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KNOW YOUR NEIGHBOR

Meg Greenwood designs a unique Taos Life – with roots

BY KATHY CORDOVA FOR THE TAOS NEWS

Meg Greenwood's world can best be described as simple, natural beauty. Her evolution from an international interior designer for architectural firms in Los Angeles to owner of a homesteader adobe home along the lower Rio Grande in Ranchos de Taos benefits both Greenwood and the surrounding community.

'I love this place'

Greenwood said after the deaths of her parents, she left the "big city." "In favor of a place where I visited during a vacation at the time of the Balloon Fiesta, when the launch occurred on Weimer Road. My visit was 25 years ago and my move happened 23 years ago this October. I love this place," she said.

Greenwood purchased property that required restoration and included a 60-degree-angled hillside to the river and a 100-year-old apricot tree and other plant life. The designer blended her skills with the traditional work of Carmen Velarde. The result produced rambling rooms with kiva fireplaces. Velarde also sculpted shelving units and a cooking fireplace from mud. Velarde and her students at the Taos Institute of Art produced an horno on Greenwood's property.

Changes resulting from the move to this area included snowy weather and irrigating from an acequia. Greenwood laughed as she recalled her participation as the only woman on ditch cleaning day. A major landscape change included the use of moss rock. A man from Las Vegas, New Mexico, delivered the material by the truckload and Greenwood used the rock to preserve items growing on the land.

She lists choke cherries, native plants and rose hips as part of her surroundings. Beavers below her property protect the land by cutting down material and damming the river. Wild birds and other animals add to the peaceful aspect of the neighborhood.

"My aesthetic is that I love Japanese design and simple joinery of what you can see. My home includes this idea," Greenwood said.

Taos background

Greenwood says she's a very visual person who is able to see the potential of everything. "Here, I spearheaded renovating my home, live to hear the bells from the St. Francis Church in Ranchos chime and meet interesting people who grew up here. I witness the Posadas, visit Taos Pueblo and enjoy life. I decided to share this wonderful experience by opening the bed-and-breakfast Meg's Place. I operated it for eight years," she said.

A couple staying at the B&B visited for the purpose of studying oil painting. They posed a question to their hostess: "Why don't you join the garden club?"

About 21 years ago, Greenwood joined Los Jardineros Garden



Meg Greenwood and her poodle, Sasha, take a stroll in Greenwood's garden in Ranchos de Taos.

Club of Taos and learned about the difficulty of growing native plants in this climate. She remained fascinated with the idea of keeping her landscaping organic without pesticides as much as possible.

Los Jardineros

Greenwood, the president of Los Jardineros Garden Club of Taos, described the main goal of the organization as helping the community. The club offers grants, informational gatherings and activities to keep the area beautiful. Club members plan to mentor young people and interact with other entities in the community.

The main fundraising event, the annual Garden and Home Tour, showcases the local area. Another successful fundraiser included the production of "Piñon Palate," a square cookbook with a black lacquer cover that features a colorful chile ristra. Established in 1949, the club uses its nonprofit status to honor its heritage to give back to the community. Los Jardineros meets from February to October on the third Thursday of the month at the Taos Tennis Club. Meetings include a potluck, the first half hour as a social opportunity, then the meeting followed by a speaker. Greenwood calls this "an educational experience, open to the public." Beginning this February, a different local vendor may sell his or her wares at a meeting. In July, a members-only tour adds to the

knowledge and enjoyment. "We have many energetic people who want to add beauty to the community," Greenwood said.

The club spearheads the hanging flower baskets in the historic area. This project includes placing brackets on the lamp posts high enough to enable people to walk under them with no hindrance. Each basket weighs more than 50 pounds. Throughout the project's history, water connectors under the Plaza gazebo, help from town of Taos employees, research and trips to Colorado formed some of the labor of love. As part of an experiment, the group attempted to use dried flowers only to have the items removed. Currently, flowers planted in Colorado in February and then moved to Taos at the proper time formulate the organization's plan. The baskets on the Plaza lasted until October this year.

Ideas for the future include solar lamp posts on the Plaza and Ledoux Street and hanging baskets and a seating area in the alleyway along La Fonda. Members hope to help beautify the Historic County Courthouse and formulate master gardener classes for young people so they may tend to their own gardens.

Personal level

Greenwood likes to be more of a behind-the-scenes person. As such, she helped initiate the Taos Folk annual event at the Stables Art Center. The pop-up gallery, which features works from local artists available for sale, exists for a month and then "is put away." The framework exists from that which Greenwood loves — simple, organic materials. Painted wood crates, sand bags, wired fencing, plastic and stones transform to tables, hanging areas, card holders, etc., or as creative Greenwood terms it, "organic with sophistication."

The interior designer loves to entertain. She didn't know anyone when she moved to Taos, but now knows many people and enjoys meeting interesting folks. Greenwood loves to cook and considers presentation as a very important factor to the self-avowed "foodie." Part of her edible life includes making chutneys from her fruit trees.

"I like giving things to people. My lifestyle is quiet. I surround myself with natural beauty and I love to create everything myself," she said. Her creations include simplicity and natural materials. Greenwood likes classical music and, besides gardening, enjoys handwork, painting, drawing, making collages with natural material and work with rice paper.

"Life here is a very gratifying experience," she said.