Sun Salutation
A PRIVATE YOGA STUDIO TOPPED BY A TAPESTRY OF SUCCULENTS
BY LAUREN MURPHY

Kathy Sloan gardens on the roof of her yoga studio.
KATHY SLOAN, A RETIRED BUILDER, AND MIKE MOSER, AN ARTIST, had been living in their secluded Mill Valley home for 34 years when Grandpa prompted them to take a second look at the adjoining steep dirt hill. Grandpa, the fond nickname they've given to a massive pine that's rooted there, "That was the beginning," Sloan says. "That tree is so exceptional that we thought, let's build something based on it." Grandpa's boughs inspired the pair of small his-and-hers cabins—a 380-square-foot yoga studio for her, a 500-square-foot art studio for him—that Sloan and Moser dreamed up for the site. They enlisted Jonathan Feldman, a green-minded architect with experience building in tricky natural locations. "We really wanted the cabins to feel like part of the surrounding woods," he says of their weathered cedar facades.

The challenging site—a precarious slope accessed by a narrow, winding road—dictated the staggered positioning of the two retreats. "The most obvious thing as you approach the cabins from the main house is the yoga studio's roof below you," Feldman says. "The green roof was a no-brainer!" Sloan, an avid gardener, worked alongside landscape architect Jori Hook on the horticultural design. "The idea was to make it look as though you took a blanket made of plants and spread it across the roof," Sloan says. The garden is patterned with a variety of succulents, making it easy to maintain—apart from the need to regularly uproot foot-tall redwood seedlings sown by the surrounding trees. "At first I thought, wouldn't it be fun to grow a redwood on the roof?" Sloan says. "Then I realized how far their roots extended." Despite their rustic exteriors, the cabins are comfortable, modern, and bright. Both have full bathrooms, and the art studio includes a kitchen. Floor-to-ceiling windows frame woods canyon views. "You turn this little corner onto our narrow road in a redwood forest, and you think, 'I'm not in Mill Valley—I'm in Europe,'" Sloan says. "It's a privilege to be here."