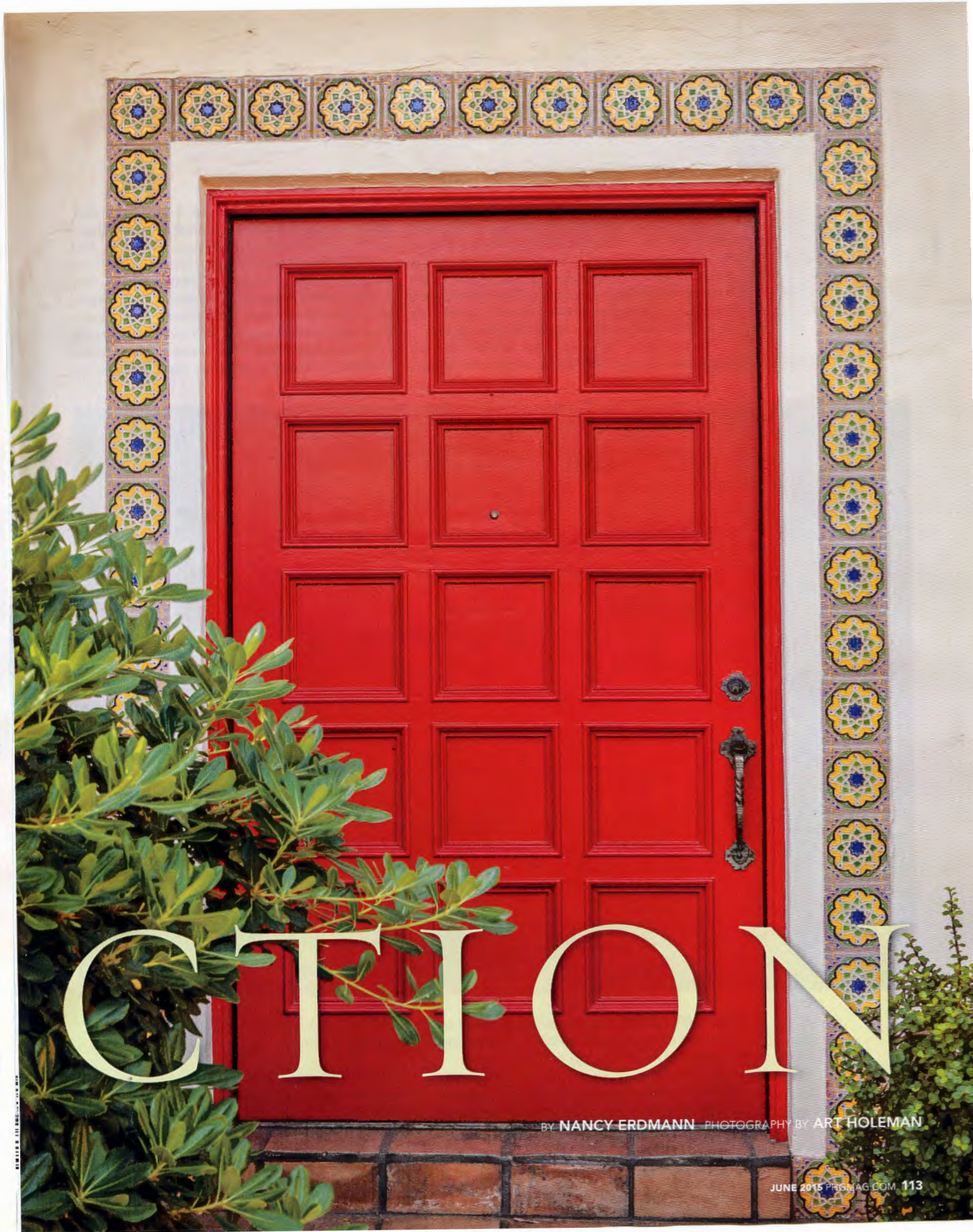


*A Thirsty Landscape in a  
Historic Neighborhood  
Gets a Desert-Savvy Redo*

# Aged to PERFECTION



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BY NANCY ERDMANN PHOTOGRAPHY BY ART HOLEMAN



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**KIM WILLIAMSON REMEMBERS THE DAY** she took a drive through the Encanto-Palmcroft historic district in Phoenix shortly after graduating from the University of Arizona School of Law. "A friend drove me through the area and told me, 'This is where you should live someday,'" Seventeen years later, she found the house of her dreams, and it even came with a little history worth bragging about.

The two-story Spanish Colonial Revival residence was built in 1931 and was home to promi-

nent banker Henry Coerver. Four years later, future senator and presidential nominee Barry Goldwater and his wife, Betty, moved in. The newlyweds celebrated with a reception for "150 members of the younger set" that was publicized in the *Arizona Independent Republic*. More recently, well-known car dealer Bill Luke took residence. One anonymous source was quoted as saying "For a neighborhood affectionately referred to as 'Attorney Avenue,' we sure did have a lot of



**PREVIOUS PAGES:** This charming residence is located in a historic neighborhood in downtown Phoenix and includes a mix of old and new vegetation. Its brick patio is home to a collection of colorful potted plants that do well in our arid climate. The decorative tilework around the front door is original to the house.

**ABOVE:** Previously carpeted with grass, the front yard was transformed with water-thrifty plants.

**OPPOSITE:** A view from inside the house was enhanced with the addition of an outdoor wall fountain and a vine-covered arbor to help shade the west-facing room.







Landscape architect Chad Robert came up with a plan for a pergola that would incorporate the design of the house and provide some much-needed color.

The south-facing backyard features a pool and spa that were added after the house was built, along with a newly constructed pergola. The blue doors lead to a storage space beneath an outdoor staircase. Adding more color is a purple-flowering Hong Kong orchid tree above the spa.





auto dealers!" For Kim, the place reminded her of her grandmother's home in Clearwater, Florida—a house she loved as a child.

While the interiors had undergone extensive restoration over the years, the yard needed work. Williamson and her partner, Nancy Meyers, brought in landscape architect Chad Robert, who had worked on other properties in the area, and whose work they admired. The grassy front yard was the first to go and replaced with desert landscaping to save on water. "In those days, there was less concern about water conservation," says Kim. But because the home is located in a verdant neighborhood, the couple still wanted a lush feel.

Robert, a *Phoenix Home & Garden* Master of the Southwest, replaced the grass with silvery wormwood for a softening effect, added a smattering of succulents and cacti, filled the borders of a realigned curving walkway with red geraniums and white alyssum, and kept the existing creeping fig vines that cover the front walls. The result is a dramatic pilgrimage of blooms and greenery that looks as though it was part of the original Spanish Mediterranean-style landscape.

As was common in many areas of Phoenix over the years, the backyard had its share of ficus trees. Although they are an excellent source of shade, ficus are also frost-sensitive, and within the last 10 years the couple has lost all but one when the trees succumbed to severe frosts. In addition, a ratty-looking shade covering with rotten wood didn't add to the appeal of the south-facing yard.

So Robert came up with a plan for a pergola that would incorporate the design of the house and provide some much-needed color. It was painted a deep blue and planted with wisteria at its base. In time, the vining plants will cover the entire structure, producing clusters of magnificent violet-blue blooms in springtime. Throughout the yard, colorful flowering plants, including autumn sage, coral fountain and desert honeysuckle, were added to attract hummingbirds and butterflies. A barbecue island that suits the rest of the home and garden was the finishing touch.

Adding to the property's charm are the home's exterior elements—some original to the house,



others added or improved upon. For instance, a second-story French door leads to a Juliet balcony overlooking the front yard. All of the windows on the first level have exterior curtains on iron rods, and Moorish-influenced tiles frame the entry door. Other alluring features are decorative tiles on an outdoor stairway, Chicago tumbled brick pavers set in various patterns, and a pair of blue curved doors below the staircase that looks like it might lead to some mysterious hideaway.

Kim and Nancy are proud of the changes made to their property and recently opened it up for the 2015 Encanto-Palmcroft Historic Home Tour. "We fielded numerous questions about the landscape and unusual desert plants," Kim says. "People really seemed interested in the plants that were attracting the butterflies and hummingbirds, which made us happy, as that was our intent with the redesign of the garden." ■

**OPPOSITE:** The side yard connects to the front patio through an arched opening. Here, a metal arbor with purple snail vines helps shade the sunny spot.

**ABOVE:** The homeowners often enjoy coffee on the secluded front patio, which is paved with Chicago tumbled brick. A Juliet balcony overlooks the space.



**RIGHT:** The arbor was coated with Dunn Edwards Black River Falls paint to match the deep blue tile found throughout the yard.

**BELOW:** Kim Williamson purchased decorative tiles for the risers of this outdoor stairway that leads to the master bedroom. The space was originally an Arizona sleeping porch, which was used for sleeping outdoors in cooler weather in the years before air conditioning, notes Kim.

*See Sources.*

