

Super Soaker

WHEN KATE ROBINSON BUILT A PRIVATE HOUSE FOR HER TUB, SHE TURNED BATH TIME INTO A RITUAL.

PHOTOGRAPHY BY ALEX HAYDEN



This page: In their second bath-house, Kate Robinson and Spring Selby opted for a slate tub rather than cedar, which had been high maintenance and prone to leaks. The tub is not a Jacuzzi. It's a deep soaking tub with built-in benches fed by a wide sheet-flow custom water-spout. A plaque of a Mayan vision serpent echoes a tattoo on Robinson's body. Opposite page: Close-up look at one of the decorative Mayan Quetzalcoatl heads.



This page: Robinson selected lime green for the bathhouse exterior. "It makes everyone else cringe," she says. "But it makes me happy." A Greek-style bas-relief of the three graces crowns the bathhouse's entrance. Opposite page, top to bottom: A bathhouse is born in a Madrona backyard. Washed river-rock tile was used as a border for the entry, shower and tub areas and a textured flat black tile was used to define the horizontal boundaries of the seating area, tub and shower areas.



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"When I was 13, I went to Japan with my family and discovered there's really only one civilized way to take a bath," says Kate Robinson, referring to the Japanese practice of showering and then taking a long, hot soak in a deep tub. At an age when it's hard to get most kids to take a shower, Robinson vowed someday she would have a traditional *ofuro* (bath) of her own. She's made good on that promise—twice. ■ The first was in the backyard behind her 1928 brick Tudor home in the Green Lake neighborhood. Together with Kirkland builder Joe Ratto, she designed a post-Victorian-style, shingle garden shed to house a Hinoki cypress soaking tub and shower. ■ There Robinson, a technical editor, planned to stay and soak for the rest of her days. That changed when she paired up with Spring Selby. With five cats, two Amazon parrots and a dog, they moved to a larger home in Madrona and immediately called in Ratto for a second kitchen-table strategy session. ■ The result is a 10-by-12-foot backyard brick bathhouse with an open-beam ceiling of fir (brushed with three coats of Sikkens clear-coat finish). The floor (radiant heated), walls, shower and soaking tub are slate tile with dark gray washed river rock and ceramic stone details. The use of stone and wood was inspired by the eclectic stone, brick and tile masonry work around the couple's 1922 Craftsman home. ■ Every effort is made to preserve the sanctuary feeling of the bathhouse, which the couple uses daily. It's separate from the domestic sphere by a few all-important steps outdoors. There is no wiring for music or telephone. All the lighting is on dimmers. "It heals what ails us," Robinson says. ■ It's a special place made more so by an unseen element. Cast in the foundation is a soapstone canister containing the ashes of Robinson's father. It's a tribute to the man who lit the *ofuro* passion in his daughter by taking her to Japan so many years ago.

TEAM >>>
BUILDER/DESIGNER Joe Ratto, J.A. Ratto/Builder, Kirkland; 206.240.5601.
COST Not available.
BRIGHT IDEA Spring Selby selected a 16-inch-wide sheet-flow waterspout to create a waterfall effect, but it has the practical benefit of filling the large tub with hot water quickly.
REASON YOU'LL NEVER LEAVE A private soak in 103-degree, chemical-free water.
PRACTICAL WISDOM The tub is emptied and cleaned weekly, but an ozonator hidden below fir cooling benches next to the tub pumps ozone into the water to prevent bacteria growth.

FOR COMPLETE DETAILS, SEE FIND IT, PAGE 76.

