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A bougainvillea-covered arch establishes a focal point at the entry to this Paradise Valley, Arizona, home.



Change OF PACE

With a fresh plant palette and newly created outdoor spaces, a Phoenix garden embraces its scenic surroundings

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WHILE VISITING PHOENIX as a medical student, Alan Andacht hiked Camelback Mountain and was smitten by the fresh air, sunshine and views. It wasn't long before he and partner Michael Maher decided to put New York City traffic in the rearview mirror and head West. "After working years in hectic, large, urban medical centers, we were looking for a change," explains Andacht.

The pair rented for two years while deciding where to live, but as fate would have it, Andacht had a bird's-eye view of their future home while perched atop that mountain. Rich in potential, the residence boasted a quiet location and panoramic views of the mountain. But the yard was untidy and much of the property was not being used.

The homeowners—both physicians and avid hikers—love to spend time outdoors and wanted a look that would blend with their personal style and function as an extension of their home. Spaces in which to enjoy Mother Nature were a priority. So, they called upon Audelio Rios to spruce up the front yard. "We removed the hideous old plants that were up against the windows and added fountains and flower beds," states Andacht. A massive olive tree, bougainvillea-covered archway and fragrant rose garden add flair to the space, and a winding path that leads to the trailhead at Camelback Mountain gets plenty of use.



The interior of the 1970s home was completely renovated before Andacht and Maher hired Chad Robert, a Phoenix Home & Garden Master of the Southwest, to maximize the outdoor spaces. Robert brought cohesion to the property with cozy outdoor seating areas offering fireplaces and comfortable furnishings. Removing a wooden fence and parking area that had cut off access to much of the backyard created room for a large ramada with a fireplace and a shady spot with a hammock. A parking garage for RVs was converted into a gym that encourages an alfresco workout with garage doors and antique doors that open the room on three sides. The pool was updated with new coping and travertine tile.

With meandering pathways that lead to an open-air cooking area, citrus grove, lush plantings, a sculpture garden and a bocce ball court, the outdoor living spaces address the pair's healthy lifestyle and the home's breathtaking setting. Andacht's pride and joy is a bountiful vegetable garden, which rewards with zucchini, artichokes, eggplant, cucumbers, peppers, melons, herbs and bushels of tomatoes. "I come out with my scissors and make dinner with whatever looks good in the garden that day," he comments. "I really don't have a green thumb—it's all about good irrigation, drainage and soil."

The backyard has changed the way the two live, Andacht remarks. "We use our home now to renew and refresh after sometimes very stressful days of work. In season, we are outside more than inside."

A favorite element is an outdoor shower, which is hidden behind a dense planting of bamboo. "We wanted a jungle," Andacht says with a smile. Robert delivered with a refreshingly fun and functional water feature. There's a place to keep shampoo and soap, and the bamboo stalks serve as hooks to hang a robe or dry towel. Of course, the ultimate accessory is simply the view. ■





Above: Alan Andacht and Michael Maher's faithful whippets love to race around the expansive backyard. A dense cluster of bamboo (to the left of the white umbrella) planted to silence pool equipment also provides a secluded spot in which to take an alfresco shower. "It's a high point of the backyard, and a highlight for every guest," Andacht says.



Left: Landscape architect Chad Robert transformed a parking area into an inviting desert oasis with the addition of this covered ramada shaded by massive eucalyptus trees. It's a favorite place to toast the sunset and unwind with a glass of wine.

Opposite: Robert created a distinctive garden space for this Buddha sculpture. Andacht notes that when the home was featured on the 2011 Phoenix Home & Garden Grand Tour of Gardens, he was delighted to see several guests sitting on the grass in front of the piece with their hands folded. "It's supposed to be settling and bring peace, and they understood that."



Left: A sprawling pyracantha climbing up a slump-block wall arches over a set of turquoise-framed windows and draws the eye to Camelback Mountain. A rare boojum tree (right) and a variety of specimen cacti and succulents create a botanical ambience outside the homeowners' library.

Opposite top: The homeowners kept dinner parties and weekend guests in mind as much as solitude and escape when they renovated the backyard. "We entertain a lot and usually have 20 to 30 people here for Thanksgiving," says Alan Andacht.

Opposite bottom: Andacht is particularly proud of this flourishing vegetable garden, which produces a bounty of fresh herbs and produce year-round. "As I've gotten older, I've realized that raised planters that are counter height are so much easier to maintain," he remarks. Chad Robert says he has seen a huge trend in vegetable gardens and asks, "What better way to get organic foods than to grow your own?"

See Sources.

