

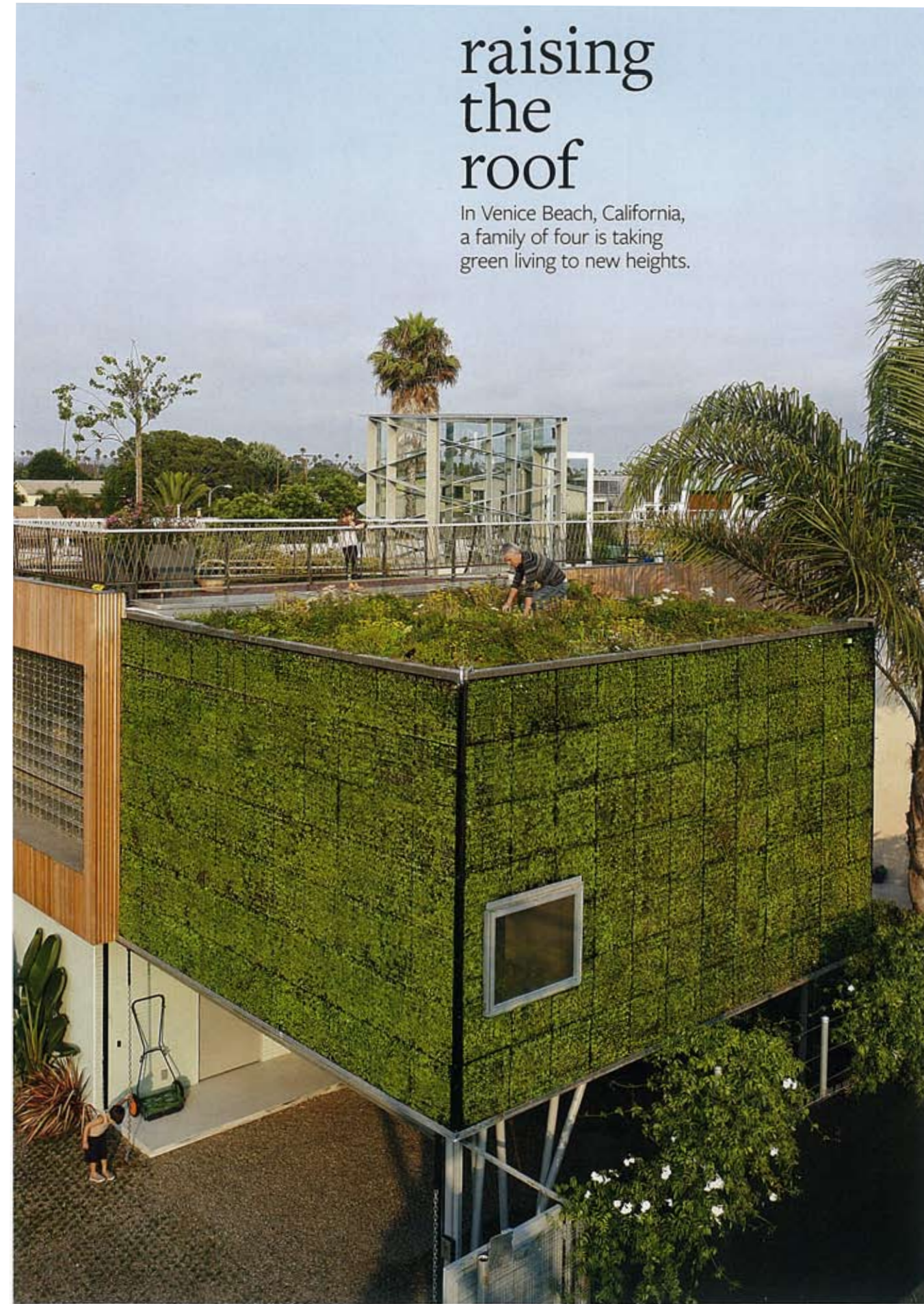
This page: Wooden screens over the second-floor walls of the Bricault family's Venice Beach home act as a heat barrier, keeping it cool on hot days.

Opposite: Paul Bricault and his daughter, Melise, hang out on the roof garden while son Destin plays below; the "living walls" are covered in panels of sedum.



raising the roof

In Venice Beach, California, a family of four is taking green living to new heights.





Thanks to an automatic drip-irrigation system, the garden on the roof is "incredibly low maintenance," says Paul, who enlists the kids to help harvest everything from satsuma mandarins to artichokes up there.



Above, from left: In the window-filled living room, a skylight can be opened by remote control to let air into the space; the kitchen's quartz-topped island has a built-in stovetop that makes cooking together as a family easier; in the master bedroom, a glass-block wall lets in light while providing privacy.

WHEN 4-YEAR-OLD DESTIN BRICAULT IS IN THE mood for one of his favorite sandwiches—cream cheese and cucumber—he and his mom, Cicek, head to the roof of their home in Venice Beach, California. There, Destin squeezes past the organic strawberry plants, blueberry bushes, and tomato vines to the cucumber patch, where he plucks a fresh one for his lunch.

There are green homes, and then there's the Bricault house, eco-friendly from the lawn (irrigated by recycled rainwater) up to the Eden-like rooftop garden. But what attracts the most attention from passersby is the exterior walls of the master bedroom, which are literally green because they're completely covered with plants. "The walls are stunning," says Cicek. "But their main function is to keep the house cool, since we don't have air-conditioning."

Cicek, a stay-at-home mom and former technology manager, and her husband, Paul, a William Morris agent, purchased their home nine years ago. Located just a few blocks from the ocean and Venice's colorful boardwalk, the house was originally a cozy two-bedroom bungalow. It was a perfect starter for the couple, but once they became the parents of two children—Melise, now 6, and Destin—they decided to expand.

Around the same time, Cicek had an environmental awakening. "I walked out of *An Inconvenient Truth* filled with fear," she says. "It sounded like the earth was destined to become like a Mad Max movie. But as I began to do research, I started to see some hope." Meanwhile, Paul had always been a nature buff. The couple realized that their renovation would give them an opportunity to put their ecological ideals into practice, while also doing right by their children's health.

They enlisted Paul's brother, Vancouver-based designer Marc Bricault, to oversee it. He had the idea of wrapping the building's face with living walls, and found a Canadian company to supply squares that had been preplanted with sedum and could be vertically installed. "At first I wasn't sure what Marc was talking about," Cicek admits. "I had never seen walls like this anywhere. It was definitely an experiment, but I trusted him." Because they're succulents, the plants don't need much water, but the Bricaults are putting in a system that will allow them to irrigate the walls using recycled water from their baths.

Marc also nearly doubled the size of the home, designing a two-story, 1,700-square-foot extension that integrates the outdoors while addressing the family's needs. On the ground floor is a breezeway where a wall of glass doors opens onto a courtyard full of fragrant, hummingbird-attracting plants. The Bricaults keep the space deliberately spare, giving the children free rein. One moment it's the setting for their toy-train tracks or an art project; the next it's the stage for a dance show. While they

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The terrazzo-floored breezeway has five doors that open onto a courtyard, which helps circulate air. (It even flows up the staircase.) Furniture and toys move in and out of the space, depending on whether it's being used for playdates or dinner parties.



Above, from left: In the upstairs hall, sliding doors to the children's shared bedroom have a chalkboard behind them that appears when they're shut; Destin's side of the bedroom is decorated with a custom-made American-ash bed, a desk that can be raised as he grows, and a wall of cubbies; save for the paint color and bedding, Melise's side is an almost perfect mirror image.

"The sense of whimsy in the house is a by-product both of having kids and of living in Venice, which doesn't take itself too seriously."

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play, Cicek keeps an eye on them from the adjacent open kitchen, where she bakes pizzas or prepares meals inspired by her Turkish ancestry. (The family favorite is called *kiymali makarna*, a dish of ground turkey combined with pasta, yogurt, and olive oil. "It's a child's dream—white, soft, and delicious," she says.)

From the breezeway, a sculptural spiral staircase leads upstairs to a skylighted bedroom floor, where the spacious, plant-clad master bedroom floats over the carport below. The room's ceiling and walls are covered in tinted natural clay, which—along with windows that are perfectly positioned to capture ocean breezes—keeps the room cool.

Down the hall, Melise and Destin share a bedroom—"growing up, I shared a room with my sister, and there is a lot of comfort in that," says Cicek—but the space was designed to be long enough that when the kids get older, it can be split in two. For now, though, Melise's side is painted pale pink, Destin's is light blue (both with no-VOC paint), and the two hues meet in a puzzle pattern in the center.

Such playful touches aren't just relegated to the kids' room. The floor of the master-

bathroom shower is tiled to look like a koi pond, the hall has a secret panel lined with blackboard paint, and in the yard is a playhouse created from scraps of wood and tile from the renovation. "The sense of whimsy in the house is a by-product both of having kids and of living in Venice, which doesn't take itself too seriously," says Paul.

What the Bricaults did take seriously was going green, even when that required stretching their budget. Beyond the living walls, the house is like a test lab for state-of-the-art green architecture, with solar panels on the roof, a rainwater-retention system, and a high-efficiency boiler that provides hot water to the bathrooms and the radiant-heat floors. While few of these features came cheap, the couple believe they will eventually recoup their investment. "The solar panels and radiant floor heating will pay for themselves in energy savings and then some," Paul says. "But as trite as it sounds, we feel living as greenly as possible is an issue of conscience, not cost-saving."

Of course, there's also the immeasurable benefits of raising two passionate, vegetable-gobbling little environmentalists. "The kids will eat anything grown on the roof, since they feel like they made it themselves," Paul says. And when her teacher recently asked what Melise would do if she were president, she knew what her first order of business would be: She would ask everyone to put a green roof on top of their house. **G**



A neglected area beside the house was transformed into a play area, with a structure made of leftover building materials and a cushy ground covering of tire remnants.



View galleries of creative family homes, kids' rooms, playrooms, and more at cookiemag.com/go/galleries.