



photos by  
julie nicole  
photography

## IN HER GARDEN

# Debbie Olson

**What do you do during the day?**

I'm the executive director of a public agency working on a federal property transfer. I am helping transfer property no longer needed by the military from federal to local control. I also do a great deal of community work. I sit on two local boards of directors, Lodi Health and the Lodi Planning Commission, and one national board of directors, the Association of Defense Communities.

**Who designed/created your garden?**

The front garden was done in collaboration and with great affection by Rosemary Stoebner of Garden and Green. The design elements were done at her direction and the plantings selected and refined over many conversations.

**What is your favorite feature?**

The planter boxes are very special. They complement and reinforce the use of repetition of the same plant materials in different shapes across the front yard—balls, twists, spheres and boxwood hedges.

**Why is this your favorite part?**

The planter boxes were made by a local craftsman. We love supporting

local artisans and love the gravitas and simplicity in the size and the detail. All have an "O" for Olson in the design.

**What has been the most challenging part of creating your garden?**

We redesigned the garden from formal and fussy to simple for several reasons. We wanted a design that would honor the grandeur, age and style of our 100-year-old house but also be relatively low maintenance. The creeping fig that grows up the face of the house is a challenge to maintain; it's a vertical garden of sorts. It's been growing on the house for well over 60 years and we wouldn't consider removing it but it requires (more like demands!) constant maintenance. It provides a beautiful backdrop for other plant material.

**What has been the part you've loved the most?**

We loved working with Garden and Green and found great creative energy in the collaboration with Rosemary, the landscape designer.

**What is the most popular area or feature of your outdoor space with family, friends, guests?**

We often have requests from strangers to use the house as a backdrop for photos—family portraits, weddings, etc. The columns, arches and



greenery and the way the light moves across the house make it a beautiful backdrop.

**What is your favorite activity to do in your outdoor space?**

The world goes by one's front door. We often sit on the front steps and greet neighbors, friends and family. We love that the front is both welcoming and well appointed.

**If you had to give other garden enthusiasts one piece of advice in creating their outdoor space, what would it be?**

I think of a garden in the same way I do an individual's signature. Both are developed and stylized over years of practice. Its simplicity or flourish (or scrawl) become one's unique identifier and say something about you, whether consciously or not. I'd urge others to be thoughtful and practiced—it takes time to develop a signature or a garden!

**What are your future plans for your garden?**

The front walk has planters on both sides that lend themselves to seasonal changing. I'm looking forward to adding new plant material specifically for the holidays—cyclamen, perhaps. **HLM**



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