

# MIX MASTER

Landscape architect Chad Robert's rich body of work reveals the diverse nature of his designs



TEXT BY NANCY ERDMANN ■ PORTRAIT BY DAVID FENTON

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# Phoenix landscape architect Chad Robert knew

early on where he was headed in life. Always drawn to science and the outdoors, his true calling became clear while preparing for a 4-H forestry competition as a teen.

"I met the head of the landscape architecture department at Louisiana State University (LSU), who was helping me with some tree identification," Robert recalls. "He asked if I had ever thought about going into landscape architecture, and I remember thinking, 'I don't even know what that is.' But the more we talked about it, the more I realized that's what I wanted to do."

Born and raised in a small town in Louisiana, Robert (pronounced Ro-BEAR) attended LSU, and in 1984 received a bachelor's degree in landscape architecture. His first job took him to Dallas, where he got his feet wet designing residential landscapes as well as participating in larger projects, such as the Dallas Arboretum and Botanical Garden, and the Texas Vietnam Memorial garden.

Five years later, he moved to Southern California. There, the plant palette was all about tropicals and desert vegetation. Robert got a taste for the commercial side of the profession as a land planner, allowing him to get a better understanding of designing on a larger scale. When the economy in California declined, he headed to Phoenix, where he had the opportunity to work with such noted landscape designers as Christine Ten Eyck and Marcus Bolinger—both *Phoenix Home & Garden* Masters of the Southwest.

"Chad and I worked together in Texas, and I encouraged him to come to Phoenix," Ten Eyck recalls. "I have been so impressed with the incredible quality of his work and his attention to detail."

Although Robert quickly became well-versed in desert plants, he says he had the reputation as "the guy from California" and ended up doing lots of lush, green gardens. His design style, however, was much more diverse, and before long he was ready to go out on his own. In 1998 he established Exteriors by Chad Robert Inc.

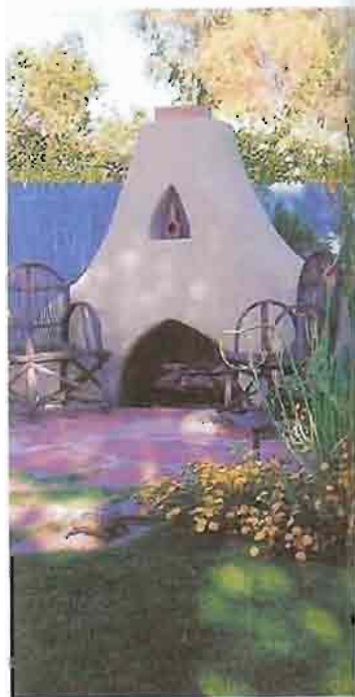
Since the founding of his landscape design/build firm, his pro-

jects have ranged from native Sonoran Desert settings to lush estates with sprawling yards to small Contemporary patio spaces. His designs, he explains, are driven by the style of architecture and the setting. "I approach each job with a fresh set of eyes," he says. "Changing gears from one style to the next is like getting a brand-new set of paints."

A fan of the "green movement," this newly named Master of the Southwest incorporates environmentally friendly elements into his work whenever possible. "I've done some things with recycled glass as ground cover. And I think the passive solar idea is important, like planting trees on the south side of the house to give you shade in summer, cutting down on asphalt, and salvaging plant material. That just makes a better living environment in the desert."

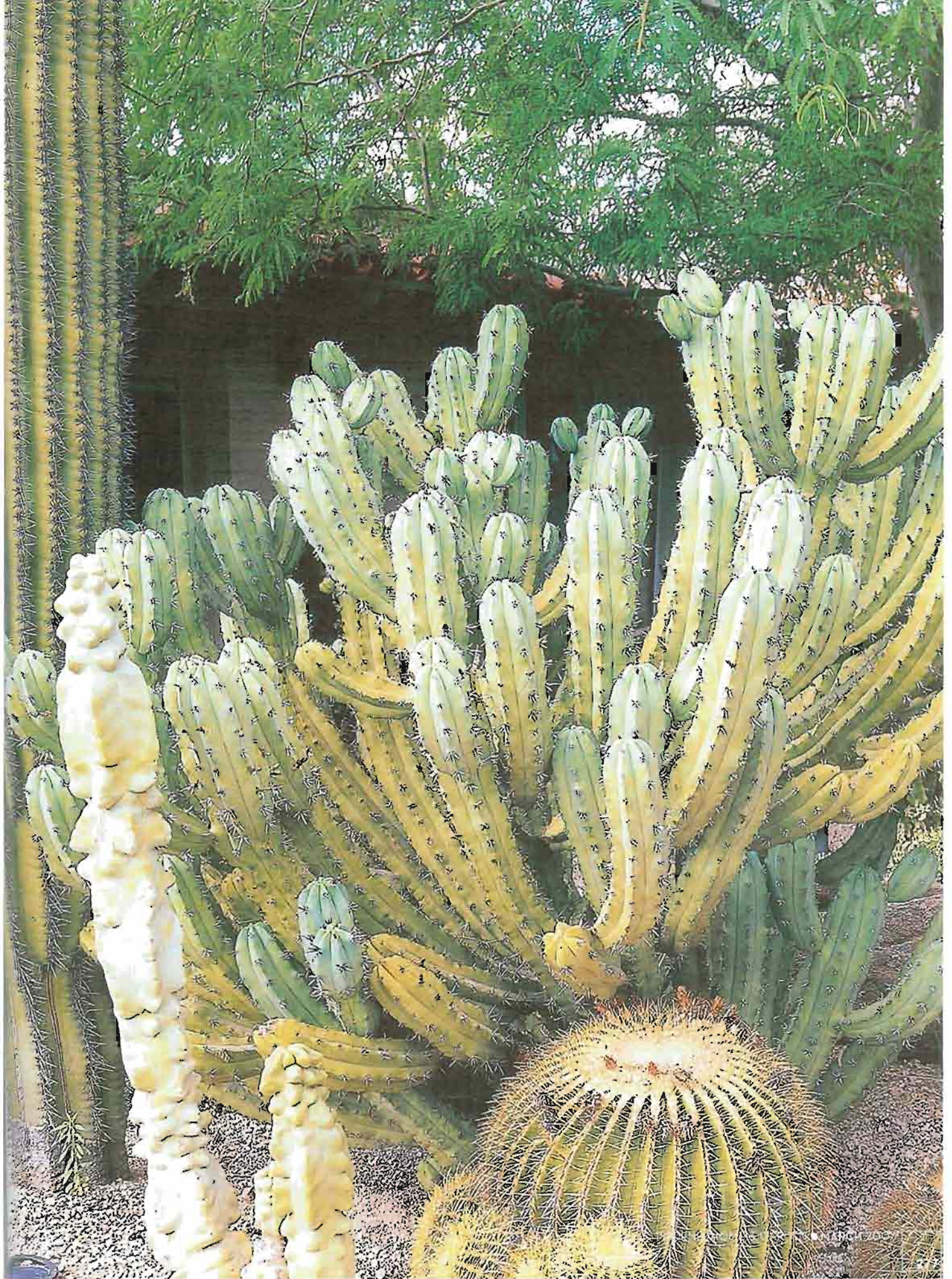
Robert's passion for design doesn't stop when the workday is over. With an observant eye, he looks for ideas wherever he goes. "I love to travel, and I'm usually the only person on vacation taking pictures of the paving, the curbs, the window railings," he says with a laugh. "But I almost always come back with something I can use in my work, and that has helped to define my style."

Registered as a landscape architect in Arizona, Texas and California, he still keeps his connection to the latter with projects in Los Angeles, Montecito and San Francisco. His work has garnered numerous awards and has appeared on *Home & Garden Television*. On April 1, one of his landscapes will be featured during the *Phoenix Home & Garden Grand Tour of Gardens*. ☐



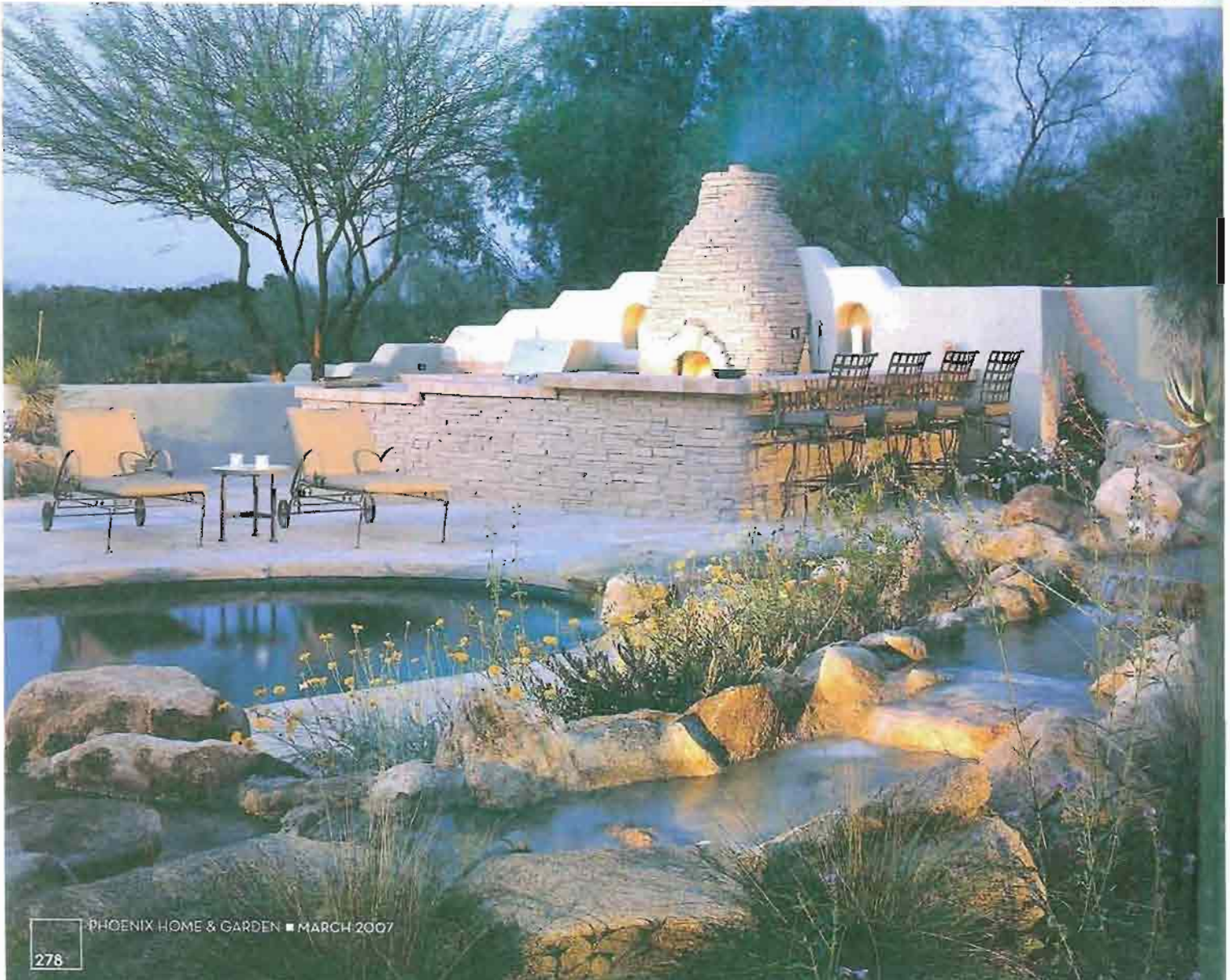
**Above:** An intimate garden space in the corner of a yard features a Southwest-style fireplace, a painted fence and flagstone pavers. **Opposite:** Chad Robert says he likes to introduce bold architectural plants into his designs, along with anything unusual that will spark conversation. Here, a blue myrtle cactus serves as the centerpiece of a desert-themed patio garden.







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**Opposite top:** Containers, planted to the brim with flowers, help soften the hardscape and appeal to the homeowner's desire for "living" color. **Opposite bottom:** This garden was featured on the *Phoenix Home & Garden Grand Tour of Gardens* in 2006. Robert designed the outdoor kitchen and boulder water feature. **Above:** Backed by a hedge of greenery, a blooming octopus agave brings a sculptural element to an Italian-style garden in Paradise Valley, Ariz. **Left:** Robert's creative use of pavers adds visual interest to the home's front entry, where beds of greenery flourish.







This page: "Chad is highly imaginative and has an excellent sense of style," notes Phoenix architect

Gordon Rogers. In this postlude setting, Robert livened up a pair of stone pots with twisted Italian cypress trees, purple lobelia and red geraniums. **Opposite:** Water flows down tiers of boulders that connect a pool to a spa

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