

Sunset

LIVING IN THE WEST

Best places to live

We've found your new hometown!

10
Off-the-grid
Getaways

P. 30

THE WESTERN GARDEN
**What to plant
this spring**

Zesty comfort food
Spicy curry, hearty chili &
super-tasty posole

FEBRUARY 2012

Sunset

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From smoky to floral, tea adds depth as a seasoning. Try it with chicken soba soup, crisp duck or tofu, even matcha whoopie pie

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Forget flowers from the other side of the planet—the best blooms come from growers near you

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Northern California weekend



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Feathery fascinator

Pop this coneflower into your garden for showy petals. Get more must-have plant and design ideas on page 38.



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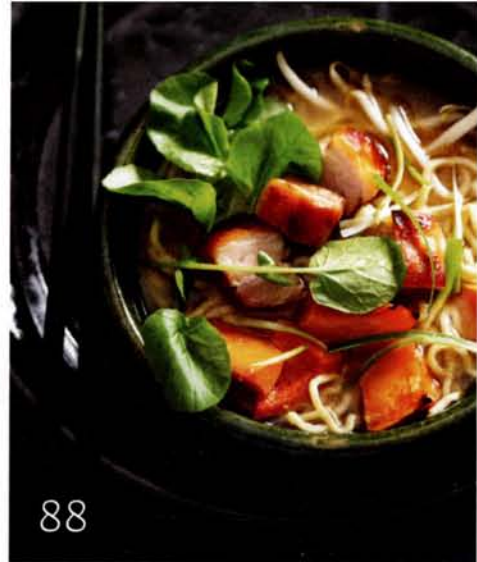
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Lanikai Beach in Kailua, Oahu, one of our Best Places to Live (see page 54) and where the First Family vacations in the West. Photograph by Erin Kunkel



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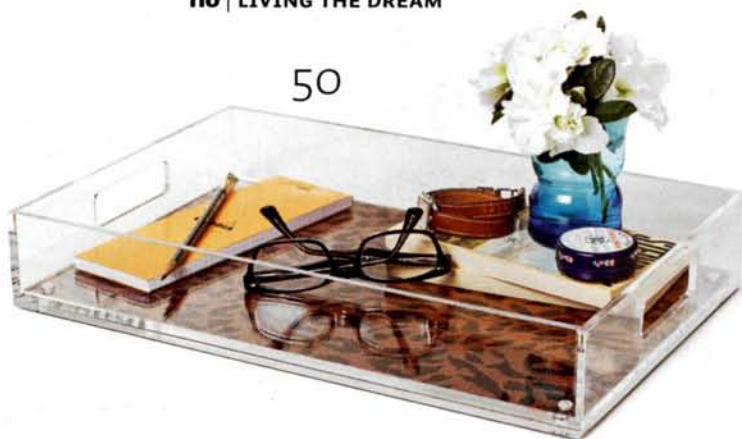
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FROM LEFT 'Tiger Stripes' coreopsis, tabletop garden at Cornerstone Sonoma, and 'Plum Pudding' heuchera (from *The New Sunset Western Garden Book*).



The amazing race

Reinventing the bible of Western gardeners takes passion, stamina—and a sense of humor

WHEN WE TOOK ON a major revision of the *Sunset Western Garden Book* in January 2011, a colleague asked me whether I was intimidated or scared by the prospect of completely overhauling the book on such a tight schedule.

Intimidated? No, though I knew that pulling it off would be a marathon, all endurance and caffeine. Scared? Heck, yes. Making over the West's most trusted garden resource is a responsibility I didn't take lightly. Generations of gardeners have relied on it, including my grandmother, whose gnarled apple trees near Seattle still bear fruit, and my dad in Santa Monica, who grew the best tomatoes ever, and a guy I sat next to on a plane recently, who told me it's a required text in his college horticulture class. But the book must stay relevant and accurate, evolving to reflect today's lifestyles and the ever-changing garden marketplace.

So the marathon began. We finalized the route (our map of the book's content) and located its checkpoints (the deadlines for each task). We lined up a first-rate team of runners—er, writers and editors (11 in all). And we had a final destination: our late-November 2011 press date.

By February, we were well into our first leg. Every fact in the book needed rechecking—not an easy task in the sometimes slippery world of botanical taxonomy, where scientific plant names can change almost

as rapidly as Lady Gaga's outfits. We'd started tracking down thousands of color photographs and tweaking zone maps to match our new weather data.

In March, the project's managing editor, Linda Bouchard, warned us: "If you keep adding plants at the rate you're going, you'll end up 1,000 pages longer than the Bible. The real one." We bumped up the size from 704 pages to 768, but still had to cut perfectly good plants to make room for better ones.

All summer, deadlines whizzed by in a blur of to-do lists and 3 a.m. texts that invariably began "Are you awake ...?" Still, memorable moments stood out. Like assistant photo editor Stephanie Rubin's famously sweet dog, Gretyl, lunging at the poor security guard who had come by our photo department after midnight to investigate the sound of rustling paper. Or our opening up images of a Hawaii garden to find its designer wearing a flame red tillandsia "toupee."

Last November, we crossed the finish line. And this month, our new, ninth edition debuts. (You can see a preview of it on page 38.) We hope you'll find it as useful as ever, but infinitely more inspiring!

Kathleen N. Brenzel, Garden Editor

What to plant now

The seven plants you'll want to grow this year, from our 2012 edition of *The New Sunset Western Garden Book*

BY KATHLEEN N. BRENZEL



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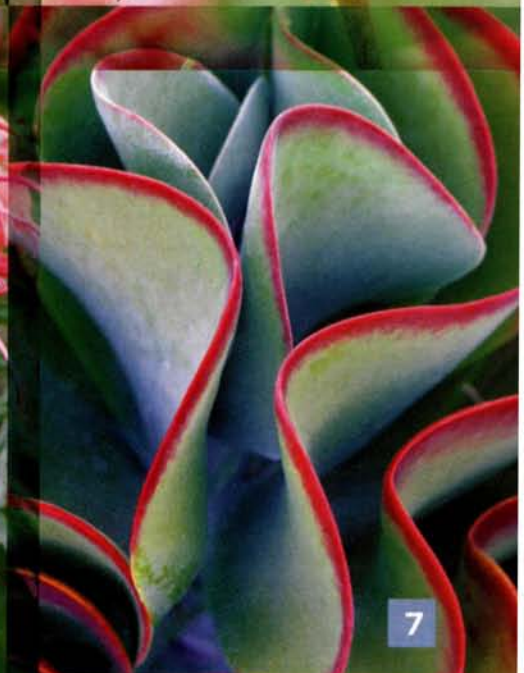
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1 | *Fuchsia x hybrida* Ruffled petals swirl about like a flamenco dancer's skirt. Part shade inland, full sun near the coast. **SUNSET CLIMATE ZONES 4-6 WITH PROTECTION, 15-17, 22-24; H1**

2 | *Phormium 'Jubilee'* Its leaves have cherry-hued margins like its 'Jester' parent, only much more vivid—striking in borders and containers. Grows 3 feet tall; colors up best in part shade. **ZONES 7-9, 14-24; H1, H2**

3 | *x Heucherella 'Stoplight'* Nearly glows in light shade; its red-streaked leaves turn lime green in summer. **ZONES 1-10, 14-24**

4 | *Echinacea purpurea 'Doubledecker'* Petals top this perennial's cone like a royal's feathery fascinator—after the second growing season, that is. **ZONES A2, A3; 1-24**

5 | '*Poodle Skirt*' dahlia Wine-colored poufs and flaring hot pink petals add pizzazz to blue and white summer borders. Plant tubers between February and April. **ZONES 1-24**

6 | '*Superb*' grevillea Large apricot orange flowers fleck this unthirsty, 4-foot-tall, 6-foot-wide hybridized Aussie shrub all summer long. **ZONES 16-24**

7 | *Kalanchoe thyrsiflora* Otherworldly or deep-sea creature? You decide. Either way, this succulent's chalky green paddles are stunners. **ZONES 13, 17, 21-24; H1, H2**

CLOCKWISE FROM LEFT: LINDA LAMB PETERS; PLANTHAVEN; TERRA NOVA NURSERIES; VISIONS BY, NETHERLANDS; DENNIS FRATES/ALAMY; LINDA LAMB PETERS; NICHOLAS GITTS/SWAN ISLAND DAHLIAS

