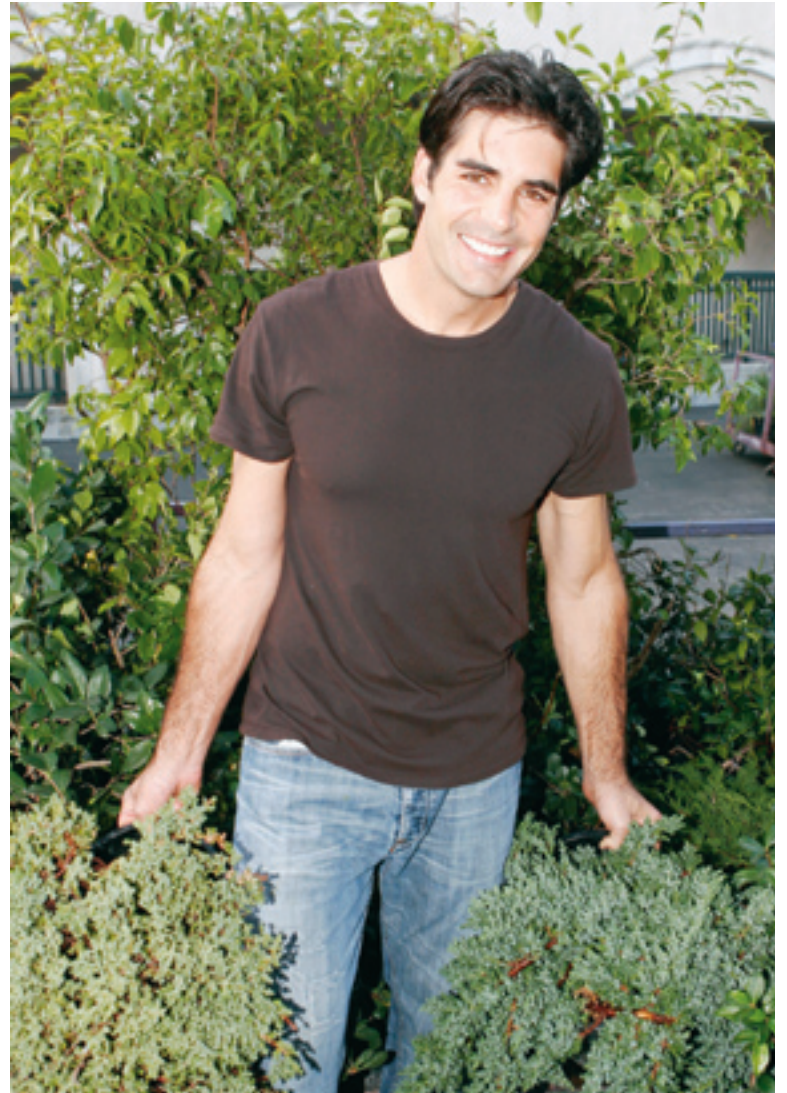


# Passions' Galen Gering

From retro-cool to the comforts of modern living, the soap opera star talks about what helps shape his outdoor living projects.

WRITTEN BY SHANE PLISKA



FOR DAYTIME ACTOR Galen Gering, gardening is both a relaxing hobby and a way to add value to his real-estate investments. During the day, Gering stars in the NBC soap opera *Passions*, and on the weekends, he is easily spotted shopping for his latest outdoor living project.

Gering first discovered his love of gardening when he started fixing up homes and reselling them for a profit. Since 1991, he has “flipped” five properties.

In working on the projects, Gering discovered his favorite garden shop, Thomas Schoos Design in West Hollywood. The upscale operation specializes in original garden sculptures and artifacts. Founded nine

years ago, it recently expanded into an additional 12,000-square-foot retail space on Santa Monica Boulevard that boasts, among other niche interests, an indoor koi pond and 65 species of specimen Cycads.

## Why is gardening important?

The landscape is not just about curb appeal; I look to create gardens that add square footage and comfort to a home.

I use French doors and giant pocket doors to allow rooms to open up into gardens and patios. The patios are built so they're flush to the rooms' floors. The effect creates the illusion that the outdoors is simply another room of the home.

### What influences your garden designs?

I was first inspired by the cool architecture of Miami Beach, which led me to my love for 1920s Spanish homes. I view my projects as restorations, incorporating antique furniture and fixtures of the era with the comforts of modern living.

I tend to use a lot of silvery foliage and olive greens: favorites are aloe plants and olive trees. I really enjoy a selection of rocks and gravel in the landscape.

### You mention antiques. What is your opinion about reproductions?

I prefer real. Not everyone has a lot of money for 100-year-old antiques, so reproductions serve a purpose - as long as they're made from real material. Faux materials, on the other hand, feel cheap. I especially don't care for fountains made from artificial stone.

### What hot trend do you like?

Furnishings with 1950s and 1960s retro flair. I like U-shaped sofas and other forms of cool patio seating positioned for conversation.

### What's tired?

For the last two to three years, I've been seeing a lot of Zen garden stuff. I think it's a passing fad.

Also, there will always be a market for chunky furnishings, but I don't like them much. I don't think people want patio furniture that lasts for more than 10 years.

### What are some of the essential yet overlooked elements in outdoor living?

Since most people are working all day, the garden needs to be enjoyed at night. Lighting is very important - and not just low-voltage. Lanterns made from punched metal and vintage glass can create a nice vibe. ■