

Architect Monica Fuerst committed herself to green design long before it became trendy. For her senior thesis project at Cal Poly Pomona in 1990, Monica designed an environmental awareness center for Laguna Canyon that was made of recycled materials such as tires and discarded concrete from demolition sites.

She holds certifications in two traditions of Feng Shui—Western Form (1998) and Classical Compass (2000)—in which an enhanced consciousness of the environment helps practitioners redistribute and enhance energy flow. In 2008, Monica also was named a Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) Accredited Professional by the U.S. Green Building Council.

Monica incorporates her Western training with Feng Shui and an acute sensitivity to environment into her architectural work, both in terms of design and practicalities. “I just finished a design on a 4,639-square-foot custom home with a 1,078-square-foot garage in a soft contemporary Hawaiian style,” Monica says. “The use and placement of windows to create cross ventilation minimizes mechanical ventilation, and maximum natural daylight with deep overhangs helps with the summer sun and allows light in during the winter while minimizing the use of artificial lighting. Interior spaces open to the outside to capture views while exiting onto covered lanai spaces, which provides the indoor-outdoor experience, which is a key element in California living.”

Her design also includes a catchment system to collect rainwater for irrigation, and the use of permeable surfaces to maximize the absorption of rainwater and limit offsite drainage and storm water pollution. “Those are just some of the eco-friendly ideas which are very basic that anyone can incorporate into their homes that make a difference,” she says.

Monica and her family are involved in Zero Trash Laguna and in Transition Laguna, which organizes projects to improve local sustainability. Monica also has been active at her children’s school in promoting clean canteen water bottles instead of disposable plastic and organic cotton lunch sacks to reduce landfill waste.

MONICA FUERST

ENVISIONING HOMES IN HARMONY WITH NATURE

