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## { ANNUAL ISSUE }

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to **community service**,  
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who will shape our world

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crushing his spirit  
**by Dr. Jim Burns**

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**win!**  
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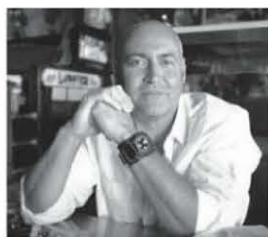
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## Celebrate spring with a garden party

Designer Molly Wood shows how to cozy up your backyard for entertaining.

*by Debbie Lavdas*









**I**t's a beautiful spring day, and the table is set for a party at garden designer Molly Wood's house in Costa Mesa. She thoughtfully arranges a humble mix of elements, including a chic, sleek marble-and-elm table, 1960s fiberglass chairs and bench seating. The table decor blends blue and white china, gingham cloth napkins, vintage goblets and charmed moss-garden parting gifts.

"It's relatively easy to put together," says the informal, breezy hostess, owner of Molly Wood Garden Design, where her authentic style blossoms every day. At her boutique studio, located in a quaint pale-yellow house, award-winning outdoor spaces are drafted and designed, and a retail showroom offers a variety of products to help create natural, whimsical settings.

### ***Creating the tone and table***

"When I'm setting a table for entertaining, my goal is to make the space special and memorable – not necessarily to impress people. If your goal is to impress your guests, I don't think it's going to be genuine," Wood says. "So when I may get nervous, I remind myself that it's about making everyone comfortable and [ensuring] they're enjoying themselves."

A gracious way to host a party begins with a large table, about 8 feet in length.

"It's one of the best ways to enjoy an outdoor space."

To create a warm and welcoming get-together, Wood combines contrasting elements from comfortable furnishings that invite guests to settle in to ample seating

that encourages all to stay a while. The use of china adds a splash of decadence. Cloth napkins bundled with twine suggest formality with eco-consciousness. And '60s glassware blends beautifully.

Mixing the fundamentals also showcases color combinations.

"In general, I love greens, blues, even oranges, but not all together," Wood says. "I choose colors and shades that make me happy, and I always try to limit my color palette to make for easy setup."

The pairing of modern and throwback furniture and the comingling of color includes the blending of lighting and reflective objects. Wood chooses airy paper lanterns that blow around playfully with the breeze, as well as heavyweight Moravian stars to add life to an entertaining space. She also adores milk-glass globes placed on the table to perfectly catch light.

"I use the lanterns, stars and globes year-round, from spring, summer and throughout the holidays."

### ***Fun margarita bar***

"Mi casa es su casa," Wood says. "It's perfect if I can meet someone at the door, give him his first drink, and

say, 'Here it is; help yourself.' It creates an atmosphere of feeling welcomed."

Something else for the side table: Coronas, limes and a bottle opener. "A side table also looks like such a celebration."

### ***Finishing touches***

Flowers instantly create a warm spring space.


"I have my kids pull flowers growing in my garden," says Wood, a mother of three, ages 8 to 13. "You'll be amazed what they come back with: variegated leaves I'd never even think of picking, for example."

Wood also likes to dress her table with personalized parting gifts that double as assigned seating spots for her guests. "Anyone who knows me knows I'm crazy for succulents, but for spring I love moss. It represents fresh, new growth."

She uses small two-handled bowls (see sidebar on next page), each with a flat of moss. After knocking away the loose dirt and watering lightly, she adds simple place cards for a thoughtful parting gift.

Wood keeps her menu simple. "I'm a gardener, not a cook. I toss a salad, perhaps a Caprese, prepare corn, grill meat or fish and have watermelon – a magical addition."

Ready to do some spring entertaining? Wood reminds everyone to remember what's most important.

"Be genuine and authentic. If it makes you happy, you're going to be comfortable and proud of what you're doing. Again, limit your color palette, keep it simple and make it easy on yourself." 



PHOTOS BY ALA CORTES / LOVE54.COM





### Molly's picks

To warm up an outdoor space, consider these go-to garden accouterments available at Molly Wood Garden Design. Wood hand-selects all items, creating one clear style. Choose from everything for the outdoors – plants, fountains, pottery, furniture and more. ∞



\* Zinc flags, \$10

\* Moravian star, \$55

\* Staghorn fern, \$54

\* Vintage glassware, \$60/set

\* 6-foot burlap runner, \$22

### Charming place cards, step by step

Wood uses place cards to show her guests that she took the time to make a special spot for them and to put people together to meet and mingle.

All you need is \$12 moss bowls; you don't need to make them, since they're available at Molly's store.



- Gather branches from the garden.
- Cut out a flag from recycled paper; fold it and glue it around the twig.
- Write the guest's name on the flag and place the twig into the moss bowl.

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[mollywoodgardendesign.com](http://mollywoodgardendesign.com)  
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