



# GREAT GARDENS GAZETTE

Summer 2006

## Great Greetings!

We are committing this issue of the Great Gardens Gazette to the tree house project we just completed at the Dallas Arboretum. Please take time to read the following article and if possible visit Casa Musgo and see it for yourself!!!

We would like to thank the followings generous donors: Laura & Doug Wheat, Jeniifer & Don Spak, Jan & Bob Barstad, Southwest Landscaping, Bill Chinnners, Ginger Fox and Texas Paints.



## CASA MUSGO

What started as an invitation to enter a design competition for a tree house ended in the completion of a labor of love. The Dallas Arboretum sponsored the competition and received 55 entries from local architects. Of those, thirteen were chosen to be displayed and Elizabeth's entry was one of the lucky thirteen! We had nine days from start to finish to complete the project and what a nine days it was! With the help of local craftsmen, some generous vendors, Great Garden's staff and many friends we built Casa Musgo and it is currently open to the public.

The inspiration for Casa Musgo, which means moss house in Spanish, was a moss basket. Elizabeth wanted to create a house that was inspired by nature and would blend in with the surroundings at the arboretum. The first step in building this house was the framework. With the help of expert framer, Raymond Gonzales and his crew, a beautiful wood deck was constructed which would be the flooring for Casa Musgo. Next, they framed the walls and roof of the house. The roof was an extremely tricky project as we were building the structure around the tree but it could not touch the tree. As you will see in the pictures on the next page, Raymond managed to make it work!

Next, Bill Chinnners and his crew created our beautiful copper roof. This rich and earthy toned material was a very important feature of our house as its texture and color lends a natural yet distinctive feel to the house. The outside of the house, as you can probably infer from the name, is covered in moss. The most frequent question we have been asked about the tree house is how we kept the moss on the walls. The method was as follows: We lined the inner parts of the framing with hardware cloth. The outer layer is lined with chicken wire and the moss was packed into the space in-between. We then inserted plants within the moss just as in a moss basket. The house is completely landscaped on the outside and there are ivies growing up the walls. Further, there is an opening between the walls and the roof where a ledge was inserted. Sitting on this ledge are ivies and spider plants which droop down from the opening to create a plant border all around the house.

The finishing touch to the outside of the house was the finials. These scrolled features were each painted in a different, bright color and attached to the corners of the house. Every one of the finials have a crystal hanging from the center which sparkle when the sun's rays catch them. The same colors that adorn the finials were carried into the interior of the tree house. The inner walls are painted a light yellow green and the ceiling is an aqua color. The walls have trees limbs sprouting out of them which are also painted in bright colors but help to carry over the feeling of nature from the outside to the inside.

Casa Musgo is nature and fantasy all wrapped into one beautiful and magical house. Built with kids in mind, the structure has shorter doorways and windows perfect for the smaller visitor to gaze out of. The house captures the imagination of all guests and one can almost envision the fairies and sprites flitting in and out of the house and then disappearing into the mist that drifts across the house. Visit Casa Musgo at the Dallas Arboretum located on Garland Road in Dallas just off of White Rock Lake.

(See pictures of Casa Musgo both completed and during construction on the back side.)



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