

CREATING Your Escape in Your OUTDOOR Space



An Interview with Expert
Ismael Covarrubias of
Growing Landscapes

By Maggie Ramos

With all the stress and challenges of life and that long commute before we retreat to our sanctuary. We are eager to arrive home but realize that as you pull into your driveway, we have a new parent and spouse role to jump into. From our spouses seeking our time or the kids asking for help with that school project as soon as we walk through that door. Imagine how much better you would feel if you pulled up to a manicured, properly executed landscape. We want to come home and find an area that takes that stress away and gives us peace in our home. If we could just have a place for unwinding before we step in to spouse mode. What better place than your very own paradise retreat in your own yard? There's a growing appreciation for the tranquility and holistic benefits that outdoor living spaces can bring, and let's not forget the value they add to one's property.

Where do we start? How do we create this sanctuary?

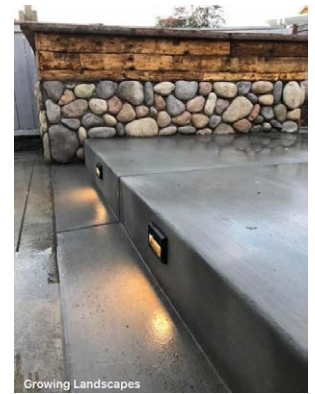
That's where we seek professional help if you're not willing to give up your weekends for the next few years to work on your own yard to accomplish this. Most professionals, including landscape designer and contractor Ismael Covarrubias of Growing Landscapes, would agree that having an outdoor living space reduces stress and anxiety. We talked to Covarrubias as he explained the process of starting and executing a new landscape oasis. "Our clients start with an idea, and it is our job to execute that idea," Ismael says. Landscape designers have the task of working with clients, with their knowledge of horticulture and construction, using soft-

ware to create a design in 3D renderings. "Outdoor spaces are extensions of our homes, designed for social connections with family and friends, promote relaxation for self-care and a closer bond with nature. According to Ismael a homeowner should have some ideas already of what they want and like before they contact a design firm. A great way is to take inspiration from online sources, magazines, of things we like in nature or our neighborhoods. The goal is to create a collection that a designer can go from. "It makes our jobs easier to be able to understand our client's tastes and preferences. Are we designing for entertaining, for a growing family, or just a place to relax and throw our feet up," says Ismael. He explains that he lets the home help him determine what the design should be. "There's no reason to design a modern landscape on a Victorian home which won't flow or be appealing to the eye. It would just throw people off." He says.



Budget is one of the first challenges he faces on an initial consultation. A Design can be in the range anywhere from \$1500-\$5000+ depending on how intricate and detailed a design is. The size of the property and topography have a factor in cost. Projects can also range anywhere from \$ 8,500 up to 1M plus," Some

people have costly taste"-he adds



After gathering ideas, we expect our clients to come up with a budget and what the must-haves are to be included in their design. "We have to guide our clients through the budget and wants, he smiles. "We can't create the Gardens of Versailles on a small budget, so we have to guide our clients to see what best fits their gardens aligned with their budget. Construction budgets can easily get out of hand that's why it is important to start with a design." - Ismael says. A design will help give his clients an outlook of what the project will look like before it is built and allow them to reduce unforeseen costs and avoid other surprises. When designing, he wants outdoor living spaces to include kitchens and outdoor fireplaces for clients who plan on entertaining. In some of his designs, he explains that clients are adding smaller pools to soak in and relax or plunge pools for ice baths. "Not everyone wants that Olympic pool," he states.

The second challenge they face is water usage and how the design is presented. They also must be mindful that most of their designs are in Southern California and water is a concern. Most of his designs are irrigated using low-volume irrigation and

low-water usage plant pallet. San Diego Water Authority offers rebates to implement water best practices on irrigation, so it is worth keeping an update on that. See www.sdcwa.org for up-to-date rebates. Rebates would help their clients allocate part of the funds for that higher-end BBQ or more exotic plant pallet when applicable.

“Every design should have a focal feature; it could be a gathering area, water feature, a rare and exotic plant species, or just something like a statue or art sculpture. That is what makes everything come together.”-he explains.

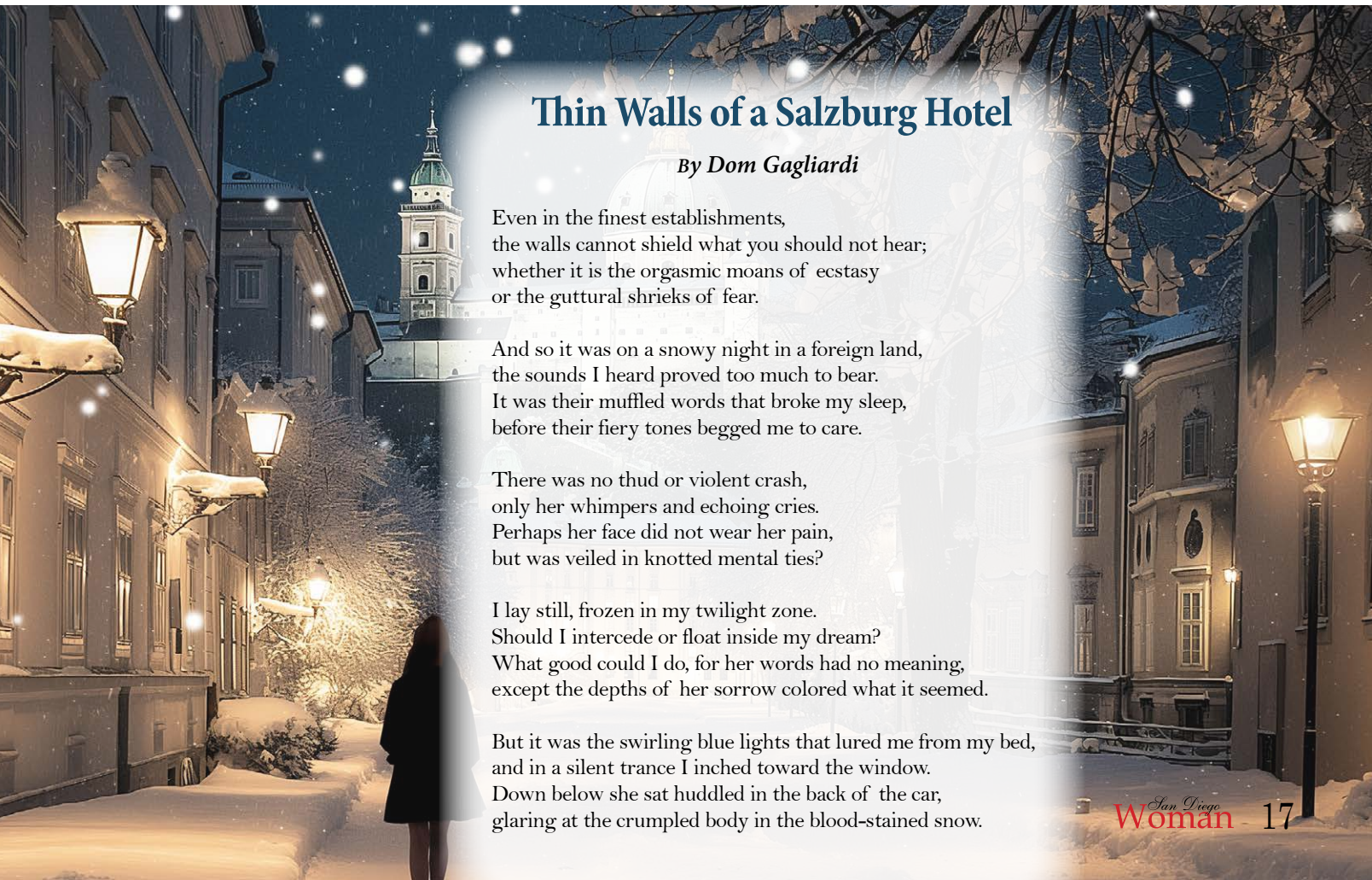
After the presentation and the client has approved their design, we move forward with the execution, which includes bidding and sourcing materials. As part of the process, Growing Landscapes offers project manage-

ment to each design if clients choose to do so. “This eliminates the headache and frees up time for our working clients with busy schedules,”-he adds. This includes sourcing materials and working with other contractors, like plumbers, electricians, general contractors, and other trades. Ismael explains that they are an extension of his team, and without them, his designs would not be completed in a timely manner with them. During construction, until completion, Ismael is working with subcontractors to ensure his design is being executed as planned. After a project is completed, a final walk-through is done with the client as a final inspection. This is the time that the client

will test out the functionality, and the project is turned over to the client. Our clients usually end up being part of our Growing Landscapes family and keep in contact, sending us photos of them enjoying their new landscapes- he says.

Ismael is a Landscape Contractor & Designer with a C27 License. He was born and raised in Southern California, where he found his passion for this industry. He also worked as the Irrigation Specialist for over ten years for Legoland California before branching off and starting Growing Landscapes in 2016. He holds a Certificate as a Qualified Water Efficient Landscaper (QWEL) from San Diego Water Authority and a Certificate in Arboriculture.

If you would like to contact Ismael and his team at Growing Landscapes, you can reach him at info.growinglandscapes@gmail.com or 760-687-8405 and find his work on Facebook & Instagram



Thin Walls of a Salzburg Hotel

By Dom Gagliardi

Even in the finest establishments,
the walls cannot shield what you should not hear;
whether it is the orgasmic moans of ecstasy
or the guttural shrieks of fear.

And so it was on a snowy night in a foreign land,
the sounds I heard proved too much to bear.
It was their muffled words that broke my sleep,
before their fiery tones begged me to care.

There was no thud or violent crash,
only her whimpers and echoing cries.
Perhaps her face did not wear her pain,
but was veiled in knotted mental ties?

I lay still, frozen in my twilight zone.
Should I intercede or float inside my dream?
What good could I do, for her words had no meaning,
except the depths of her sorrow colored what it seemed.

But it was the swirling blue lights that lured me from my bed,
and in a silent trance I inched toward the window.
Down below she sat huddled in the back of the car,
glaring at the crumpled body in the blood-stained snow.