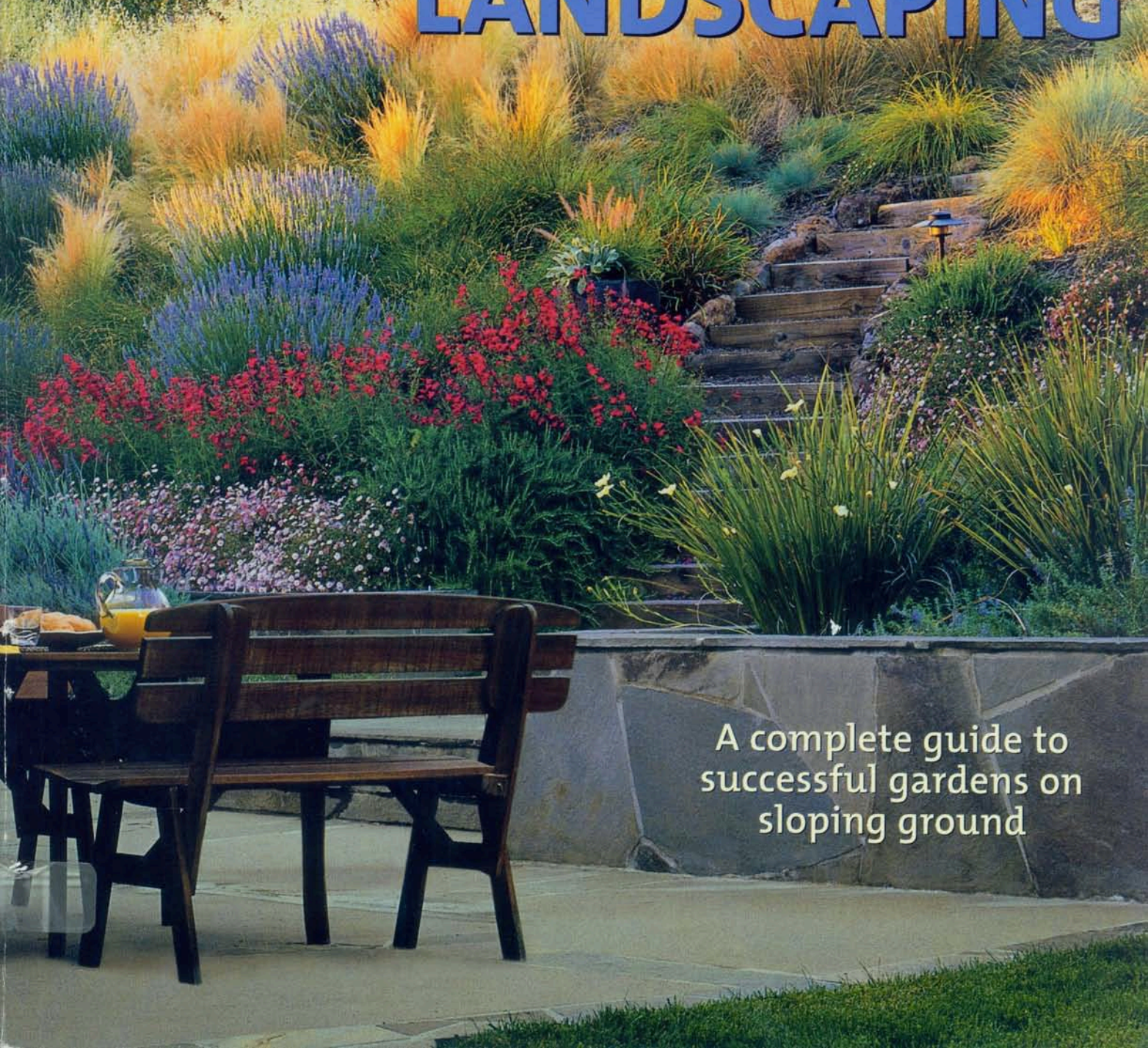


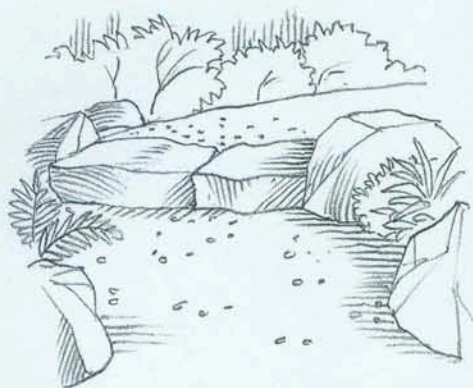
Sunset

hillside

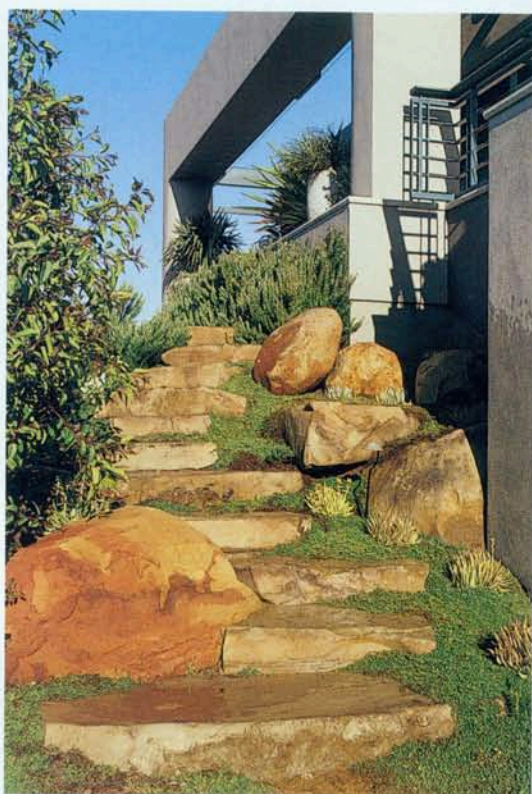
LANDSCAPING



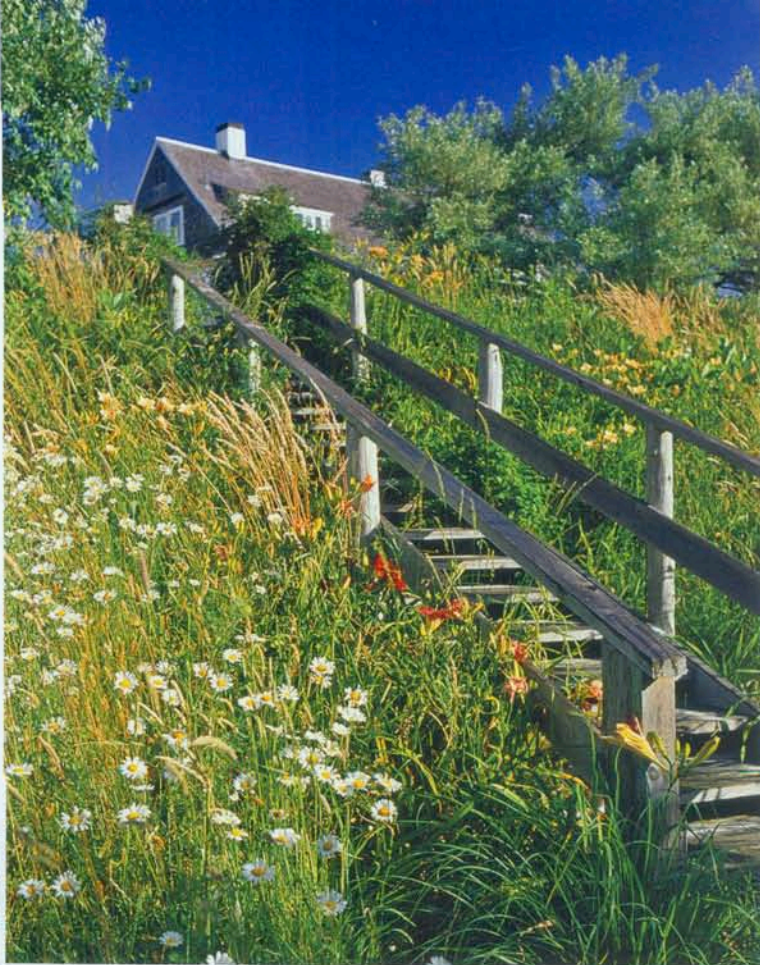
A complete guide to
successful gardens on
sloping ground



A single step composed of two large slabs of rock breaks the downhill flow of a steep gravel path. To prevent tripping when there's only one step, make it so bold it cannot be missed.



ABOVE: These steps in a rocky hillside garden could almost have been carved out of bedrock. The sharp edges are hidden in mats of thyme, and the steps jog this way and that to avoid a spill of boulders. Varied riser widths make pleasing lines, and the boulders are just the right height for sitting.



ABOVE: A wooden staircase bridges a bank, keeping strollers' feet out of the mud and grass seed off their shoes—and protecting the bank from erosion. This is a simple solution for difficult terrain, leaving a natural space like this meadow free of hardscape.

OPPOSITE: When a small, steep site makes it impossible to build steps graciously wide and shallow, with landings to let visitors catch their breath, you'll need to work extra hard to make the steps inviting. Color animates this stairway, and wood extensions to the concrete steps conjure up a sense of roominess. The slim handrail and recessed lighting are space-efficient details. There's even room for plants; despite the constraints of the site, this is a generous-seeming space.

BELOW: The rule of thumb for an inviting and easy climb is five steps per flight of stairs—more may daunt your visitors, fewer earn extra graciousness. In both examples below, the paving matches the site's natural stone; using a single material for step risers, treads, and adjoining paths creates an elegant, understated style. The honey-colored stairs at left are made of concrete cut to look like stone; they have an energetic swing to them, as if they could almost lift you up the hill.





PATIOS

FROM A CONSTRUCTION STANDPOINT, A PATIO IS ESSENTIALLY THE SAME AS A PATH—AND IN FACT, some patios aren't much larger than a generous path.

As with a path, consider drainage as you plan your patio. If you want an outdoor kitchen, be sure to lay whatever pipes you need for gas, electricity, or plumbing before you install the patio's gravel base.

ABOVE: Finding just the right flat space for a patio can be difficult on some hillside lots. You can cut into the hillside to expand your patio area, but don't build on top of fill unless you work with a professional to secure the filled area.

Patio Paving Materials

Any paving you use for a path can be used for a patio. A poured-concrete patio is usually a job for a professional, but concrete pavers, bricks, and stones are easy to work with. Before you make your decision, check pages 12–65 for ideas. Also consider these practical points:

- **PAVING OVER TREE ROOTS** may irreparably damage some trees. If you can't avoid placing the patio over a tree's root zone, choose a permeable paving such as gravel, bricks, or flagstone on sand so that air and water can get to the roots.
- **IF YOU PLAN TO HAVE PATIO FURNITURE**, consider how smooth the surface needs to be. Delicate metal chairs with tiny feet may necessitate the use of large cut-stone pieces with joints that are either very narrow or filled with mortar. But if you have wooden furniture with thick legs, other paving choices may be fine.



water features and boulders

WATER ANIMATES A HILLSIDE BY ITS SOUND AND BY ITS MOVEMENT OVER THE LAND. IT ALSO DRAWS THE EYE TO THE BANK OR HILLTOP FROM WHICH IT SPRINGS, THE LITTLE CANYON THROUGH WHICH IT FLOWS. BOULDERS, TOO, CALL ATTENTION TO PLACE, SHOWING WHAT THE HILLSIDE IS MADE OF THROUGH THEIR PARTICULAR COLORS AND STRIATIONS.

Creating a Rock Garden

Natural rock gardens are found on deep piles of fragmented stone at the bases of cliffs or on mountain ridges where alpine plants enjoy the fast-draining soil. You can create your own version of a rock garden as part of your hillside landscaping.

Site your rock garden on a gentle slope, if you can. If your soil is already fast-draining at all times, you don't need the 18-inch excavation described below. Install your boulders and then excavate to a depth of 1 inch before planting and laying the gravel surface.

1 MARK OUT YOUR GARDEN AREA. Place a group of boulders at the top edge, arranging them like a natural outcropping (see facing page), with their steepest, most clifflike sides toward the planting site. Be sure the tops all tilt at the same angle. Excavate the remaining planting area to a depth of 18 inches.

2 SPREAD A 6-INCH LAYER OF DRAINAGE MATERIAL— rocks, broken bricks, chunks of old concrete, or equal parts gravel and sand—in the excavation. Then fill to within 1 inch of the surface level with a fast-draining soil mix of 1 part crushed rock ($\frac{1}{2}$ - or $\frac{3}{4}$ -inch size with smaller particles included) or pea gravel, 1 part coarse sand, and 2 parts good garden soil. Some rock gardeners prefer far more crushed rock, but that means the mix will dry out more quickly and you will need to water more often.

Plant the garden using rock-garden plants; see pages 152–155. Finish your rock garden by spreading 1 inch of gravel on the surface. For a natural look, choose gravel that matches the color of the boulders.



Found Boulders

This hillside patio was brought to the boulders, not the boulders to the patio. Seize the opportunity offered by any boulder that already exists in your garden. Excavate around it to show it to its best advantage, prune a tree to frame it, and make a path to its base. Be sure there's access to its face, because visitors will want to lean against it or touch the warm, rough sides. And a place to sit—that's necessary too.



Explore the rich possibilities offered by a hillside garden setting, from waterfalls and rock gardens to secluded retreats

- Hundreds of exciting design ideas
- Hillside construction for paths, steps, retaining walls, and water features
- Techniques for controlling erosion
- The best plant choices for sloping terrain
- Hillside planting and plant-care techniques



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