

DESIGN NOTEBOOK REBECCA JURETIC

# Feeling at home at Old Town

Nipomo nursery helps take the guesswork out of gardening

Gardening can be a guessing game. How big will that shrub really get? Will this plant look okay next to that one?

For those of us uneasy with speculation, Nipomo's Old Town Nursery strives to take the guessing game out of gardening.



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Many of the plants that it sells at the nursery also have a permanent home in a bed, border or display garden on the grounds.

"Just seeing a plant sitting in a pot doesn't inspire creativity," said nursery manager Mary Sue London. "When you see how other plants complement it, with different combinations of heights and colors, it gives you ideas of what you might be able to do at home."

The nursery staff is currently overhauling a cottage garden, which, come spring, will be replete with roses, lavender, salvias and gaillardias. Succulent and drought tolerant gardens are also in the works. Many plantings are years old and well-established, offering examples of what ground covers will look like when filled in, which plants might complement a 'Dwarf Red' Abutilon, or how lovely a Lady Banks rose looks with its yellow blooms blanketing an arbor.

Much of the nursery stock is integrated into these garden vignettes, rather than displayed on tables or in rows. Some are placed in groupings to offer ideas for novel plant combinations. Even fountains and garden art are integrated into these arrangements.

"It's become more like a park. People like to just come and walk around."



## GARDEN TIPS FROM MARY SUE LONDON

### PLANT PICKS

Mary Sue London is partial to tough, drought-tolerant plants. A few of her favorites are hardy ceanothus, arbutus 'marina' with its lovely red bark, and arctostaphylos with small white or pale pink flowers that turn to berries in the summer.

### AVOID CHEMICALS

Systemic pesticides and chemical fertilizers can destroy microbes that are necessary for the health of your soil and plants. Try using a hose or a power washer on a low setting to eliminate harmful insects in your garden.

### TAKE YOUR VITAMINS

Soil in San Luis Obispo County tends to be magnesium deficient, which can result in yellowing leaves. Epsom salt is an inexpensive solution to the problem. Use it to amend your soil in March and again in the summer.



PHOTOS BY REBECCA JURETIC

Top photo, Mary Sue London, nursery manager of Old Town Nursery in Nipomo. Above, the displays at the nursery help customers visualize placement in their own yards.

said London, who hopes the nursery will soon be host to wine events and weddings.

Currently, bare root plants take up a good portion of the nursery, which will focus more heavily on bedding plants and succulents in the spring. The nursery carries over 60 varieties of roses, along with fruit trees, vines, and vegetables. This year's inventory includes pomegranates, persimmons, boysenberries, artichokes, and as-

paragus. You'll find a few unusual varieties like apriums (a cross between an apricot and plum), and a 3-in-1 apple tree that bears Anna, Dorsett Golden and Ein Shemer fruits.

Last September, Old Town Nursery was purchased by George and Barbara Papageorge who also own Nipomo Rexall. With the help of London and her staff, the Papageorges began renovating the approximately 14-year-old nursery.

Also new at the nursery

are gardening classes. On March 6 from 10 a.m. to noon, Tom Spellman from Modesto-area tree farm Dave Wilson Nursery will share tips on how to successfully grow fruit trees in your yard. The class is free, but reservations are recommended. Visit the nursery [www.oldtownnursery.com](http://www.oldtownnursery.com) for a complete class listing.

Old Town Nursery is located at 323 W. Tefft Street A, in Nipomo, 929-1084.