

New Dream Inn owners thinking big (trees)

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SANTA CRUZ — The new owners of the Dream Inn having been fooling around when it comes to their \$2-million renovation that is now nearing completion.

One good example is the transformation of the landscape into a tropical island scene. What tropical island, for example, is complete without palm trees?

The new owners, the Senior Corp.,

didn't want just any little palm trees. They had 15 huge, established ones trucked in.

The tallest are some 30 feet with root balls four feet wide and deep. The trees were transported by low-bed truck more than 50 miles and transplanted with the use of a crane.

Interestingly, the Fremont company involved in the tree plantings — Wilkerson Large Tree Transplanting — is the same company responsible for some of the palm trees in Southern

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California that made Beverly Hills famous.

Owner Wally Wilkerson, who has been in the business since 1927, told The Sentinel he got his start around Beverly Hills. He transplanted palm trees around the homes of film stars Wallace Beery, Rudolph Valentino, Red Skelton and Charles Ray.

"Heck, I might be responsible for half the palm trees growing down there today," he said, laughing.

One of his more recent jobs,

Wilkerson added, was the yard of producer/director George Lucas in San Anselmo.

The Dream Inn transplanting was coordinated by Mark Fisher of Coastal Landscape Co. in Soquel. The landscape design was done by Rod Garrett Design in San Rafael.

Ron Basker of Ron Garrett Design said the precise placing of the palm trees is critical. "A subtle lean makes all the difference in the world," he said, as he directed one of the trees a few inches this way and that.

Seven of the trees were placed in a grove near the entrance. The other eight were transplanted in groups of two or three on the other side of the Inn's lobby.

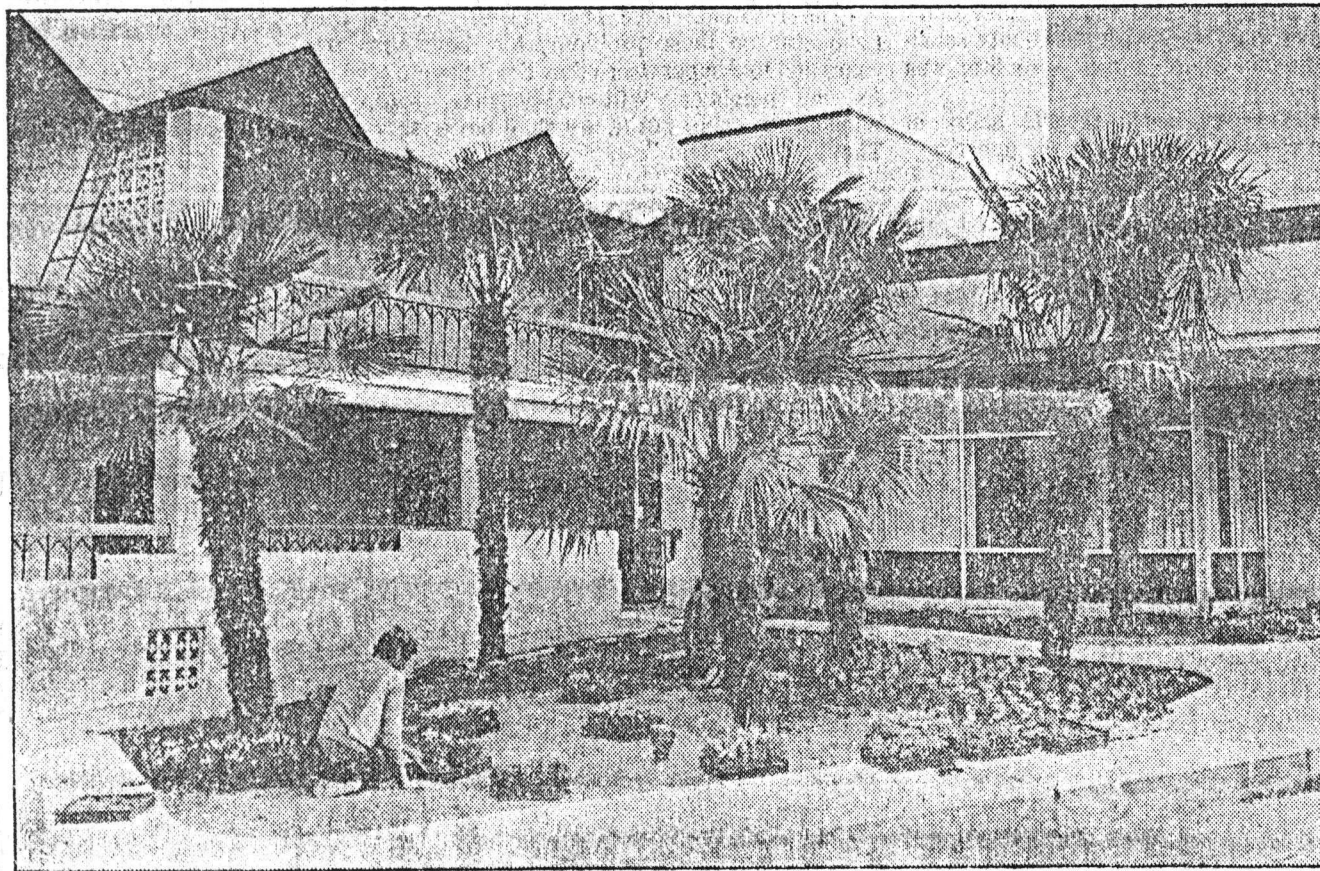
According to Project Manager Ben Mammmina, the new landscaping cost \$150,000. It takes in not only the front, but also the new pool-deck area and even into the interior corridors.

In all, more than 25,000 individual groundcover plants were planted and 4,000 bulbs dug in, added Fisher. One of the interior corridors, which used to have a gravel area alongside, now features the orange-flowered clivia, brightly-colored nandina and groundcover.

The pool-deck area was expanded, according to Basker, and curved planting areas designed to not only match the shape of the existing building, but also the gentle sweep of the bay which it overlooks.

Groves of bird of paradise are planted at the entrance to the area. Flowering groundcover and bulbs will also be planted abundantly.

The \$2-million renovation extended to the exterior as well. The coffee shop, all rooms, banquet and meeting facilities received a facelift. The project has taken six months.



One grove features seven transplanted palm trees.

Pete Amos/Sentinel