



THE PRESS DEMOCRAT

Bathtub Retreat a Garden Winner

by Meg McConahey

Santa Rosa landscapers Jeff and Anne-Marie Allen captured a Western Garden Design Award from Sunset Magazine for their “outdoor bathing oasis.”

“Charming and playful” is how one juror described the whimsical al fresco “bathroom” featuring not a Jacuzzi with jets but a common, clawfoot bathtub set on a flagstone patio amid the natural aromatherapy of real gardenias and jasmine.

The garden bathroom, with hot and cold running water and screened with bamboo and birch branches, is one of 20 winning gardens featured in this month’s Sunset.

“We knew we had a good chance of winning because it’s a pretty unique garden,” said Jeff by cell phone from the Northwest Flower Show in Seattle, where the couple is celebrating not only their Sunset award, but a brand new baby. Jeff refurbished a salvaged bathtub used primarily as a backyard beer cooler, then designed a little getaway around it, only steps from their home. It was a surprise gift for his bride and partner Anne-Marie. It was selected from among several hundred entrants, singled out for distinction in the category of “garden details.”

Consumers taking a soaking with sky rocketing bills might take note. The low-tech outdoor tub, says Jeff, offers the same sensation of luxuriating under the stars, at a fraction of the cost of a Jacuzzi.

Several clients who called Allen Landscaping requesting their own backyard bathrooms after the oasis was featured in The Press Democrat last year, cited energy savings as one of the most appealing selling features.

Jeff says the bathtub also has it over a hot tub when it comes to time-savings. With a hot tub, he said, you have to bathe afterward to get rid of the chlorine. “But with this tub,” he said, “you’re clean and ready to go. It’s relaxing and a time saver.”

