a panoramic view and the opportunity to take advantage of a pair of swing chairs. Above, a "trellis" of photovoltaic, solar panels shades the space and provides much of the home's energy needs.

The orientation of Coyote House, in combination with large overhangs, shade interiors from summer sun while allowing the sun's rays to enter during winter months. A trellis, covered with a large native honeysuckle, supplies additional protection.

In 2009, Coyote House was the first residence in the Santa Barbara area to be certified LEED Platinum by the U.S. Green Building Council's Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design. It would be difficult to find another home with greater commitment to sustainability and style.

"We design homes to work for families in terms of cost, as well as lifestyles," Radtkey points out. "That means low maintenance homes using passive features



Master bath

(no moving parts, no high-tech controls) which can also have lower first costs."

The combined talents of Ken Radtkey and Susan Van Atta and their deep design collaboration have created in Coyote House a remarkable blend of fine architecture and smart living. ✱

Ken Radtkey, AIA, LEED AP, is the founder of Blackbird Architects, Inc. (805/957-1315, www.bbbird.com). Susan Van Atta, FASLA, is the president of Van Atta Associates, Inc. (805/730-7444, www.va-la.com).



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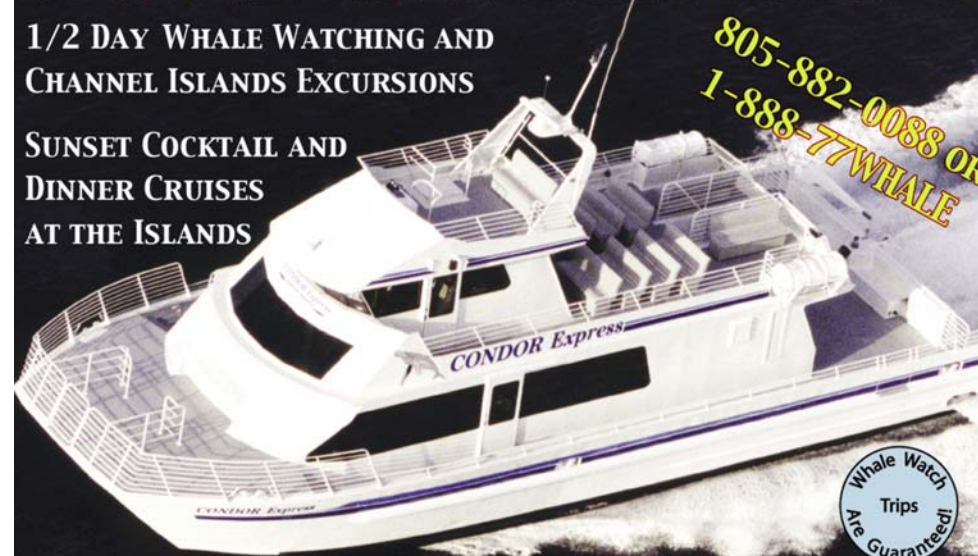
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