

## 8.0 Architectural Elements

The “shared image” of The Sea Ranch began with the first buildings that were part of the continuum of the rural building tradition of the north coast. These early buildings established a vocabulary of ideas about design, materials, and construction that are still appropriate. Architectural elements include building form and size, openings, materials, finishes and architectural details.

When viewed in the context of an individual building, many elements, such as the height of fencing, the scale of entryways, or the color of window sashes are seemingly minor design issues, but when viewed as part of the larger context, they are important in

establishing and maintaining the character of the place. Buildings must respond to The Sea Ranch community at large as well as to their specific sites. The impact of wind, rain, and sun over many years takes its toll on the materials and finishes of buildings. The DC is aware of the changing availability and the declining quality of traditional building materials, and encourages the exploration of new, alternate, and sustainable building materials, and energy-efficient building systems. Because of the uniqueness of each site, the DC may allow variations or require more restrictive solutions than those listed below.



*Simple roof forms and rectangular window shapes reinforce the traditions of The Sea Ranch vocabulary.*

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### 8.1 ROOF DESIGN

Simple roof elements that are a coherent part of the building form and avoid the look of a “hat” placed on top of the wall elements are preferred.

**8.1.1 Roof Slope** Roof slopes are a product of the type of roof and the building width. A 4-in-12 or greater roof pitch is appropriate for a gable roof; whereas a single pitch (shed) roof may be the same or lower. Metal roofs create less reflection at a lower pitch and sod roofs require an even lower pitch.

Shallow-pitch gable and hip roofs are not compatible with traditional Sea Ranch buildings and should be avoided. In forested areas, steeper roof slopes are suggested to shed rain and forest debris.

**8.1.2 Dominant Roof Slope** In the interest of maintaining neighborhood unity, a roof slope direction plan has been adopted. The dominant roof slope on all structures on designated lots must conform to the roof slope direction plan available for review in the DCEM office. “Dominant” is inter-

preted to mean 65% of the area of the roof. The orientation is subject to a 15-degree variation. The DC may grant exceptions where the dominant roof slope is not perceptible in adjacent structures.

**8.1.3 Flat Roofs** Flat roofs or a combination of flat roof segments must be used with care and restraint to avoid awkward building configurations and shall be integrated with the

total building form. Where possible, they shall be shielded from view with other roof or building elements.

**8.1.4 Roof Overhangs** Roof overhangs should be eliminated or minimized to permit direct sunlight on walls, to avoid heavy eave shadows (that accentuate a visual separation of the roof from the other building elements), to reduce uneven weathering, to simplify visual form, and to avoid wind prob-

lems. Minimum overhangs are permitted as needed to create spaces for ventilation between rafters in conformance with Uniform Building Code (UBC) requirements. Greater overhangs may be allowed in the forest areas.

**8.1.5 Fascias** Fascias over six (6) inches deep will not be approved.

## 8.2 ROOF MATERIALS

**8.2.1 Permitted Materials** Permitted materials include: asphalt or composite flat shingles, in black or dark earth tones without pattern or excessive texture; dark tone, non-reflective metal and earth sod. The DC encourages exploration of new

and alternate materials. These materials will be considered on an individual basis, with adequate evidence of proven use and/or testing and aesthetic compatibility. Specifications and/or samples of roofing materials must be submitted for approval by the DC.

**8.2.2 Flat Roofs** A flat roof may be sheathed with a “built-up” roofing system – but only if approved by the DC. The size

of crushed rock materials must be uniform and the color must be approved by the DC.

**8.2.3 Fire Rating** Roof materials must conform to a Class A fire rating as approved by Sonoma County. Wood shingles and wood shakes are not allowed. If repairs constitute more

than 50% of the roof area and the roof is not a Class A roof system, the entire roof must be replaced with a Class A roof system.

**8.2.4 Vents** Roof vents require care in placement, orientation, and design to maintain the visual order of the building. It

is often possible to group vents to avoid a cluttered roofscape.



*Building forms should evolve from an understanding of the three-dimensional character of the site.*

## 8.3 EXTERIOR WALLS

**8.3.1 Materials** Redwood or cedar vertical boards and wood shingles have been the traditional exterior siding materials at The Sea Ranch, but because of the decline in availability and quality of these materials the DC encourages

exploration of the use of alternative materials, either natural or manufactured. New and/or alternate materials will be considered on an individual basis, based on compatibility with the visual vocabulary of The Sea Ranch and adherence to finish, color, and reflective requirements. See the DCEM list of approved finishes and colors.

**8.3.2 Trim** The size and amount of trim around door and window openings and the use of corner boards will be reviewed in relation to the form and finish of the building.

Typically, there should be no trim at the windows except in the case of board-and-batten siding. Decorative and/or over-sized trim of any kind will not be approved.

**8.3.3 Foundation Walls** Siding shall be designed to come to within six (6) inches of and be parallel to the finished grade. Exposed concrete stepped foundations as part of an integrated

design will be considered on an individual basis in terms of appropriateness of the relationship of the overall design of the structure to the landscape.

**8.3.4 Decks** First-story decks and decks in exposed locations shall have siding matching the house and extending to within six (6) inches of and be parallel to the finished grade.

The DC may consider alternative deck configurations depending on site conditions.

**8.3.5 Meter Boxes** Meter boxes and switch boxes shall be recessed into the wall of the structure, unless otherwise

approved by the DC. The access door shall be flush and constructed of the same material as the adjacent siding.

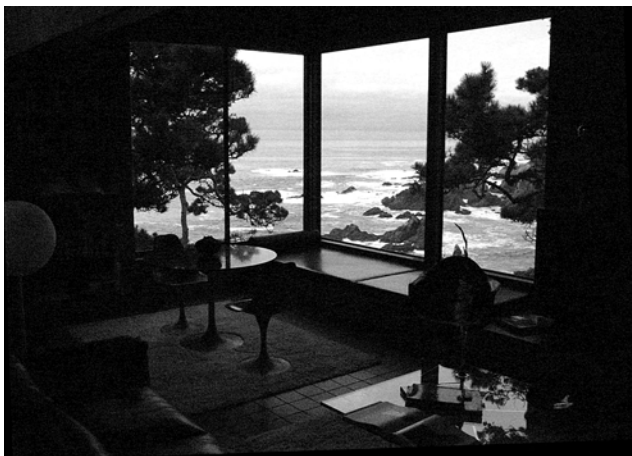
## 8.4 WINDOWS

Windows are an important element in determining the character and livability of a house. They provide the connection to the outside – to close and distant views. They can extend the apparent spaces beyond the walls, provide ventilation, and allow sunlight in to enrich and define the interior spaces. Thoughtful design and location of windows can provide both views and the preservation of privacy.

from a catalog or only as a response to the exterior composition of the building. The scale (apparent size) of the building will be affected by the size and arrangement of windows and how the windows fit into the wall. With the exception of board-and-batten design, windows should be integrated into the walls without trim.

Window openings should be considered as part of the three-dimensional development of the interior spaces responding to the building program, not as an afterthought merely chosen

California Energy Resources Conservation regulations have reduced the glazing area in new residences. Details and trade-offs related to this law are available through the Energy Resources Conservation and Development Commission, Sacramento.

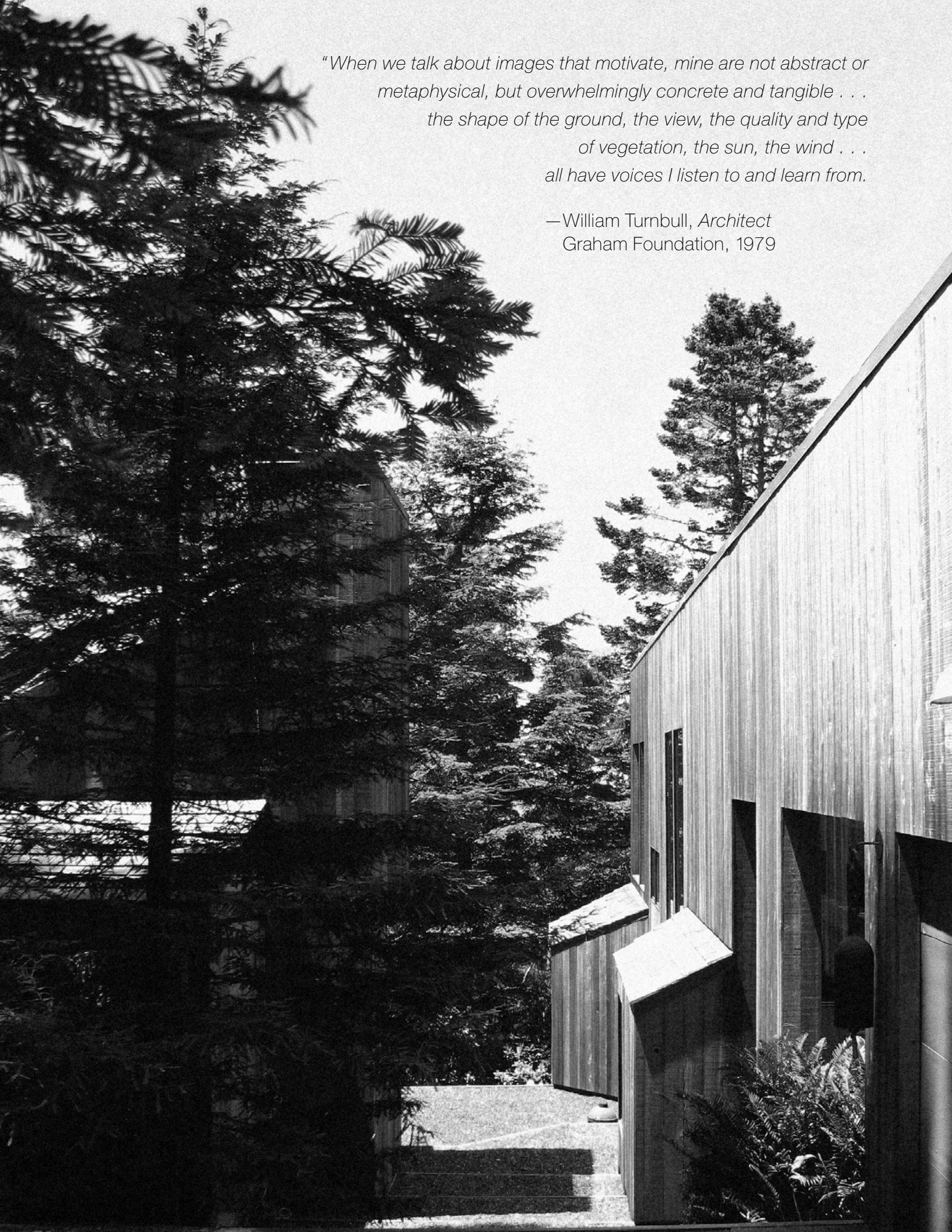


*Windows can frame views, extend space, and provide a source of natural light.*

<p><b>8.4.1 Shape</b> Window shapes should result from their function – to focus views, to extend spatial relationships, and to bring in light – not just as elements on the exterior walls. They</p>	<p>should relate to the character of the building and be integrated with it, not stand out in contrast. Simple window forms responding to their use are almost always the most appropriate.</p>
<p><b>8.4.2 Glass</b> Mirrored glass is prohibited; clear glass is preferred. Some high-efficiency, lightly tinted glass materials</p>	<p>may be acceptable, but samples must be submitted for review along with the appropriate specifications and drawings.</p>
<p><b>8.4.3 Coverings</b> Interior window coverings are inescapably visible from the outside of houses, and brightly colored curtains and blinds have a visually disturbing impact on</p>	<p>the community. Beige or subdued earth-tone colors are recommended.</p>
<p><b>8.4.4 Ventilation</b> To prevent excessive heat build-up in warm weather, operable windows should be provided for</p>	<p>cross ventilation, especially on meadow sites.</p>
<p><b>8.5 SKYLIGHTS</b> Skylights provide an ideal source of natural light as well as views into treetops in wooded locations. They can also</p>	<p>provide welcome warmth on cool days, but they need to be considered with care to avoid excessive heat loads.</p>
<p><b>8.5.1 Materials and Shape</b> Skylights should be flat, clear glass, or polycarbonate (or similar) panels placed parallel to the roof plane. “Dome” or other three-dimensional shaped skylights or skylights with white or other colored glazing</p>	<p>materials add unnecessary complexity to the building form, may create light-fall problems for neighbors, and are not permitted.</p>
<p><b>8.6 SOLAR COLLECTORS</b></p>	
<p>The use of active and passive solar design systems is encouraged.</p>	
<p><b>8.6.1 Location</b> Solar collectors and related equipment (fasteners, pipes, power lines, and so on) must be thoroughly</p>	<p>integrated with the building and/or site design. Screening from nearby properties and roads may be required.</p>
<p><b>8.6.2 Materials</b> Materials that minimize reflectivity are preferred. The collectors and related materials must be properly</p>	<p>integrated with the overall building and roof forms.</p>
<p><b>8.7 FINISHES</b></p>	
<p>Exterior surfaces, trim, and siding should normally be treated for weather protection. Colors and methods of application will be controlled to achieve neighborhood continuity. (See</p>	
<p><b>8.7.1 Approval</b> All exterior finishes require approval. The use of a color not on the approved list will require approval by the DC and must be submitted on a sample of the actual</p>	<p>the DCEM list of approved finishes and colors.) Decisions by the DC for permitted use will be based on the specific case related to the material, location, neighborhood compatibility, and the visibility from neighboring houses and public areas.</p>
<p><b>8.7.2 Window Frames</b> Dark-colored window frames are part of the traditional visual vocabulary of Sea Ranch buildings. Windows are a major element in the visual character of a house, and they should blend in with the walls – not stand</p>	<p>out in contrast to them. Only dark colors will be allowed for window and skylight frames. Material samples will be required for DC approval.</p>
<p><b>8.7.3 Metal Work</b> Flashing, metal work, vents, gutters, and trim must be non-reflective and finished with the same color</p>	<p>as the adjacent siding or roofing to avoid contrast.</p>
<p><b>8.7.4 Reflective Finishes</b> Other than glass and hardware, reflective finishes are not allowed on any exterior surface.</p>	

*"When we talk about images that motivate, mine are not abstract or  
metaphysical, but overwhelmingly concrete and tangible . . .  
the shape of the ground, the view, the quality and type  
of vegetation, the sun, the wind . . .  
all have voices I listen to and learn from.*

—William Turnbull, *Architect*  
Graham Foundation, 1979



## 8.8 FENCING

While most fencing is architectural in character and relates to the composition of the building or building compounds, fences are also important in shaping and protecting public areas, roads, and view corridors as much as to define private courts. Fences should be seen as edges of public areas as well as boundaries for private spaces. In some cases, fences should join with other fences rather than with the house to

reinforce the neighborhood grouping of buildings and to preserve the character of the larger landscape rather than accentuate the individual house and lot. Because of the natural character of the site or the relation to the character of the neighborhood, fencing may have a greater impact and will require special care. Fencing location, design and materials must be approved by the DC.

**8.8.1 Use of Fencing** Parking areas and all above-grade service facilities, including trash and garbage containers, maintenance and service equipment, LPG tanks, and clothes lines must be screened with fencing or a combination of fencing and plant materials. Trash and garbage enclosures must be animal proof and placed to allow for convenient pick-up from the road. Fences may also be used to define and screen private

courtyards and gardens from public view. Gates used to close off parking areas require approval from the DC. Fences may not be used to define the perimeter of a lot or large portions thereof. The use of fences to define areas for private use should be limited. Privacy screening by the use of a combination of fences and vegetation is preferred.

**8.8.2 Height** Normally the height of fencing shall not exceed five (5) feet, subject to the review of the DC. On some sites, the apparent height of fencing can be reduced by the use

of landscape elements or by the use of gently sloped berms extending to the top of a retaining wall and then topped by a low fence.

**8.8.3 Visual Impact** The scale and placement of fences are important to the visual composition of the total building complex. When fences are used as integrated extensions of buildings to define entrances and courts, they should be constructed of the same materials as the buildings. The extent

and visual impact of fencing should be minimized. Typically, fences should have no caps. However, fence caps may be used when they are extensions of deck railings or other architectural features.

**8.8.4 Restricted Private Areas** Fences are not permitted within or to delineate Restricted Private Areas.

**8.8.5 Location** While fencing and planting may be appropriate at the street side of the property to establish the edges of public spaces, to provide screening, privacy, and to soften the visual impact of the buildings, the spaces on the Commons

side of buildings should visually flow into the Commons without fenced or planted barriers to maintain the open character of the larger landscape.

**8.8.6 Relation to Grades** Fences that are elements in the landscape, rather than being extensions of the building, may utilize the traditional “sheep fencing” of the north coast

following the contours of the land. In general, however, tops of fences should be level and stepped to follow the grade.



*Fencing should be used to separate private from public spaces and to give coherence to the neighborhood, not to delineate property lines.*

### 8.9 DECK RAILINGS

At the ground level, when in close proximity to neighboring properties or trails, decks shall have constructed edges, seating, or railings at least eighteen (18) inches above the deck surface to visually screen the deck surface. In specific cases this rule may be waived by the DC to provide a more subtle demarcation between the structure and the landscape. When required,

these railings shall be solid, with the same surface material of the adjacent structure, and extend downward to within six (6) inches of the finished grade. A combination of wood railings, earth berms, and landscape planting may be approved by the DC. Decks at an upper floor level may have solid or open railings appropriate to the character of the building.

### 8.10 HOT TUBS

Hot tubs and spas must be located and screened from view in such a way that their use provides no intrusion on neighboring property, Commons, or public use areas. Heights of the

screening enclosure must conform to applicable public safety requirements and must be a minimum of six (6) inches above the top of the hot tub or spa cover. Additional screening may be required by the DC.

### 8.11 ANTENNAS

Antenna and satellite dishes are subject to applicable regulations of the Federal Communications Commission (FCC).

Owners are encouraged to review the installation of antenna and satellite dishes with the DC or DCEM.

**8.11.1 Visibility** Antennas, including satellite dishes, should be installed so that they do not project above the ridgeline of the roof of the structure. Installation should minimize the visibility from neighboring properties, pedestrian trails, and

roads. The color of satellite dishes should match the color, as closely as possible, of that part of the structure on which they are mounted.

### 8.12 EXTERIOR ORNAMENTATION

Ornamental fences, gates, and railings, doors, ornate plant containers, "garden sculpture," permanent flagpoles, and

other decorative elements are not permitted if visible from outside the house or private exterior spaces.



*“At The Sea Ranch we have developed a community based in wild nature and sustained by its beauty. We have an important responsibility here. What do we bring to this environment and how do we alter it? I feel myself a custodian rather than an owner of it. . . . I feel I owe constant vigilance and care for its poetic and spiritual survival. I hope those who follow me feel the same.”*

—Lawrence Halprin, *Landscape Architect*  
*The Sea Ranch . . . Diary of an Idea, 2003*





## 9.0 Landscape Elements

The Sea Ranch landscape includes a rich diversity of indigenous plant types as the terrain extends from the ocean bluffs to the ridge top forests. The mixture is varied, and the success of each plant type is a result of its suitability to the terrain, soil conditions, available moisture and wind. The common pattern is random, a mix of grassy meadows intertwining with forest trees and riparian corridors. The orderly cypress hedgerows are a unique and valuable exception that are part of The Sea Ranch landscape history and image. The goal of The Sea Ranch planning is to maintain, restore, and reinforce the native landscape. The flow of vegetation and landforms to and between buildings is an important part of that concept. Personalized gardens incorporating non-indigenous plant materials may only be developed within enclosed courtyards.

Some plant materials, such as Monterey cypress, are not local natives but over the decades have naturalized and

appear to be a part of the regional natural landscape. Generally, however, non-indigenous plants in The Sea Ranch landscape are ill suited to the character of The Sea Ranch and are not allowed outside of screened courtyards. Non-native plant materials or plants arranged in a formalistic pattern are not consistent with the overall concept of supporting the natural setting of The Sea Ranch, in terms of plant association and imagery.

The constructed elements of the landscape must also be compatible with The Sea Ranch image. Walls, steps and graded slopes are an important part of site development and must be designed as part of the overall plan for the project. Such constructed elements must use materials and building techniques that blend with the existing landscape. The DC may require landscape solutions other than those listed below depending on the characteristics of the specific site.

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### 9.1 LANDSCAPE DESIGN

Any improvements or modifications to the existing landscape require the approval of the DC. Landscape designs should be simple rather than complex, natural in appearance, and free of artificial appearing geometric patterns, such as evenly spaced,

straight rows of trees or shrubs along driveways or property lines. A detailed landscape plan identifying plant materials and locations of both proposed and existing vegetation must be submitted for review and approval.

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**9.1.1 Relation to Site** The design of the landscape for individual homes must be consistent and blend with the landscape character of the site and the adjacent Commons. Landscape

planting, even in limited quantities, can help achieve a visual connection between the building and the site.

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**9.1.2 Plant Selection** Variety in plant selection and size can maintain the visual diversity present in the natural land-

scape. A diverse pattern rather than a monoculture leads to a healthier and more successful landscape design.

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### 9.2 WALLS AND STEPS

**9.2.1 Design and Materials** Landscape walls and walls relating to stairs adjacent to a building shall be sheathed in the same materials as the building. Generally, materials such as

exposed concrete, concrete block, or precast modular wall components are not acceptable. Step railings, where required, must conform to safety requirements but should be simple and visually unobtrusive rather than a dominant design feature.

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**9.2.2 Local Materials** Walls of local stone may be appropriate for the construction of retaining walls in areas where these materials occur naturally. In the forest setting, walls

constructed of horizontal or vertical logs blend well with the natural setting but may need special treatment to be resistant to decay.



### 9.3 PAVEMENT

The design of paved areas and the paving materials must

**9.3.1 Drainage** Porous pavements are required rather than poured concrete or asphalt-based materials. Porous pavements permit rainwater to be absorbed into the soil, decreasing the quantity of runoff and consequent downgrade problems. At times, site conditions require the use of non-porous materials,

**9.3.2 Materials** Materials such as paved surfaces of decomposed granite, compacted drain rock or gravel, fir bark mulch, and stepping-stones of wood or stone are suitable materials for landscape walks and terrace areas. Unit pavement materi-

reinforce and blend in with the rural character of the site and de-emphasize an urban or suburban appearance.

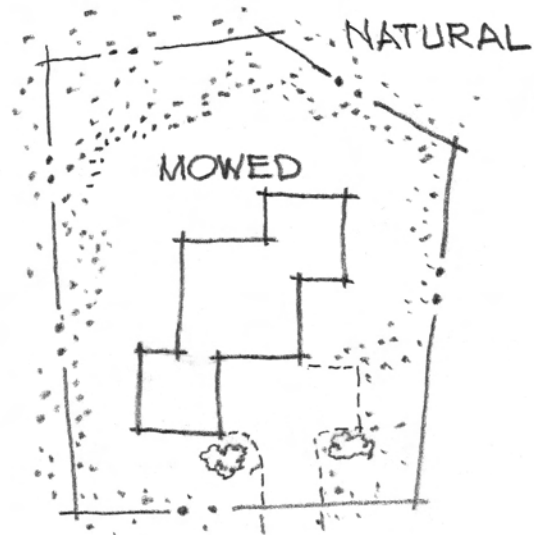
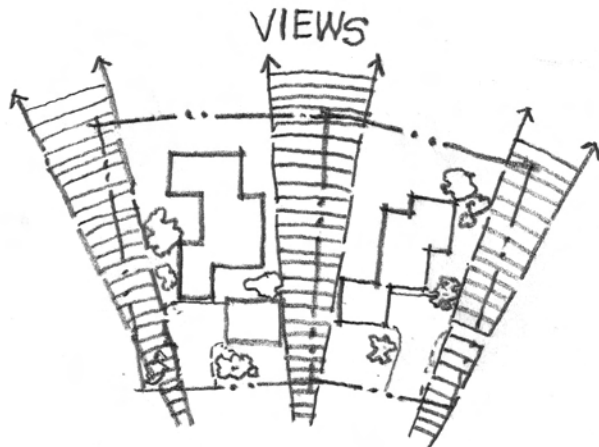
but their use should be well reasoned and limited. Sonoma County requires concrete or asphalt paving for grades over 10%. Grading and drainage plans are required for all paved areas.

als placed over base materials of drain rock and sand may be suitable substitutes for concrete. Some types of precast pavers may be suitable for use at The Sea Ranch, but most are urban in character and inappropriate.

### 9.4 LOT LINE DEFINITION

Delineation of lot lines with fences or planting is not allowed. Lot boundaries serve a legal purpose, but they are visually unimportant in an open landscape like The Sea Ranch. A lot

line made visible by rigid planting patterns, clearing, or mowing to the edge establishes a suburban look as precisely as a fence and denies the open-space philosophy underlying The Sea Ranch development.



### 9.5 PLANT MATERIALS

**9.5.1 Preservation of the Landscape** Native vegetation should be managed, restored, and replaced to the extent possi-

**9.5.2 Landscape Design** The design of new landscape must be informal and simple. All exterior landscape planting must be native or indigenous (except as noted in section 9.5.5)

**9.5.3 Plant Types** Excessive areas of a single plant type in a geometric pattern which by the dominance of foliage or flowers detract from the natural surroundings must be avoided. Placement of large shrubs and trees should be made

ble in areas damaged during construction. The landscape plan must indicate areas to be protected as well as any new planting.

and should reflect species found naturally in the neighborhood. Eye-catching plantings using non-indigenous plants are not acceptable.

judiciously. They must be considered as elements of the total composition along with the mass of the building and related components, and will require continuing maintenance. An approved plant list is available at the DCEM office.

**9.5.4 Heights and Views** Planting must not impede neighbors' views or important views from neighborhood roads and trails. Future growth must be considered in the selection of plant materials. Tree heights have the same limitations as

building heights unless waived by the DC. Vegetation height maintenance is the responsibility of the owner. Tree height limitations shall not apply to lots having a height limit over twenty four (24) feet except with respect to view preservation.

**9.5.5 Non-Indigenous Planting** Plants located completely within enclosed courtyards and not visible from any neighboring properties, roads, or pedestrian trails may deviate from the approved plant list. However, they must remain screened from public view. Plants selected should be appropriate to the north coast environment. Invasive non-native

plants capable of spreading by seed, root growth, or runners are prohibited and must be replaced by the homeowner. (See DCEM list of plant material not allowed on The Sea Ranch.) Plant material considered incompatible with the Sea Ranch landscape is subject to removal at the expense of the property owner, if requested by TSRA or the DC.

**9.6 FIRE AND TREE MANAGEMENT**

Maintenance of existing plants and the locations and types of new plantings must respect fire management regulations. Please refer to Public Resources Code section 4291, the

Sonoma County Department of Emergency Services Sec 1359.5, California Division of Forestry, and related Sea Ranch management policies as to types of plants, location requirements, and management practices.

**9.6.1 Meadow Grass** Management of meadow grasses is required for fire protection. However, care must be given to the way that grasses are mowed. Cutting grasses too short simulates a suburban lawn-like appearance, allows invasive plants to become established, and is detrimental to the regeneration of native bunch grasses. The shape of the mowed area

should be random. Mowing strictly along the property line or in a rectilinear pattern emphasizes the shape of the parcel and negates the visual continuity of the meadow.

**9.7 SANITARY SEWER SYSTEMS**

Refer to section 7.2 regarding vegetation management regulations for sanitary sewage system installation. Refer to section

7.4 regarding vegetation protection requirements during construction.

**9.8 TREE MANAGEMENT**

The possibility of damage from falling trees due to storms and/or disease should be assessed, and when there is a potential concern, an analysis by a professional arborist should be

obtained. Refer to TSRA's Procedure for Vegetation Removal and windthrow studies for information on the management of trees.



## Additional Resources

Halprin, Lawrence

*The RSVP Cycles:  
Creative Processes in the Human Environment*  
New York: George Braziller. 1970

Halprin, Lawrence

*The Sea Ranch ... Diary of an Idea*  
Berkeley, California: Spacemaker Press 2002

Lyndon, Donlyn and Jim Alinder

*The Sea Ranch*  
Princeton Architectural Press. 2004

Moore, Charles, Gerald Allen, and Donlyn Lyndon

*The Place of Houses*  
New York: Holt, Rinehart, and Winston. 1974.  
(Reprinted, Berkeley, California: University of  
California Press. 2000.)

Sexton, Richard

*Parallel Utopias: The Quest for Community/Sea Ranch,  
California and Seaside, Florida*  
San Francisco, California: Chronicle Books. 1995.

These publications, along with general Sea Ranch information, site maps, and other publications are available in the reference library at Department of Design, Compliance and Environmental Management at The Sea Ranch Association Office, 975 Annapolis Road. Telephone: 707-785-2316.

For online information, including this Design Manual and other information related to The Sea Ranch and The Sea Ranch Concept, visit The Sea Ranch web site at [www.tsra.org](http://www.tsra.org).

This booklet has been prepared by the Department of Design, Compliance and Environmental Management of The Sea Ranch Association and the TSRA Design Committee as a resource for TSRA members, their architects and designers.

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*"A good house has been warped, pushed, molded, compromised and recompromised by its architect, client, site, climate, the laws it is built under, the amount of money available, and by the customs, traditions, and history of its location. . . . If it has unexpected places in it, if the truths of its construction and form are occasionally evident, if it will bow out of one's consciousness when not wanted, remind one of China, southern France, or rural England on occasion, refuse to admit that it has ever received the finishing touch, make people seem even more beautiful, wise, or charming than ever before, if it will do these and a few other things, as well as treat you right physically, then it is a really good house."*

—Robert Woods Kennedy  
*The House and the Art of Its Design, 1953*





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