



The home's steel-and-glass addition overlooks the verdant gardens created by landscape architect Carlos Somoza and his team. The project included the renovation of the pool, which is now finished in geometric glass tile.



Garden Reckoning

A COCONUT GROVE RESIDENCE'S ARCHITECTURAL ADDITION PROMPTS AN OVERHAUL OF ITS GREEN SPACES

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PHOTOGRAPHY CARLOS SOMOZA

ABOVE: The home's entrance reveals the use of Brazilian *ipe* wood, which was used extensively throughout the gardens.

BELOW: The garden's architectural precast pavers are embedded with Florida seashells and aggregate. Neanthe Bella palm was chosen because it adapts well to dappled light.



By the time Carlos Somoza got the call to transform the gardens of a particular Coconut Grove residence, he was rather well acquainted with the property.

"I'd driven by the home for years," says the landscape architect. "When the owners contacted me to interview for the design commission, I already had ideas on what to do."

Said house is a 1950s Trip Russell structure that was the recent recipient of a two-story steel-and-glass ribbon addition by Brillhart Architecture with a backyard focused on a 60-foot-high Florida Strangler Fig tree. The homeowners tasked Somoza with extending

the living areas of the residence outdoors. "The floor-to-ceiling glazing inside the home admits abundant natural light into the interior and creates the feeling that you are living in a treehouse," says Somoza. "We wanted to continue that."

Somoza and his team began by installing an *ipe* wood deck just outside the living room and kitchen for an easy transition to the alfresco spaces. Just steps away is a swimming pool that was renovated with new finishes, geometric glass tile, and the addition of a six-foot waterfall. "We selected materials that evoke nature, including *ipe*, and architectural



ABOVE: All the outdoor spaces were designed around the home's ancient Strangler Fig tree, which measures approximately 60 feet in height. The wood deck just outside the home's living room and kitchen is made from Brazilian *ipe*.

BELOW: "Mystery and surprise are important components of our gardens," says landscape architect Carlos Somoza. "In this one, gray shellstone paver pathways weave through the front entrance grounds. We incorporated multiple layers of perennials and groundcovers to create a rich tapestry of subtropical plantings."



precast pavers that complement the building's vernacular," adds Somoza. "The pavers are embedded with seashells and aggregate that complement the beige, bronze, and gray colors of the home's steel, the beach pebble pathways, and the glass tile that surrounds the pool."

In terms of plant life, Somoza opted for specimens that would not go unnoticed. Among these are green and black bromeliads ("both varieties provide seasonal interest by emitting tangerine- and orange-colored blossoms in winter"), Giant Leopard plants ("with round leaves the size of dinner plates and spikes of yellow daisy-like flowers"), Simpson's Stoppers ("because they attract cardinals and honeybees to the garden, and provide edible berries in the summer"), and two types of palms: Red Feathers ("which produce red-colored leaves that turn green as they mature") and Licualas ("for their attractive ruffled leaves, which are like sculptures in the landscape"). As intended, the gardens wrap the perimeter of the home and create the illusion that they were carved from a jungle.

"When you sit on the deck, it's like you're on a perch," says Somoza. "You're surrounded by nature, and you can hear the sounds of water coming from the pool. It's very soothing." designsomoza.com



ABOVE: Part of the pool renovations included the addition of a waterfall feature.

ABOVE: The dark green foliage provided by Lady Palm provides a textured backdrop to other plant species, including Black Magic and Mojito Elephant Ear. An outdoor kitchen under an *ipe* pergola is just a few steps from the pool and lower gardens.