



Heavy timber framing, connected to the roof, creates heavy-duty outdoor living for Jackie Chama and Rob Roy at their Eugene home. Windows also were added to adjacent family room for better views.

# Tall timber patio

Couple's outdoor shelter "like a living room" between their Eugene house and front-yard woodlands garden

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THE REGISTER-GUARD

After rainwater started running across a brick patio and beneath their family room door, Rob Roy and Jackie Chama figured it was time for better drainage.

While they were at it, the couple planned to replace the water-damaged family room door.

But the more they looked at possibilities, the more their eyes widened.

Rather than simply fix a leaky patio and door, why not bridge another gap, the one between indoor living spaces and their front yard's woodland garden of oaks, conifers and underlayers of native plants like huckleberry, rhodies and hellebores?

"We initially were just going to fix the door, and then it got out of hand — that's basically it," says a chuckling Chama.

Not just out of hand, but way overhead as well — a new patio shelter soaring to the home's existing

roofline. And not just any shelter, but a 200-square-foot, timber-framed structure with open sides, bench seating and swath of flagstone through sand-finished concrete floors.

"So we get a big, broad room to step into," Roy says. "We get this enormous, cathedral-like impression."

Chama, who has a degree in landscape architecture from the University of Oregon, helped design drainage and some aesthetic elements of the shelter/gazebo. More brainpower, and all of the brawn, came from Rainbow Valley Design & Construction in Eugene.

Roy and Chama could have saved money by framing their shelter with traditional 4-inch by 4-inch posts. But for anchoring shelter to house, including the roofline, Rainbow Valley designers suggested far heavier lumber dimensions of 6-by-6



and 6-by-8 posts, pillars and beams.

Chama had a quick answer: “I said, ‘Go big,’” she says.

“You need a much bigger scale when you’re constructing outside than you think that you would,” she continues. “And often that is a mistake people make: They build on too small of a scale.”

### Social hub

Indoor/outdoor living now connects the couple to their woodlands garden nearly year-round.

“It’s sort of like having an additional living room — it’s just outside,” Chama says. “Now we have this whole other living space.”

Rain never dampens a day under the patio. In fact, the couple can barely hear any blustery drumming on the shelter’s translucent polycarbonate roof. “We get to stretch the seasons,” Roy says. “We come out earlier in the spring and stay later in the fall.”

Neighbors and family often drop by the shelter for coffee or a glass of wine. Some sit on the shelter’s built-in bench seats of clear fir, perhaps resting on pillows against honey-colored support beams. Others relax on chairs, or at picnic tables Chama and Roy recently built through Willamalane’s wood shop in Springfield.

All together, Chama and Roy can



Rocks dug up from excavating are repurposed in gabion cages under the shelter’s sitting benches. Water flows beneath the gabions as part of the patio’s new drainage field.

seat a dozen or so guests beneath the shelter, which was finished in the summer of 2014.

“I think it’s very welcoming,” Chama says. “It’s just social; it’s comforting to be under a cover.”

### Creative drainage

Before digging into the patio project,

Roy had to dig out 1,100 old bricks in the space. “We had water flowing across the brick into the family room, because the brick had sealed up,” he explains. He hauled it all off to BRING Recycling, which gladly resold the payload.

More excavation by Rainbow Valley crews unearthed untold small boulders. “I say my gardening tools are a pick



Family room’s exterior before new door, windows and patio structure added.

and a pry bar,” Chama says in a nod to the couple’s rocky south Eugene hillside landscape.

But rather than add to the garden’s rock retaining walls, Chama had another idea for Rainbow Valley’s “outdoor spaces” crew of Jon Clark, Josh King and Lytton Reid: encase the rocks in heavy-gauge iron gabion cages as part of the new drainage field. The rock cages not only channel runoff, but serve as bases for the shelter’s sitting benches, plus add another earthy element to the patio surface of slate, concrete and brick.

### Warm timber

Beyond artistic carpentry of hidden joinery and heavy brackets, the 11-foot by 17-foot shelter’s timber framing had to be ample, notes Scott Felsher, a Rainbow Valley designer.

The shelter not only rises to the home’s roofline, but connects with a new window wall in the family room, which had been converted from garage space years ago.

Like an “integrated outdoor room,” Felsher says in sum, the shelter “effectively blurs the line between inside and outside.”

Roy loves “the warmth of the wood and the natural tones in the pavement,” he says.

“It makes a nice transition between the woodland and the house, so when we step out it’s an enjoyable space. It’s covered.”



Like an outdoor “living room,” Chama and Roy say, the shelter borders their woodlands garden of native trees and plants.