



Designer
& A

NATURAL INFLUENCES

An outdoor project capitalizes on the beauty of its surroundings

By Laurie Rudd

The phrase “poolside sophistication” captures the essence of an extensive exterior design project for an Orinda,

California, family by David Thorne of David Thorne Landscape Architect Inc. Surrounded by a stand of large,

privacy-creating valley oaks, the home’s outdoor spaces underwent a total renovation to capture the natural beauty of the area and the potential for outdoor living.

From a redesigned pool and added spa to a covered pavilion great room, Thorne and his team created gathering areas to fit the exterior layout as well as the desires of the family. The team built intimate places for relaxation, recreation and entertainment into a series of coordinated structures, defining them with furnishings and accent features.

Thorne provides a narrative on the multi-focal point project and explains how the natural surroundings influenced the execution of the design.



Casual Living: What was the inspiration for the project?

David Thorne: The main inspiration was twofold. First, we deconstructed a larger accessory building into three smaller structures to fit into the site topography and to preserve the beautiful native oak trees. Then we worked to echo and repeat the theme of materials from the house into the landscape structures, including the shingle style and the black-painted trim.

CL: How did you make furniture selections?

DT: The contemporary furnishing style was driven by the client's goal of a simplified, clean-line look, all focused on a sophisticated black-and-white color theme.

CL: How did textiles influence structural choices?

DT: For the landscape materials, we selected a calming palette of gray tones to complement the black-and-white theme, including wall stone, the barbecue countertop and flamed bluestone pavers in an ashlar pattern.

CL: Is curating the entire outdoor space—from turf to grills, pavers to pillows—a trend you're seeing grow?

DT: Yes, many of our clients are looking to us to provide a total lifestyle design that fits with their home and surrounding landscape. This includes advice on the selection of furniture, accents and other design elements that define the space and create a customized look.

CL: What was your favorite part of the project?

DT: I would say the great room in the pavilion is the highlight, as it's an intimate and comfortable area that all the family can access and enjoy year-round while taking in views from the rest of the landscape and property.



Photos: Treve Johnson Photography

