

# PHOENIX HOME & GARDEN

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# Hillside Retreat







*A Thirsty Garden is Transformed into  
a Water-Wise Setting, Making it a  
Perfect Fit for a Territorial-Style Home*

JILL SCHILDHOUSE PHOTOGRAPHY BY ART HOLEMAN

The swimming pool courtyard, which is located in the front of this Valley home, was designed to allow Camelback Mountain to shine as the rightful centerpiece. The unusual decking is flagstone mixed with Mexican beach pebbles.





**WHEN ONE PACIFIC NORTHWEST-BASED** couple noticed they were drawn to the same Paradise Valley hotel—one that epitomizes Arizona living with its rustic charm, traditional adobe hacienda design and Southwest tranquility—every time they came to town, they realized they’d found the perfect location for the second home they’d been yearning for.

“My husband is notoriously not happy with heat, but for some reason he loves coming to Arizona,” says his wife, recounting the pair’s unexpected purchase of a classic desert dwelling. “While house hunting, we viewed a property that had such beautiful landscaping that even though we didn’t buy it,

we thought ‘We need to hire whomever did this garden.’” It was landscape architect Chad Robert, a *Phoenix Home & Garden* Masters of the Southwest award winner, who designed the grounds and who the couple ultimately sought.

The home they purchased, a Territorial-style built into a hillside property, faces Camelback Mountain. However, the snowbirds were dismayed by the lot’s thirsty, high-maintenance garden, which did not work visually with the traditional Southwest architecture.

As such, Robert was immediately tasked with transforming the grounds—with its lawn, non-native plants and overhanging trees—into the





water-wise desert garden of their dreams. “Most of what I did involved the softscape, as the existing hardscape suited their needs,” he recalls. “I hate destroying something if I don’t have to. My work comes from several areas that influence the design: the architecture, the clients’ needs and wants, the views and the existing style.

“I let these factors drive the design decisions, and then everything just falls into place,” he continues. “So we morphed it into a Southwest feel because it was already headed in that direction, making it easy to take it to the next level.”

The horseshoe-shaped drive, which guides visitors to the main entry, was originally overgrown

with native plants such as brittlebush that had self-seeded. The area was immediately refined with the thinning and pruning of excess plants. An existing waterfall that once cascaded from the upper-level pool down toward the driveway was converted into a cactus-oriented garden accented with palms. At the top of the drive are three mesquite trees the homeowners call the Three Amigos.

Across the way is a large gate that provides an entry to the front courtyard and leads to a stunning pool terrace with flagstone pavers peppered with Mexican beach pebbles. An abundance of color from cascading bougainvilleas and other flowering flora draws the eye toward the magnificent backdrop

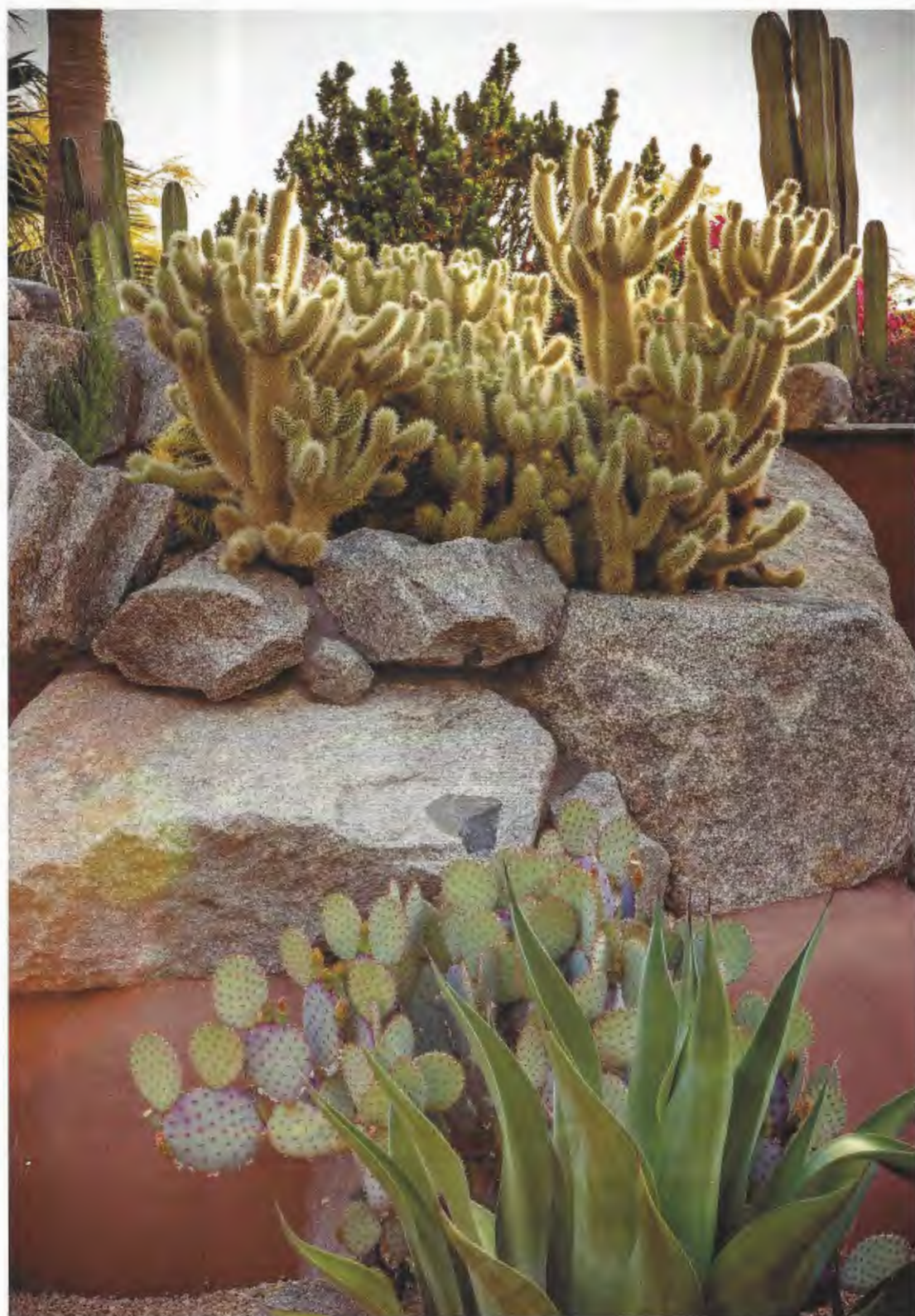
**ABOVE LEFT:** The dramatic front yard renovation includes an array of stunning flowering desert flora and a boulder-laden planting bed that was once a waterfall.

**ABOVE RIGHT:** The entry to the front courtyard is quintessential Southwest.





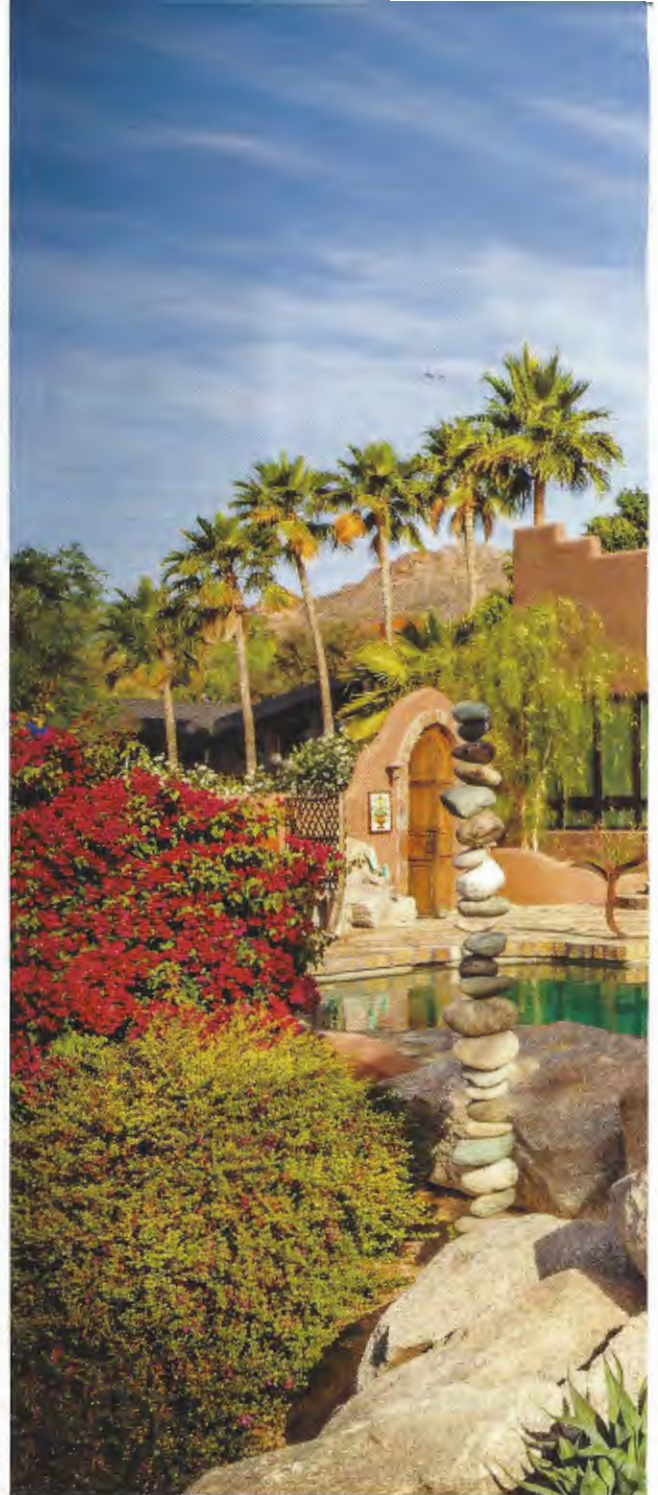




**LEFT:** An eye-catching medley of specimen plants brings this corner of the yard to life. Swimmers can relax on the pool's sun shelf or go for a dip in deeper waters.

**ABOVE:** Weber's agave, Santa Rita prickly pear and teddy bear cholla reveal their beauty on the front hillside, which was planted to provide privacy to the swimming pool area above.





The four-sided fountain brings tranquil sounds to the quiet hillside lot while blending seamlessly into the richly planted backdrop.

of Camelback Mountain. Special touches, like a Moorish-style fountain, a towering stacked stone sculpture and artistically placed boulders soon come into view. Robert focused on what he calls verticals: teddy bear chollas, fencepost cacti and totem pole cacti that he skillfully placed to frame the view of the mountain. "It's not necessarily the things on-site that have the most powerful impact in a garden; sometimes it can be the things that are off-site," he points out.

In the rear garden, which includes a view of Mummy Mountain, Robert tore out the grass lawn,

pruned back the ficus trees to allow in more sunlight and removed a built-in wood-burning fire pit, planting a specimen totem pole cactus in its place. "We love strolling along the meandering path in the back garden and crunching along the rocky terrain to the various intimate spaces," says the homeowner. "There are several sitting areas perfect for reading a book, and hummingbird and butterfly plantings invite more nature into the space.

"Chad achieved exactly what we wanted: a desert-style garden that's not overly cluttered." ■



A stacked stone sculpture—strung together with a rod through its center—echoes the verticality of the palm trees and the fountain, while shorter plantings fill in the bottom layers in the courtyard.

*See Sources.*



Breathtaking desert flora has transformed the look of the landscape and better suits the property's Territorial-style home.