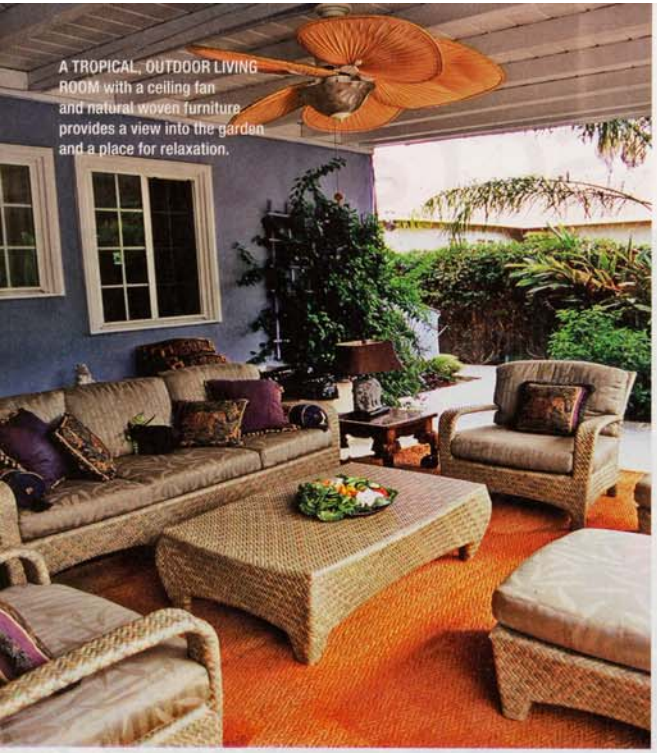

A TROPICAL, OUTDOOR LIVING ROOM with a ceiling fan and natural woven furniture provides a view into the garden and a place for relaxation.

THE LITTLE PATH to the secret nook winds past plantings of ginger, red kangaroo paw and pindo palm. Other plants along the way include a giant bird of paradise, banana, purple stem elephant ear and albutilon.

entire yard's soil had to be replaced. Since one of the causes of the infestation had been poor drainage, a complete underground drainage system would have to be put in before the soil could be replaced. So the yard came out—to the depth of four feet! Then the entire excavation was lined with root barrier to keep the new planting from invading the neighbors' yards and, even more important, to keep possible infected soil from the yard next door from re-infecting the new garden. A drainage system was installed, complete with sump pump to push the water to the curb. Every pipe that penetrated the barrier was caulked and sealed. Finally, 166 cubic yards of drainage gravel and new topsoil was brought in.

A new yard was born. Now it was time to design the garden. The owner wanted a jungle feel for the small space, measuring only 32 by 64 feet. Tikotsky created a tropical look with a winding flagstone path to a hidden nook at the end of the garden. The planting was designed to be so dense that the path would literally disappear into the foliage, even though it would travel less than 50 feet. The large trees, including Queen and Fan Palms and a purple orchid tree, were established first, then the path was laid. The trees were tricky to bring in, since only the smallest bobcat tractor would fit through the side yard and there were two power lines crossing the property that had to be carefully avoided. Bamboo was placed as a screen along one side and half the back yard.

The owner then turned to Shelley Jennings of World Wide Exotics, Inc. for plant advice to achieve a tropical look in a non-tropical climate zone. Located in the San Fernando Valley of Los Angeles, it has a Mediterranean climate of hot summers that regularly exceed 100 degrees, and occasional frost in winter. The owner, a New Zealander, was pleased that Jennings could provide specimens from Australia, Mexico and South Africa. The plants were acclimated to local conditions at the nursery, then dug up and placed in containers for transfer to her garden.

"We wanted large plants that would create a jungle look and survive," said Jennings. "So we went with cannas and elephant ear." For mid-size shrubs, she suggested duranta and heat-resistant sages; groundcovers included dymondia around the stepping-stones and purple secretia. The range in scale from large plants with large leaves to groundcovers with tiny leaves created an interesting juxtaposition in the small garden.

Halfway down the path there is a water feature—a large urn that bubbles over with water onto a dry gravel base. The fountain provides the sound and look of running water with no standing pond to cause maintenance problems or breed insects. Foliage quickly overarched the urn and produced the dense jungle look the owner desired.

The garden lies next to a modest swimming pool whose decking was altered to create a better transition to the nearby "jungle." An old wooden fence in back of the pool was screened with trumpet vine. A planter on the deck near the pool was filled with a trio of dwarf citrus: Meyer lemon, orange and mandarin that all bear well in the summer.

The garden fronts a cozy outdoor seating area next to the house and the winding path that disappears into the greenery invites visitors to the hidden bench at the end of the path. The fronds of the arching palms soften the sunlight and the variety of plant colors and textures makes the small area look much bigger than it really is. After all the work, the owner is joyous that her new garden not only survives but thrives as a lush inviting oasis in a small space.

Tropical Flair

For a tropical look in a non-tropical area, Shelly Jennings of World Wide Exotics, Inc. suggests the following:

- For trees—palms, including queen and fan palms
- For large plants—bamboo, purple orchid tree and citrus
- For medium-size plants—arching, large-leaved plants for that jungle look: cannas with large banana-like leaves, actual bananas that are hardy to the area and elephant ear
- For a lush look—vines, including snail vine and *passiflora* 'Lavender Lady'

"We wanted large plants that would create a jungle look and survive," said Jennings. "So we went with cannas and elephant ear."

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Vigna caracalla 'Snail Vine'

Left: Passion Flower Passiflora x 'Lavender Lady' (P.'Amethyst')

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Purple Orchid Tree (*Bauhinia purpurea*)

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Mediterranean Fan Palm (*Chamaerops humilis*)

Creating a JUNGLE

VINES
- "snail vine" Vigna caracalla
- passiflora "lavender lady"

BAMBOO
- phyllostachys bombusoides "castillions"
- phyllostachys nigra

TREES
- Bauhinia purpurea "purple orchid tree"
- dwarf citrus improved Meyer lemon
- dwarf citrus seedless Valencia orange
- dwarf citrus Satsuma Madarin seedless owari
- lagerstroemia muskogee "crepe myrtle"

PALMS
- Butia caitata "pindo or jelly palm"
- Chamaerops humilis "Mediterranean fan palm"
- Livistona decipiens "ribbon fan palm"
- Syagrus romanzoffiana "triple queen palm"