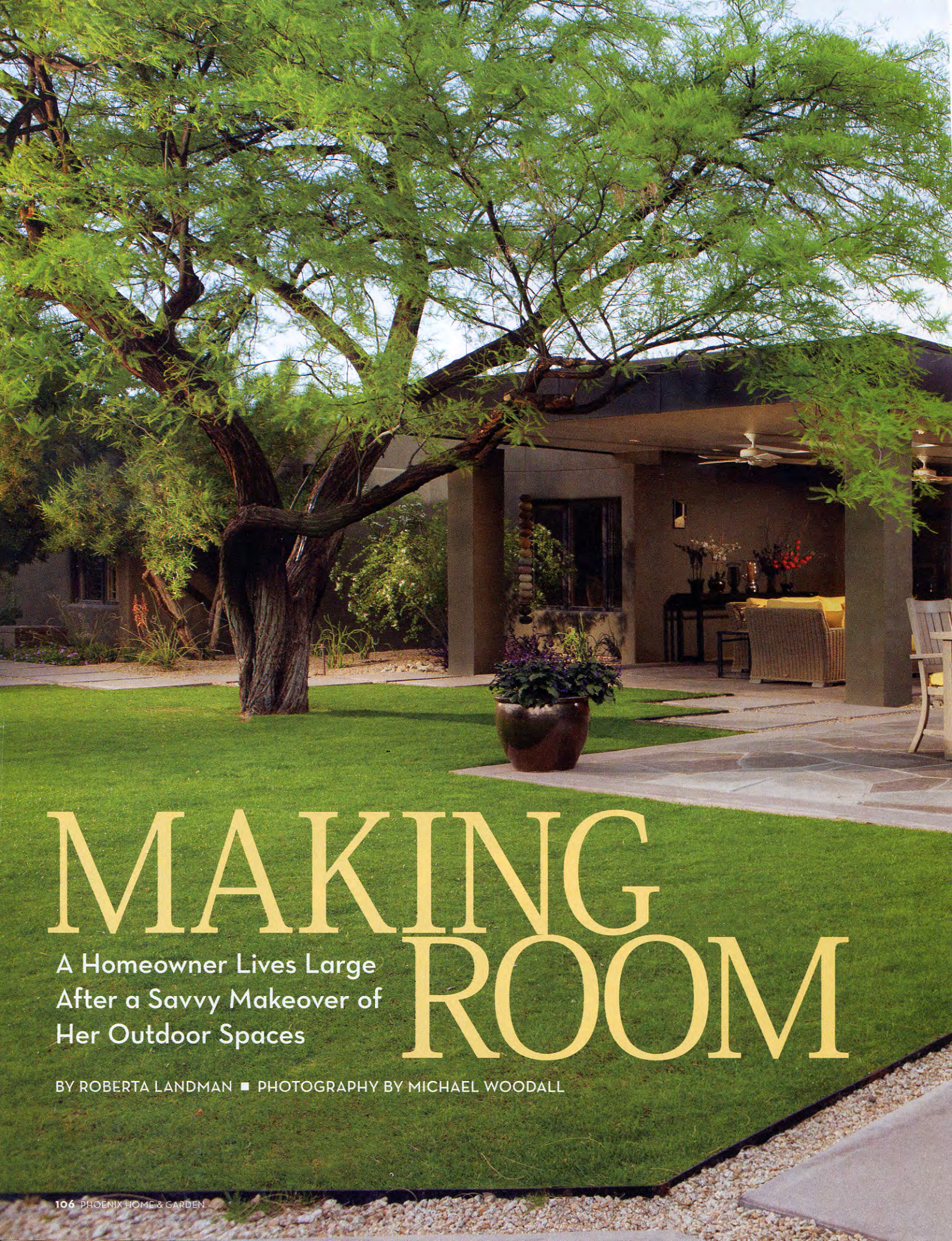




MAKING ROOM

A Homeowner Lives Large
After a Savvy Makeover of
Her Outdoor Spaces

BY ROBERTA LANDMAN ■ PHOTOGRAPHY BY MICHAEL WOODALL



This backyard living area and its adjacent kitchen are the by-products of a renovation by landscape architect Chad Robert. The home's facade, too, underwent changes, turning it from a tired Mexican Territorial with pale walls to a color-rich Modern style that Robert says is "still related to the feeling of the desert Southwest."



SEATING WITH BRIGHT lemon-yellow cushions. A sleek Contemporary-style fireplace. Well-placed art and accessories. Such details lend this home's sheltered patio the look and feel of an indoor room.

It most certainly is a room, and "It definitely extends the living area of the house," remarks the owner of this Paradise Valley, Arizona, residence. Wincing at the memory, she says the much-changed area is a huge improvement over the former "postage-stamp-size" setting, where her guests often had to sit shoulder-to-shoulder.

Landscape architect Chad Robert doubled the size of the former patio during a comprehensive renovation of the backyard living spaces and landscaping. An added boon: An outdoor kitchen also was added. "More people can get involved in the process, which is fun," notes the homeowner.

Robert, a Phoenix Home & Garden Master of the Southwest, positioned the kitchen in a spot behind the outdoor living room's fireplace, to keep "functional" spaces separate from living areas.

The updated amenities and refurbished landscaping on the near-acre property have charmed its owner and visitors alike. "Guests, especially those from the Midwest and Southeast, have described the outside areas—front and back—as an oasis or a sanctuary in the desert," she says. Sculpture from her art collection adds to the visual riches.

Robert and his staff, including project manager Todor Spasov, fulfilled the homeowner's wish to make the backyard landscape more water-thrifty. An existing lawn was reduced in size, and low-water-use plants were installed; several are reminiscent of cacti and other vegetation used in a major renovation of the front courtyard two years earlier.

Color, among many factors, was a consideration in the choice of plants for both landscape revisions. Robert comments: "The Sonoran Desert allows us to have a diverse palette of plants—my 'paints'—to create our gardens with some of the most unusual colors: blues, silvers, purple and chartreuse greens."

Placement of vegetation was another consideration. Night-



Left: The outdoor living room, with its skylights, cushioned wicker seating and art-accented fireplace, has a view of garden beds that have been filled with low-water-use plants. Of landscape architect Chad Robert and project manager Todor Spasov, the homeowner says: “They incorporated their artistic and architectural skills to take a green backyard and make it desert-savvy and interesting.”

Above: A mesquite tree lends shade to the dining patio, which is outfitted with easy-care aluminum furnishings designed to look like wood.

blooming cereus cacti were located off the backyard’s dining patio, for example, “so guests could enjoy the night blossoms,” he points out.

When they are not pitching in with the cooking, guests gathered at the patio’s dining table also can enjoy the company of the homeowner as she “mans” the grill. A divider wall—painted a vibrant red-orange hue—contains a vertical opening, allowing her to converse and be part of the action.

A few steps away, the revamped outdoor living room, with its centerpiece fireplace, is a joy, whether she is having people over or simply relaxing on her own. “It is great. I can enjoy reading the Sunday paper and having coffee out there.” And when temperatures drop, or just for atmosphere, she basks in the warmth of the new fireplace. “It extends the day and adds an intimate air to outdoor entertaining.” ■



Tips From Designer Chad Robert

If possible, locate your outdoor kitchen in a place that is easily accessible to its indoor counterpart, so you can share amenities if space is tight.

Site the kitchen so that the person grilling or tending bar feels connected to guests, yet the kitchen apparatus is not within their view.

When planning the space, allow for installation of any future accessories, such as a rotisserie motor.



Top: A gas grill and an under-lit ventilation hood are the key ingredients of the sheltered outdoor kitchen. "It's a simple setup, given the proximity to the indoor kitchen," explains the homeowner. Counters are poured-in-place concrete, while cupboard doors are metal. An elongated wall opening keeps the chef in touch with guests.

Bottom left: In the front courtyard, solid paving was replaced with a wide curving swath of Arizona Lilac flagstone. Random edges of this paving meld with protruding boulders, whose placement serves to soften the area's boxy, rectangular lines, notes Chad Robert.

Bottom right: A sculpture of "floating rocks" by artist Woods Davy is a centerpiece of the front courtyard.



Plants on the back of the kitchen wall's splashy orange side include whale's tongue agaves, night-blooming cereus, Mexican thread grass and a trailing dalea plant in the foreground.

See Sources.

