

This Old House

LADDERS • CEILING FANS • BUILDING PERMITS • PENDANT LIGHTS • ROOFTOP GARDENS

easy summer projects

- Laying a Walkway
- Fixing Screens
- Designing a Deck

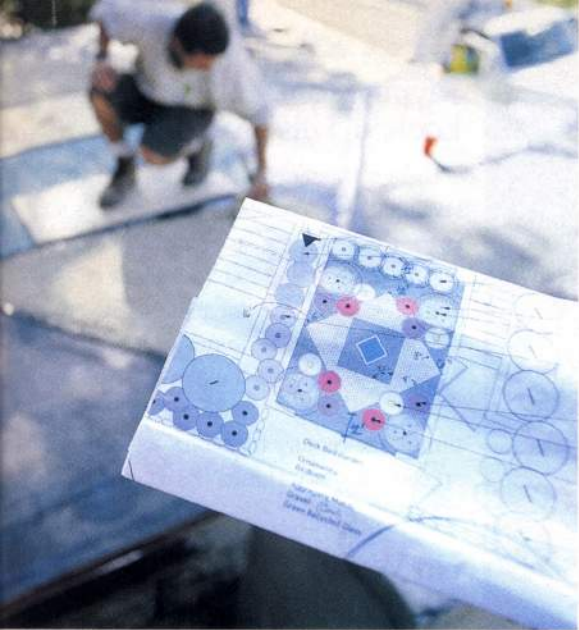
TV SHOW FINALE:
**Recreating the
 Craftsman Style**

18 Classic Fences



Roger Cook, T.O.H. landscape contractor, washes down a new walkway.





Creating a low-maintenance, budget-minded garden that would compete for attention with views of the Pacific Ocean could daunt even the most imaginative of landscape architects, but for Susan Van Atta it wasn't a problem. Asked to landscape the top of one of the two flat-roofed garages visible from the front porch of Jan Winford's home—*This Old House's* renovation project in Santa Barbara, California—Van Atta conjured a garden that was based on traditional geometric patterns, but inventively composed of gravel, recycled glass, and potted plants. "We needed to do something especially interesting because of the flat surface," she says. "The glass has a sparkling quality that changes color throughout the day, much like the ocean."

Coming up with an aesthetic solution that would enhance the otherwise banal rooftop, Van Atta took into account time-tested landscaping schemes, but she rejected them for the most obvious, practical reason: Any structural system that involves earth—such as a built-in flower bed—typically requires 18 to 24 inches of soil depth, a volume that may pose a weight problem. Plans for rooftop gardens that include extensive flower beds should be reviewed by a structural engineer or an architect to determine if the roof will require additional support. This rooftop could not withstand that much weight.

Two years ago, a fellow landscape architect had inspired Van Atta to investigate recycled glass. "She had used green glass, recycled into beadlike fragments, as a lawn substitute at her own house," Van Atta says. "I immediately thought it would be great on flat rooftops." Van Atta first experimented with the material on the walk-out roof of her own office, an unappealing expanse dotted with vents and air-conditioning equipment. She specified to the recycler a grassy-green tumbled glass that turned out to be multi-hued. "It had all kinds of green in

LEFT, TOP TO BOTTOM: Working from a computer-generated plan of homeowner Jan Winford's rooftop garden, the landscaping crew set glass and gravel and installed a birdbath. RIGHT: Landscape architect Susan Van Atta shows off blue glass chips. OPPOSITE: Jan's completed garden and its view of Santa Barbara.



on higher ground

Two flat rooftops are transformed into serene garden spaces

it,” she notes. “Everything from Heineken to 7-Up.” The glass came straight from the recycling facility, where color-sorted bottles—or other types of used industrial glass and consumer containers—are cleaned, crushed, and tumbled into smooth pieces about ¼ inch in diameter. The tumbled glass for Van Atta’s roof was packaged into 50-pound bags, but more often it is purchased in 50-gallon drums or by the truckload.

Recently updated, Van Atta’s office rooftop garden now boasts a rivulet of cobalt and light-blue glass that meanders through a field of older, green glass. Terra-cotta pots stand in a row at the edge of a wooden deck that abuts the glassy area. These she planted with succulents, which are drought-resistant and, having little root mass, are able to survive the especially warm temperatures that are created when heat radiates off large flat roofs.

At the *T.O.H.* project house, Van Atta used glass and gravel to create a striking quiltlike arrangement of squares-within-squares, separating the two materials with copper flashing. On top of this glittering surface, she orchestrated a compact 13-by-17-foot container garden featuring plants selected for their ability to attract birds. The scheme is simple: Anchoring the corners of the roof are four potted Nagami kumquats, bushy citrus trees that offer fragrant nectar and fruit. Clustered around each tree are pots of Mexican bush sage, autumn sage, and midnight penstemon, a plant with flowers that prove irresistible to hummingbirds. An

RIGHT: A pergola-covered deck on Susan Van Atta’s office rooftop is the perfect spot for alfresco brown-bag lunches. LEFT AND BELOW: Van Atta introduced light- and dark-blue glass into the garden to simulate water.

Arts and Crafts-style birdbath stands at the center of the layout; Jan Winford filled it with seed, to coax birds down to the roof for a bite. Adding plants that entice birds “creates another dimension of life and beauty and harmony within the garden,” Van Atta says. ■



A river runs through it—made of recycled blue glass chips



ALL THAT GLITTERS

At about \$600 per ton, tumbled recycled glass—available through any glass recycling facility—is relatively inexpensive compared to tile or wood. At \$25 to \$50 per ton, the gravel traditionally used to protect flat roofing is considerably cheaper. To keep on budget, Van Atta trimmed costs by using the tumbled glass in combination with gravel, creating a pleasing composition of positive and negative spaces. The materials are separated and contained by copper flashing with a smooth, rolled standing edge, which is nailed to the existing roofing. Asphalt emulsion covers the nail heads, seals the roof, and forms a bed for the layers of gravel or glass. The glass bonds well to the asphalt and is as wind-resistant as gravel. As she has gained familiarity with the material, Van Atta has invented new applications. One recent design, for instance, reinvents the rivulet on her rooftop; it features ribbons of blue glass embedded in washed-concrete walkways that lead away from an in-ground pool, which mimics the way water naturally appears and disappears as it flows along in creeks and gullies in the desert.