



INTERIOR COURTYARD
Between two wings of the building, under the shade of London plane trees, space is designed for casual meetings.

THE DROUGHT WILL TELL

THE PACKARD FOUNDATION HEADQUARTERS IS GETTING THE TOUGHEST TEST IT'S LIKELY TO FACE.

BY BILL MARKEN, HONORARY ASLA

Consider this a new model for a California native garden: wild enough to suggest natural beauty, disciplined enough to fit into suburban surroundings, and low maintenance enough to deserve praise for sustainability. Installed on the cusp of California's latest extreme drought, the landscape for the David and Lucile Packard Foundation, in the Silicon Valley town of Los Altos, was designed for a future of scarcer water.

This is not some cold, cookie-cutter landscape around a tilt-up building that is typical of high-tech urgency and efficiency. It was designed to exemplify the foundation's dedication to global environmental conserva-

tion as well as its deep local roots—the late David Packard, cofounder of Hewlett-Packard, lived on an apricot ranch in Los Altos Hills.

Joni Janecki, ASLA, and her firm, Joni L. Janecki & Associates, fulfilled the foundation's commitment with a landscape that serves as a demonstration of appropriate suburban landscaping—making use of local construction materials, state-of-the-art water conservation, a living roof, and, most notably, unthirsty native plants. Janecki brought back a slice of California's wild landscape into the suburban downtown's heart: the vivid blooms, pungent scents, muted foliage, sometimes unkempt



ABOVE
The main entry is on the right; a low wall lined with *Juncus* is at center; and a stone-rimmed catchment basin is on the left.

growth, dramatic rock outcroppings, and some of the wild creatures of the chaparral-clothed foothills of the Santa Cruz Mountains just a few miles away. Janecki's own roots go deep into the natural California landscape. She was born in Santa Monica, lived in Santa Barbara, and, while young, spent a lot of time with her family in the wide-open, unspoiled spaces east of the Sierra Nevada. At California Polytechnic State University in San Luis Obispo, she was fascinated by plants, art, and architecture and wanted to combine "the fluidity of landscape architecture with the structure of architecture." Soon after graduating with a degree in landscape architecture, she went to work with the influential Los Angeles landscape architect Emmet Wemple, who emphasized sensitivity to the particular nature of each site as he worked on large civic projects like the Getty Center, the UCLA campus, and Sunnyslands Estate. Janecki started

her own firm in 1991, now based in Santa Cruz, and describes her clientele as people who "want to bring back a sense of place using native plant communities."

The foundation's landscape was not Janecki's first Packard project. Early in her career she met David Packard at the Elkhorn Native Plant Nursery, near Moss Landing, about 25 miles from Santa Cruz. He had started the nursery as a hobby, and she had volunteered to work there to deepen her knowledge of California native plants. In 1998, she won a competition to redesign a landscape at Hewlett-Packard's headquarters in Palo Alto, and then went on to design projects for the foundation—established in 1964, now one of the nation's wealthiest foundations.

To design a landscape for the foundation's new headquarters that consolidated offices scattered across different

buildings, Janecki partnered with the San Francisco architects EHDD. The origins of EHDD go back to a firm established in 1946 by Joseph Esherick, a founding father of the Northern California vernacular style whose works included the rustic, ecosensitive vacation community of Sea Ranch and the environmentally forward-thinking Monterey Bay Aquarium, which was funded by Packard.

The 1.5-acre Packard Foundation landscape was completed in the summer of 2012. The main property, not counting nearby parking areas, is in the shape of a triangle with a rectangular notch cut out of one angle, which is occupied by a neighboring business. Embedded deep in the town, the site is edged by sidewalks and streets, including a busy four-lane road on one side.

Designed to fit into a neighborhood of small businesses, offices, and shops dating back to the 1960s, the

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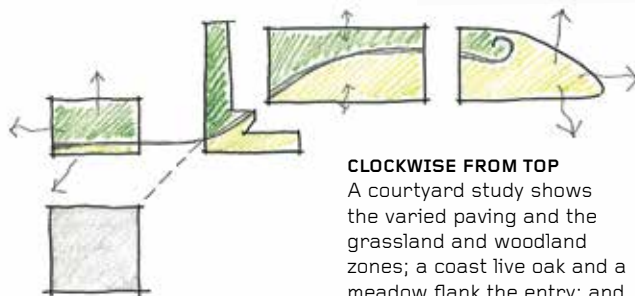
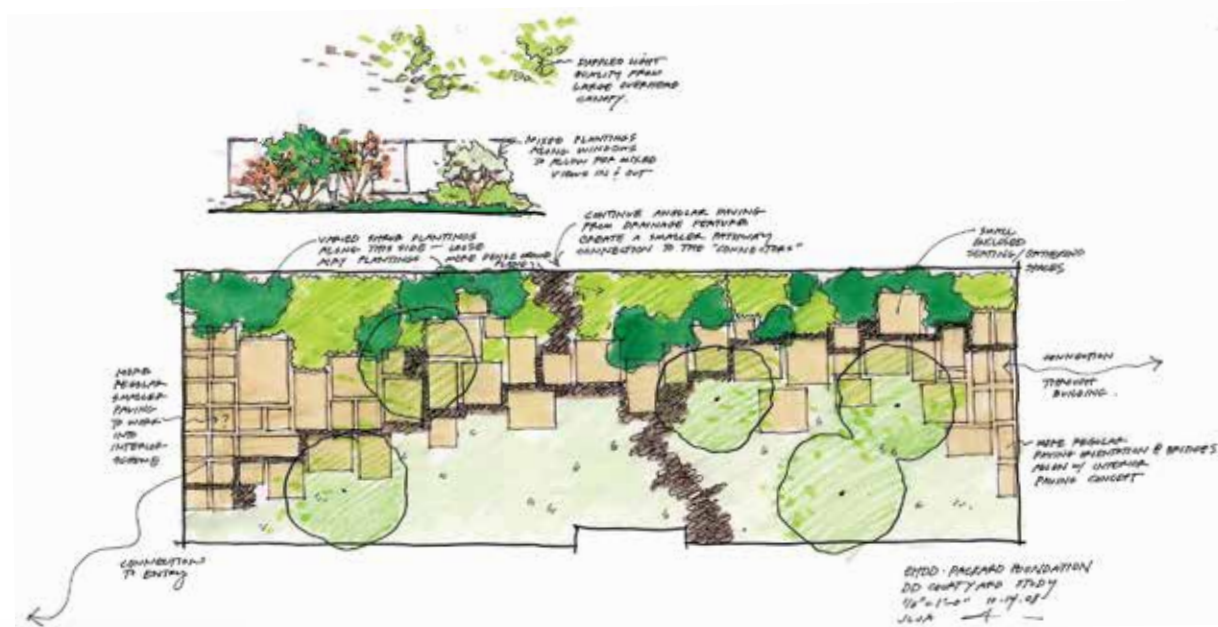
low-slung, cedar-and-copper-clad, 45,553-square-foot building looks strikingly (and beautifully) contemporary in comparison, but blends comfortably in with a scale more like that of a large house than an office. The building earned LEED Platinum status and uses net zero energy. Janecki was asked to create a landscape that was equally sustainable and that would offer take-home ideas for the community and visitors. The landscape, scaled to suburban-garden size, includes residential-style paving and seating, along with native shrubs and

perennials that demonstrate that a mostly native landscape can be beautiful and ever-changing, with a color palette that shifts with the season.

On a side street just half a block from a Walgreens, the foundation's entry offers a transition from the commercial downtown to a distinctly different, wilder place. The entry's hardscape and planting design preview some of the motifs that recur throughout. A mosaic pattern of stone pavers starts where the standard city sidewalk ends. Janecki explains that she inten-

tionally avoided stairs and kept the grades shallow to avoid using ramps and rails and to create a simple transition from the street into the building. Oversized paving stones vary in dimensions (up to 48 by 72 inches), and they tend to exaggerate the scale of the paving in the center of the space. The paving becomes progressively more uniform and smaller the closer it is to the building.

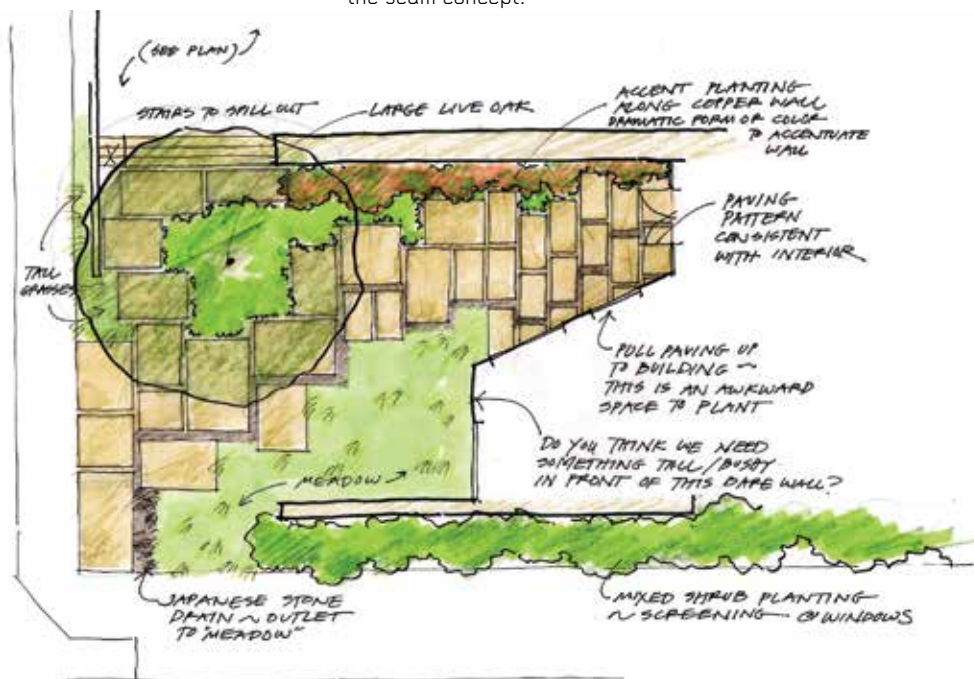
A narrow seam of smaller, saw-cut stones wends through the pavers from the sidewalk to the front door



CLOCKWISE FROM TOP
A courtyard study shows the varied paving and the grassland and woodland zones; a coast live oak and a meadow flank the entry; and an early sketch illustrates the seam concept.

and continues in various forms throughout, also functioning as part of the drainage system. Janecki says, “The seam is a concept that we used to guide the overall design. The architecture feels like the building is pulled apart into two pieces, and we used the seam of stone to give the feeling of reuniting the two parts.”

Native plants also begin right at the edge of the city sidewalk. Planting beds flanking the irregular edges of the paving include clumps of California fescue (*Festuca californica*) in formal rows and dogwoods against the building. The edging is grasslike sedge (*Carex divulsa* and *C. praegracilis*)—the designer’s go-to plants for all-year green ground covers on this site. A specimen oak stands as the entry’s signature and, in Janecki’s words, “strives to balance nature with building.” About 25 years old when planted and now 30 feet tall, the coast live oak (*Quercus agrifolia*) is a local native, and thousands of them were cleared for the fruit orchards planted in the area a century ago.



The landscape’s functional and metaphoric heart is a 150-foot-long interior courtyard flanked by two office wings. Office spaces open to the courtyard, outfitted with movable tables and chairs inviting employees outdoors for breaks, impromptu meetings, or working on laptops—casual get-togethers are intended to encourage the business style of David Packard, known for his “management by walking around.”



The courtyard is paved with the same stones used for the entry, mostly of uniform size (12 by 24 inches), occasionally interrupted by larger sizes. “The goal was a look both natural and refined, and it had to create a continuous platform for tables and chairs,” Janecki says. Down the middle, the stone seam used in the entry picks up again. The seam has a gravel infiltration trench under the vertically set stone of the channel that allows runoff from the paved area to infiltrate slowly into the ground.

Irregular cutouts on both sides of the paving define planting beds that evoke the two dominant natural habitats of the area: woodlands and grasslands. The shady side of the courtyard is planted with woodland plants, including dogwoods in the background, *Heuchera maxima* as

a clumping ground cover, and Japanese anemone as accents. The sunnier side represents the grasslands, with a massed planting of sedge. The evergreen sedge creates a forgiving setting for intermingled Pacific Coast iris (*Iris douglasiana*), camouflaging the irises when they go dormant after spring bloom. Down the middle, a row of tall, narrow plane trees (*Platanus x acerifolia* ‘Columbia’) provides summer shade for the courtyard and building. This species of plane tree is closely related to the local California native sycamore, which was not selected because it would grow too large for the space.

At the far end of the courtyard, the paving continues through glass doors and into a sunny, bowl-like meadow, about 10,000 square feet. The meadow, which gently slopes and drains

into a catchment and infiltration basin, was originally planted with plugs and seeds of native fescue grass, which failed and was replaced with a native mow-free fescue mix; the new mix has a deep wavy look, maintained with selective trimming, not mowing. Stone slabs, in an offset circle at meadow’s edge, provide informal seating and also serve as sculptural accents. The meadow is rimmed with a low metal fence and a berm that rises gently from two to four feet high, thickly planted with evergreen natives screening the busy road.

Janecki says that some Packard board members favored using nothing but California native plants, but she saw problems with that. “We found that many natives struggle in the highly compacted soil of most building sites,” she says. In the final planting

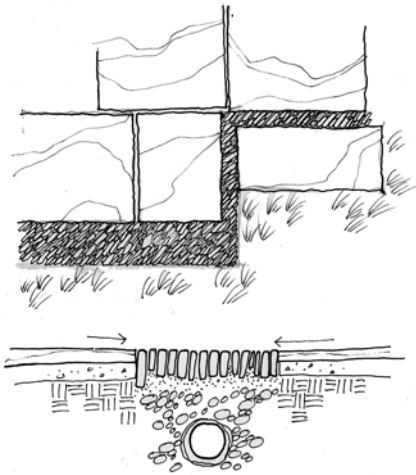
ABOVE
Portable chairs and stone slabs offer seating in the courtyard. The paving is saw-cut stone with planting cutouts on each side.

RIGHT

On the left of the courtyard paving, *Carex* and iris form a grassland habitat. On the right, a shady woodland includes *Heuchera* and dogwood.

BELOW

Vertically laid pavers create a seam that runs through the site, capturing runoff.



plan, nearly three dozen different native species make up about 90 percent of the total plants used; the rest are compatible nonnatives tolerant of conditions typical of a built landscape.

For such a highly visible spot, Janecki also had to deal with the tendency of California natives to look, well, native—kind of sprawly and wild, often drab and drab in their summer dormant season. Janecki compensated for the natives' downtime by including such nonnative plants as the perennial Japanese anemone (*Anemone x hybrida*), with white flowers in fall, and kousa dogwood (*Cornus kousa*), with white spring blossoms and fall foliage color.

To add a sense of unity and structure to the looseness of the natives, Janecki and Amy West, her codesigner

and principal, incorporated naturalistic stonework throughout the design. Saw-cut stone, from a quarry on Mount Moriah in eastern Nevada, is used for paving and the building's wall veneer; the stone's color ranges from gray to reddish brown, with splashes of silver-gray quartzite. Janecki says the team chose the stones for both their aesthetic and architectonic qualities. "We had to find a stone that would be suitable for the walking surfaces and meet accessibility requirements [little to no ridges or vertical clefts] and that also would work as a wall surface for the interior and exterior of the building."

West traveled to two quarries in Montana to hand-select boulders, ranging from bathtub to refrigerator size, to use as seating and accents through-

out the landscape. Janecki says, "The large slabs suggest outcroppings you might see in nature where weather erodes the soil and exposes the solid rock." The stones were placed to be used as informal seating around the site.

Over a one-story building wing, a 1,350-square-foot living roof—patterned mostly with creeping *Sedum* and other succulents and several species of thyme—offers a green view from a second-floor meeting room. The living roof helps insulate the building below it and is intended to demonstrate an option for reducing, slowing, and controlling water and sediment flow from site runoff. The living roof catches a portion of the rain that hits the site and waters the plantings; overflow goes to a catchment and infiltration basin at ground level.



In this area of low rainfall (15 inches a year), conserving water is critical to sustainability. The new landscape reduced the amount of the site's impervious surfaces from 95 percent to 35 percent and includes other steps to save water and cut down on irrigation.

Nearly all of the rainwater is collected and recirculated. Building downspouts empty into a filter chamber on the side of the building, which



ABOVE
Succulents and herbs form a mosaic pattern on the living roof.

RIGHT
Rain gardens on a side street are planted with *Heuchera*, *Juncus*, and other natives to capture and filter stormwater.

removes pollen, tree debris, dirt, and other large particles before the water is piped into two 10,000-gallon cisterns. The first cistern is used for toilet flushing and meets 90 percent of the building's demand. Once the first tank is filled, water begins filling the second tank, which is used for irrigation.

On both sides of a side street, three- to five-foot-wide "flow-through planters" capture, slow, and filter stormwater that formerly ran down the street, collecting oil and debris before eventually reaching San Francisco Bay. These rain gardens receive little supplemental irrigation and are planted with the most hardy of drought-resistant natives, particularly California gray rush (*Juncus patens* 'Elk Blue').

On a mid-August and mid-drought maintenance inspection, Janecki and Nicole Steel, the project manager, begin in the courtyard. Janecki explains that the maintenance crew is learning how to cope with the realities of a native plant garden—California natives are famously quirky and sensitive to

PLANT LIST

SHRUBS AND PERENNIALS

- Anemone hupehensis* var. *japonica*** (Japanese anemone)
- Arctostaphylos bakeri* 'Louis Edmunds'** (Louis Edmunds baker's manzanita)
- Arctostaphylos uva-ursi* 'Point Reyes'** (Point Reyes kinnikinnick)
- Carpenteria californica* 'Elizabeth'** (Elizabeth bush anemone)
- Ceanothus griseus* var. *horizontalis*** (Carmel creeper)
- Ceanothus* x '*Concha*'** (Concha California lilac)
- Cornus kousa* var. *chinensis*** (Chinese dogwood)
- Cornus sericea* 'Isanti'** (Isanti red twig dogwood)
- Dendromecon rigida*** (Bush poppy)
- Fragaria chiloensis*** (Beach strawberry)
- Fremontodendron californicum*** (California flannelbush)
- Heuchera maxima*** (Island alumroot)
- Iris douglasiana* 'Canyon Snow'** (Canyon Snow Douglas iris)
- Morella californica*** (Pacific wax myrtle)
- Pittosporum tenuifolium*** (Tawhiwhi)
- Ribes sanguineum* 'Barrie Coate'** (Barrie Coate red-flowering currant)
- Ribes viburnifolium*** (Evergreen currant)
- Rubus pentalobus*** (Creeping bramble)
- Salvia clevelandii* 'Aromas'** (Aromas Cleveland sage)
- Salvia sonomensis* 'Dara's Choice'** (Dara's Choice creeping sage)
- Sambucus nigra* 'Madonna'** (Madonna black elderberry)
- Sambucus nigra* ssp. *cerulea*** (Blue elderberry)

GRASSES, SEDGES, AND RUSHES

- Carex divulsa*** (Berkeley sedge)
- Carex praegracilis*** (Clustered field sedge)
- Chondropetalum tectorum*** (Cape rush)
- Eschscholzia californica*** (California poppy)
- Festuca californica*** (California fescue)
- Festuca californica* 'Blue Fountain'** (Blue Fountain California fescue)
- Fragaria chiloensis*** (Beach strawberry)
- Juncus patens* 'Elk Blue'** (Elk Blue California gray rush)
- Miscanthus transmorrisonensis*** (Evergreen miscanthus)

VINES

- Clematis armandii*** (Evergreen clematis)

TREES

- Arbutus* x '*Marina*'** (Marina Madrone)
- Cornus kousa* x *nuttallii* 'Starlight'** (Starlight flowering dogwood)
- Lagerstroemia* x '*Natchez*'** (Natchez crape myrtle)
- Lophostemon confertus*** (Brisbane box)
- Pistacia chinensis*** (Chinese pistache)
- Platanus* x *hispanica* 'Columbia'** (Columbia London plane tree)
- Quercus agrifolia*** (Coast live oak)

RAIN GARDEN PLANTINGS

- Aquilegia formosa*** (Western columbine)
- Heuchera micrantha*** (Crevice alumroot)
- Iris douglasiana*** (Douglas iris)
- Juncus patens* 'Elk Blue'** (Elk Blue California gray rush)
- Ribes viburnifolium*** (Evergreen currant)

LIVING ROOF PLANTINGS

- Echeveria* x '*Imbricata*'** (Blue Rose echeveria)
- Festuca arvensis*** (Blue fescue)
- Phedimus spurius* 'Voodoo'** (Voodoo caucasian stonecrop)
- Sedum sediforme*** (Pale stonecrop)
- Sedum spathulifolium*** (Broadleaf stonecrop)
- Thymus praecox* 'Elfin'** (Elfin creeping thyme)
- Thymus pseudolanuginosus*** (Woolly thyme)
- Thymus* spp.** (Common thyme)

RIGHT

The path from the courtyard wends through a meadow lined with native fescue in summer seedhead stage.

BELOW

A wavy mass of evergreen *Carex* is the main ground cover on the courtyard's sunny side.



Janecki fingers the crunchy brown leaf tips of a dogwood. “Maybe too much sun? Or salts in the water or not enough water. The dogwoods in the shade are doing much better.” So is the *Heuchera* ground cover, and the sedge is a solid mat of deep green. Most of the plane trees have put on three or four feet of growth, but two display the contorted-leaf signs of anthracnose. Janecki advises waiting to see what the trees look like after they leaf out the next spring and possibly treat then. Just outside the building, plants close to the copper cladding show signs of sunburn from the reflected heat; they’ll be replaced or moved farther away.

Checking out the rain gardens, with their minimal irrigation, Janecki calls *Juncus* “a major winner.” The steely green rushes are thick and bristly as an old-fashioned shaving brush. But looking brown and shriveled are the native California columbine, a delicate, beautiful Sierra perennial—its position as one of Lucile Packard’s favorite flowers had earned it a spot on the planting list.

nuances of the site, especially to overwatering in heavy soils. The crew had to learn the difference between weeds and fescue in the meadow: They were pulling out the wrong plants. Leaf blowers aren’t to be used because they blow away too many of the fallen leaves, which are supposed to be left as a mulch.

Already, a berm planting—the view seen by pedestrians and drivers on the busy road—has filled in thickly. Native shrubs and ground covers have thrived in the berm’s well-drained soil. In spring the planting looked as romantically colored as an early 20th-century plein air painting: bursts of dark blue sage (*Salvia delevelandii*)

and ceanothus, and deep yellow bush poppy (*Dendromecon rigida*) and fremontia (*Fremontodendron californicum*). Ground covers of glossy-leaved Carmel creeper (*Ceanothus griseus* var. *horizontalis*) have massed together so tightly that hardly any soil shows.

In a two-foot strip between the sidewalk and fence, Sonoma sage (*Salvia ‘Dara’s Choice’*) has knit together solidly and makes its presence known even when out of bloom. On a hot summer day the pungent scent of its foliage—powerful enough to drown out bus fumes—seems to waft down from the foothills and transports you to a wilder, more natural place and time. ●

BILL MARKEN, HONORARY ASLA, IS THE FORMER EDITOR IN CHIEF OF *SUNSET* AND *GARDEN DESIGN* MAGAZINES.

Project Credits

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