

## CHAD ROBERT

exteriors by chad robert

CHAD ROBERT MAY BE THE CLOSEST thing to a landscape whisperer that you'll find.

This charming, low-key Southerner is not about forcing a look upon the land. Instead, he lets the environment call the shots.

"I let the site, the architecture and 'the program' — the client's needs and wants — dictate what goes in," says Robert, who admits his 1960s-era dwelling near Phoenix College flaunts some pretty sparse landscaping.

Raised in the small Louisiana town of Gonzales, Robert had the love of the land instilled early in his soul. With his schoolteacher mother involved in the local 4-H Club, he soon found himself busy with club activities and taking part in state competitions in forestry.

As a high-school sophomore, he was required to identify trees for one project. That led him to a meeting with the head of landscape architecture at Louisiana State University. And, without really even knowing it, Robert's career had begun.

"That was the first time I'd ever heard the words 'landscape architecture,'" he recalls.

From that point on, Robert knew what

he wanted to do. By the mid-1980s, he had a bachelor's degree in landscape architecture from LSU and headed to Dallas to work for a respected firm. He took part in numerous high-profile commercial projects: the Dallas Arboretum, the Texas Vietnam Memorial and the Dallas Botanical Gardens, to name a few.

Texas was also where he met up with colleague Christy Ten Eyck — Valley landscape designer who's worked on such projects at the Desert Botanical Garden, Four Seasons Resort and the Phoenix Art Museum — who encouraged him to come to Phoenix after his companies in Texas and Southern California closed.

In the early part of this decade, Robert established a new shop of his own again. Today, he employs four full-time employees, and his company specializes in residential yards, from vast spaces to postage stamp size courtyards. The goal, he says, is always to enhance a homes' interior through landscaping, and he prides himself on the scope and range of his work.

"I think if you look at my work, at what's in my portfolio, it's pretty diverse," he says. //

### DESIGN TIPS

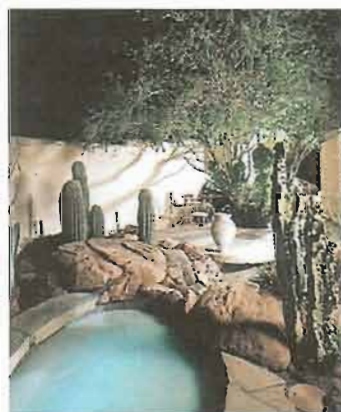
\* **Get expensive looks without spending a lot of money.**

Upside-down saltillo tile, for instance, has a look of stone and is a fraction of the cost.

\* **Use the color wheel.** Use warm or contrasting colors to draw attention. For a subtle look, use cooler or complementary colors (below center).

\* **Watch shapes.** For instance, if you have a symmetrical-shaped pool, employ square-shaped materials (below right).

\* **Your exterior is just another room.** Focus first on the overall space itself, just as you would the layout of a room in your home. Then feel free to fill in the details.



### WHAT'S NEXT

\* **Creating a spiritual connection to the garden.** For instance, a Sonoran-style Zen garden featuring crushed gravel that can be raked. This is said to have a calming effect.

\* **Landscapes inspired by feng shui and Indian influences.** Creating outside spaces — sometimes even delineated by a tent — for massage or yoga sessions or for places to meditate and relax.

\* **Recycling plants, concrete and other materials, as well as salvaging materials, particularly flora.** A tree that's grown 50 years in the desert without regular watering is more beautiful than one that's been pampered in a nursery.

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