



Star MAGIC

Actress Ricki Lake has pulled a rabbit out of her hat and created the outdoor living space of her dreams.

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THIS PHOTO: A woody vine, *Bougainvillea spectabilis* blooms in shades of pink, magenta, purple, red, orange, white, and yellow.
OPPOSITE: Actress Ricki Lake welcomes visitors to her Zone 10 garden in Los Angeles.





"I love my garden," says a newly svelte Ricki Lake as she leads me out the back door of her house and into her subtropical backyard high on a Los Angeles hilltop overlooking the Getty Center. "It's all just so beautiful. This is my sanctuary. This is where I come to escape and relax."

Recent projects have not allowed the 39-year-old former talk show host and mother of two much time for relaxing, much less tending to her $\frac{7}{8}$ -acre garden. Ricki's childbirth documentary, *The Business of Being Born* (which she produced and appears in), is currently in limited theatrical release; she's enjoying the positive notices she's received from her recent role in the comedy film *Park* opposite William Baldwin and Cheri Oteri—and she had a cameo appearance (and sang on the soundtrack) in last year's hit movie musical *Hairspray*, a remake of the original 1988 John Waters' cult film that made the teenage Ricki a plus-size sensation practically overnight.

Ricki and I have been close friends for more than two decades, and she's excited to finally show me around her garden and single-story

plantation-style house built by architect John Winford Byers in 1949. The home combines native California architecture and its Mexican and Spanish roots.

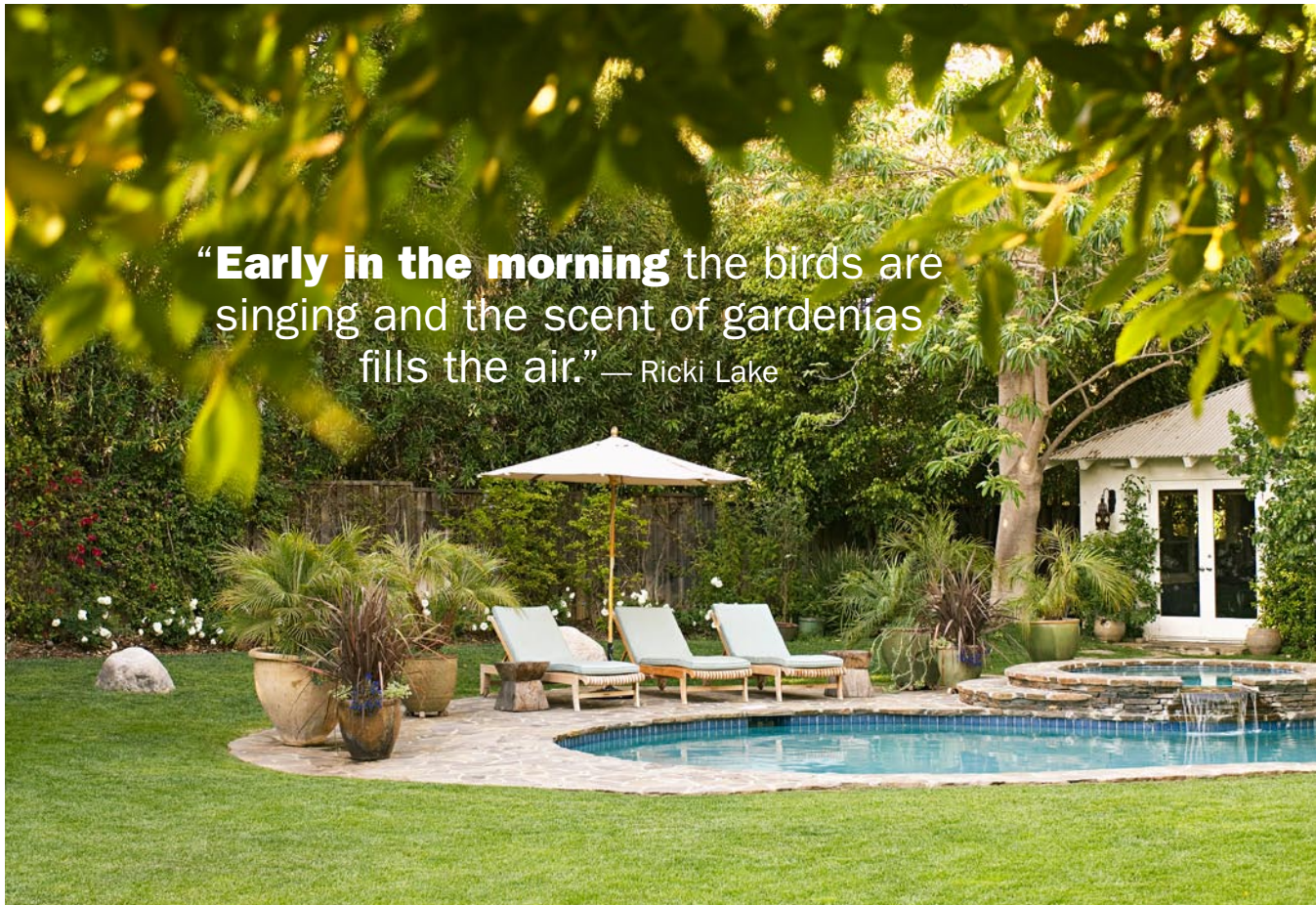
A single mother, Ricki shares the house she bought in 2002 with her two sons, 10-year-old Milo and 6-year-old Owen—plus a rambunctious female goldendoodle named Jeffie. "This was the most beautiful property I had ever seen, with the most amazing garden," Ricki explains. "It was the first house I saw when I was house-hunting, and I knew immediately I would buy it and make it my home. I fell in love with it right away."

As we leave the house we enter a covered porch-cum-outdoor-living-room warmly appointed with a generous daybed, colorful throw pillows, a porch swing, and massive light fixtures with a decidedly Moroccan feel. Tropical plants—including kentia palms (*Howea forsteriana*), cast-iron plant (*Aspidistra elatior*), and fiddle-leaf fig (*Ficus lyrata*)—provide the proper ambience. "Hummingbirds made this outdoor living room their home this year," Ricki



THIS PHOTO: A larger-than-life Buddha reposes in a pool of water surrounded by tropical *Tibouchina urvilleana*, *Cordyline fruticosa*, *Helichrysum petiolare*, and backed by scarlet bougainvillea. **OPPOSITE:** "The boys love to hang out on the swing in the outdoor living room," Ricki says.

“Early in the morning the birds are singing and the scent of gardenias fills the air.” — Ricki Lake



says proudly. “The parents built the nest in this potted up *Schefflera*. She laid her clutch of eggs, and two baby hummingbirds hatched on Easter Sunday. We enjoyed witnessing the process.”

She grasps my hand and leads me down a couple of steps across a patio outfitted with comfortable chaise longues and a low-slung oversize wooden table on one side with a larger-than-life stone-carved Buddha standing guard in a serene pool of water on the other. Behind the statue, a white-stuccoed wall drips with magenta bougainvillea. Yellow swallowtail butterflies visit the pretty purple blossoms of a glory bush (*Tibouchina organensis*), and flycatchers dart among the leaves of a massive philodendron. A tangle of Swiss cheese plant (*Monstera deliciosa*) climbs the trunk of a huge magnolia tree. Angel-wing begonias and dainty ferns dance in the shade below.

Beyond the patio, a large limbed-up *Pittosporum* shades the walk to a covered outdoor kitchen

draped in sheer-white curtains and anchored with substantial pots of orange trees. “Coming here from New York,” Ricki says, “I was struck by how large this lot is. Forty thousand square feet in this part of Los Angeles is pretty much unheard of.” We continue to stroll through the garden filled with hostas, bear’s breeches (*Acanthus mollis*), *Lobelia erinus*, and bloody dock (*Rumex sanguineus*). We are surrounded by tree ferns and agapanthus, clivia and abutilon. We stop and admire the white, blue, and purple blossoms of a curious shrub called yesterday, today, and tomorrow (*Brunfelsia pauciflora*). “Don’t you just love how the blossoms open up purple and slowly age to white?” she says, leaning in for closer inspection.

Private seating areas dot the landscape, and a couple of large boulders emerge from the lawn like a pair of sedentary tortoises. Toward the back of the lot we come to the swimming pool and workout studio. An apricot tree shades one end



OPPOSITE: ‘Iceberg’ roses serve as the backdrop to the pool area. **ABOVE:** The curious tricolor blossoms of *Brunfelsia pauciflora*. **BELOW:** Pots of blooming citrus provide the requisite California dream appeal. **RIGHT:** Common bear’s breeches (*Acanthus mollis*) contributes an architectural element in late spring.





of the pool, and a border of blooming 'Iceberg' roses frames the view. The scent of gardenias fills the air. "My boys and I enjoy every part of this property," Ricki says. "They play basketball and ride their bikes out front and play baseball and swim here in the back."

We finally reach the rear of the far back end. Ricki shows me how if you stand right beside a healthy patch of rosemary and lavender you can view the Getty Center in the distance. "Now you see why I moved here," she says with a hug. "Welcome to my little slice of paradise." 🌺

For more information, see page 111.

LEFT: Ricki takes a break from her busy schedule to enjoy a quiet moment on the outdoor patio of her 1949 John Winford Byers home in Los Angeles. **BELOW:** The view toward the rear of the house reveals a verdant mix of tropical textures, including palm trees, bird-of-paradise, philodendrons, as well as the limbed-up *Pittosporum*.



All About *Abutilon*

Abutilon, also known as flowering maple, is a shrubby plant that produces maple-leaf-shape leaves and large bell-shape blossoms in mixed shades of orange, red, and yellow. It is often grown in beds or containers as an annual, but it's actually a tropical shrub—it can reach 15 feet high—hardy only to USDA Zone 8. Flowering maple is a hibiscus relative and prefers bright light and warm temperatures of 65°F or higher. Allow abutilon to dry out between waterings and feed every other week with a water-soluble fertilizer. Prune lightly in the fall. Be sure to root cuttings taken in spring and summer.