



LEFT Assorted Vintage French Willy Guhl Hourglass Planter, Handkerchief Planters, Rare Wily Guhl Pod Cahir, all on an antique French table.

BELOW A Ficus Arbutifolia in a brown terracotta bowl.

BOTTOM LEFT Portrait of Stephen Block By John Skalicky.



“I DIDN’T GET INTO PLANTS, THEY GOT INTO ME,” insists Stephen Block, whose passion for his field is infectious. As president of Inner Gardens—the beloved Culver City showroom is supported by a 1.5-acre nursery in Malibu—he offers sophisticated design solutions to both interior and exterior plantings. With clients like Elton John and Cher, plus a portfolio of commercial projects that includes Spago and the Waldorf Astoria Beverly Hills, it is hardly hyperbole to refer to Block as a celebrity designer.

“I needed to distinguish myself from everyone else, so early on I decided I was going to collect antiques,” recounts Block, who says of his eclectic tastes, “I buy what I love.” He founded Inner Gardens in 1989 and after a devastating fire at his previous facility in 2015, relocated to Inner Gardens’ current 20,000-square-foot showroom in the Culver City Arts District.

The designer subscribes to the Japanese principle of wabi-sabi, a concept of aesthetics based on the imperfect, transient or incomplete, and is drawn to meticulously-crafted objects whose wear is readily apparent. “If it’s too perfect it doesn’t interest me,” insists Block, who suggests, “Those imperfections throw off the eye and get the viewer involved in the piece.”

Block confirms the growing popularity of native plants, which contribute to healthy and dynamic ecosystems, and reports that every Inner Gardens project now includes some aspect of drought-tolerance. Native species from the Americas, Australia and South Africa—typically exotic-looking plants paired with intriguing containers—find their way into his work.

“A lot of what Inner Gardens does is to provide the ‘jewelry,’” reports Block, who sometimes acquires unique vintage items for his collaborators, including acclaimed interior designers Michael Smith and Kelly Wearstler, while trekking through Europe. Citing an unconventional approach to treasure-hunting, one equally applicable to leisure travel, Block explains, “Getting lost is the best way to find things, and my best discoveries have occurred when I’ve been lost in the South of France.”

“In designing a garden, I draw inspiration from some element of the house, and a garden needs to reflect the architecture,” reports Block,



ABOVE Rare Adenia spinosa in the Sphere Planter from the Inner Gardens Malibu Collection

ABOVE TOP LEFT An Epiphyllum, also known as an Orchid Cactus, in an antique French Cast Iron Urn with Swan Handles.

ABOVE MIDDLE A dried grape vine root planted with Sansevieria Hanii.

LEFT Assortment of Large spheres carved from a large, thick block of French limestone.



Gardens

RIGHT A *Drimia Maritima* (also known as Sea Squill) paired with a *Haworthia Zebra* Plant in a Light weight fiber-cement planter.

FAR RIGHT St. Remy Planter from the Inner Gardens Stone Collection, planted with an Olive Tree. Photograph by Studio Lifestyle.

BELOW Inner Gardens Malibu Planter, planted with a rare *Echinopsis pachanoi*, also known as a San Pedro cactus, and a *Echinopsis Pachanoi Cristata* (Crested San Pedro Cactus).



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who notes that a single item from his collection might inspire an entire theme. Inner Gardens offers an extraordinary selection of planters, fountains and objets d’art, as well as furniture and lighting for outdoor living spaces. The inventory, including the company’s own line of products, ranges from antique European pieces to modern expressions.

Inner Gardens’ recently-launched line of cast composite resin planters, whose light weight makes them ideal for rooftop gardens or balconies, is available in natural stone textures and modern colors. That collection—in addition to vintage pieces from iconic designers David Cressey and Willy Guhl—complements Palm Springs’ mid-century modern architecture and embodies the spirit of the city’s Modernism Week. **CH**



ABOVE Date Palm Allée at the Inner Gardens Showroom, with assorted antique terracotta jars from Italy, Spain, Greece and Crete; the three antique Moorish cast-iron lanterns featured here are also available as a reproduction at the Inner Garden Collection.

OPPOSITE LEFT A collection of Antique French Green Glazed Castelnauvady Pots and Classic Glazed Anduze Orangerie Planters, planted with Boxwood Globes.



Rare Vintage Willy Guhl Loop Chair circa 1960s Switzerland.