

Home again

We have been home for eight days after six months in India, oh my, it feels good. I promised to give an update on how my wild suburban garden did during our absence and I am happy to report that it did just fine.

We left for India on December 1, entrusting our house to our son, daughter-in-law and granddaughter. However, I knew that they are not the gardening type, so I hired a colleague of mine from [Rancho Santa Ana Botanic Garden](#) to take care of the yard. I have not yet debriefed K so I am not sure about how things went for her. I do know that she must have spent a lot of time on poop-patrol, cleaning up after my 15-year old dog, Milo. As she said, he is a testament to good digestive health. Interesting because the first thing that struck me when Milo and I were reunited was how thin he looks. Nevertheless, after being home one week, it is clear he is eating something!



Milo gets up and "runs" to keep up with me. Not bad for 15.

My very first impression of the yard was that it is a bit more scrubby than I remembered. This is no reflection on K. Plants were cut back from the sidewalk and paths, lawn mowed and edged, and

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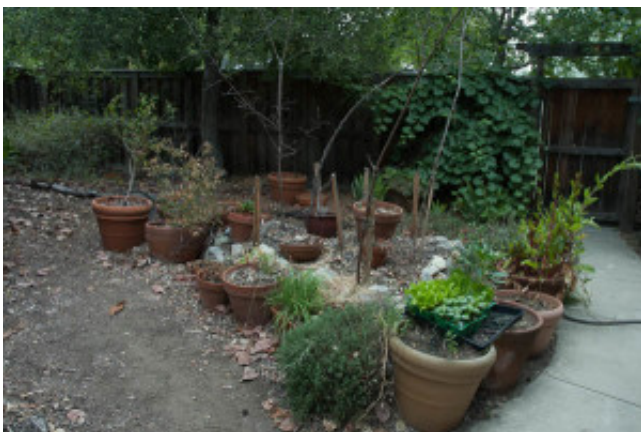
weeds removed.



Sidewalk clean and clear.

I know that a lot of cleanup is required after the wildflower season and clearly it had been done. The scrubbiness resulted from seeing the garden with fresh eyes. Within hours it faded away to be replaced with a new appreciation for the birds, lizards, and insects that coexist with us, and the delicious scent of the sages. It would be nice, though, to hold on to that new perspective when modifying the garden. As such, I'm thinking that I need to use more deer grass and less sage. Monkeyflowers are great while in bloom, not so good the rest of the year.

The only plants that did not make it were those in containers. Although there was a drip system for some of them, many did not survive the long term neglect. Of course it did not help that this winter was extremely dry.



Even though the drip system was working I lost many container plants. The flat on the right contains

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lettuce, basil, and chili peppers that will be planted, hopefully this weekend.

The irrigation controller was set to go off once every two weeks in the front yard. I assume it did because although K told me the lawn looked dry, it did not die out entirely. Unfortunately I am still having trouble setting and monitoring it, though I have messaged the support people and hope to get it up and running soon. The lawn looks okay except for a small corner that is not getting enough water. I can either try to fix the irrigation heads or ... remove more lawn. My husband will be traveling soon, a perfect opportunity for lawn-shrinkage.



Picture taken from upstairs office window. Don't you think extending the garden around the corner would look just right?

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Woodland garden looks great. Fuchsia flowering gooseberry is going dormant early due to lack of winter rain. The toyon in the back is in full bloom; there will be lots of red berries next winter.



Tail end of flannelbush bloom period. Must have been glorious.



Pink coral bells still in bloom in front yard, along with a few irises.

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Winnifred Gilman wild sage is a show stopper in parkway garden. This plant can be short lived but it is worth replanting.



My neighbor's boysenberries sneak under the fence into my yard. I enjoyed a large bowl given to me by my neighbor and a few bonus berries growing on my side of the fence. They are really yummy!



Purple needlegrass has gone dormant. Scrubby, yes, but I do like this look.



I missed my garden, and California, in general, but what I missed most was my family. My granddaughter has grown up so much!

Travel in India was a wonderful adventure but it is great to be home!