



Desert
Oasis



An Expansive Arizona Garden
Is Inspired by the Color and
Architecture of the Property's
Spanish Colonial-Style Home

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Paved with salvaged Mexican street cobbles, this spacious patio is a comfortable outdoor living room. Bougainvillea vines with brilliant pink flowers frame the arches leading to the shady loggia.

Gardens are often reflections of regional history, climate, and style. And the garden on this approximately one-and-a-half-acre lot in Paradise Valley, Arizona is no different. Phoenix-based landscape architect Chad Robert, of Exteriors by Chad Robert, Inc., took his cue from the property's Spanish Colonial house. Evoking the mood and style of old Arizona gardens, he used salvaged street cobbles from Mexico to pave the patios, and incorporated plants such as sour oranges, cacti, and palms in a series of garden spaces and rooms. "The garden is a sequence of surprises," says Robert. "Unexpected things happen as you move through the garden."

A sour orange (*Citrus aurantium*) hedge growing behind the original low garden wall provides complete privacy from the road, allowing the first surprise experience to happen: from the street, the path into the garden begins wide, narrowing as it moves from the public sidewalk to the private home. It makes a sharp turn so the garden is not seen until you actually walk through the entrance. A blue palo verde tree (*Cercidium floridum*), with its mossy green trunk and striking branching pattern, draws the eye toward the entry gap between the two walls, and hints at the wonders to come.

Once inside the outer wall, the Saltillo tile path traverses the driveway in the outer garden, leading straight to an enclosed patio. Instead of creating a solid mass of hot paving for the driveway, Robert placed black street cobbles from



Mexico in uneven parallel lines, a car tire's width apart, and planted grass to fill the rest of the space. The stones provide adequate driving surface for cars without overwhelming the long narrow space with too much hardscape. This early twentieth-century driveway style makes a potentially hot and utilitarian space, cool, verdant, and visually delightful.

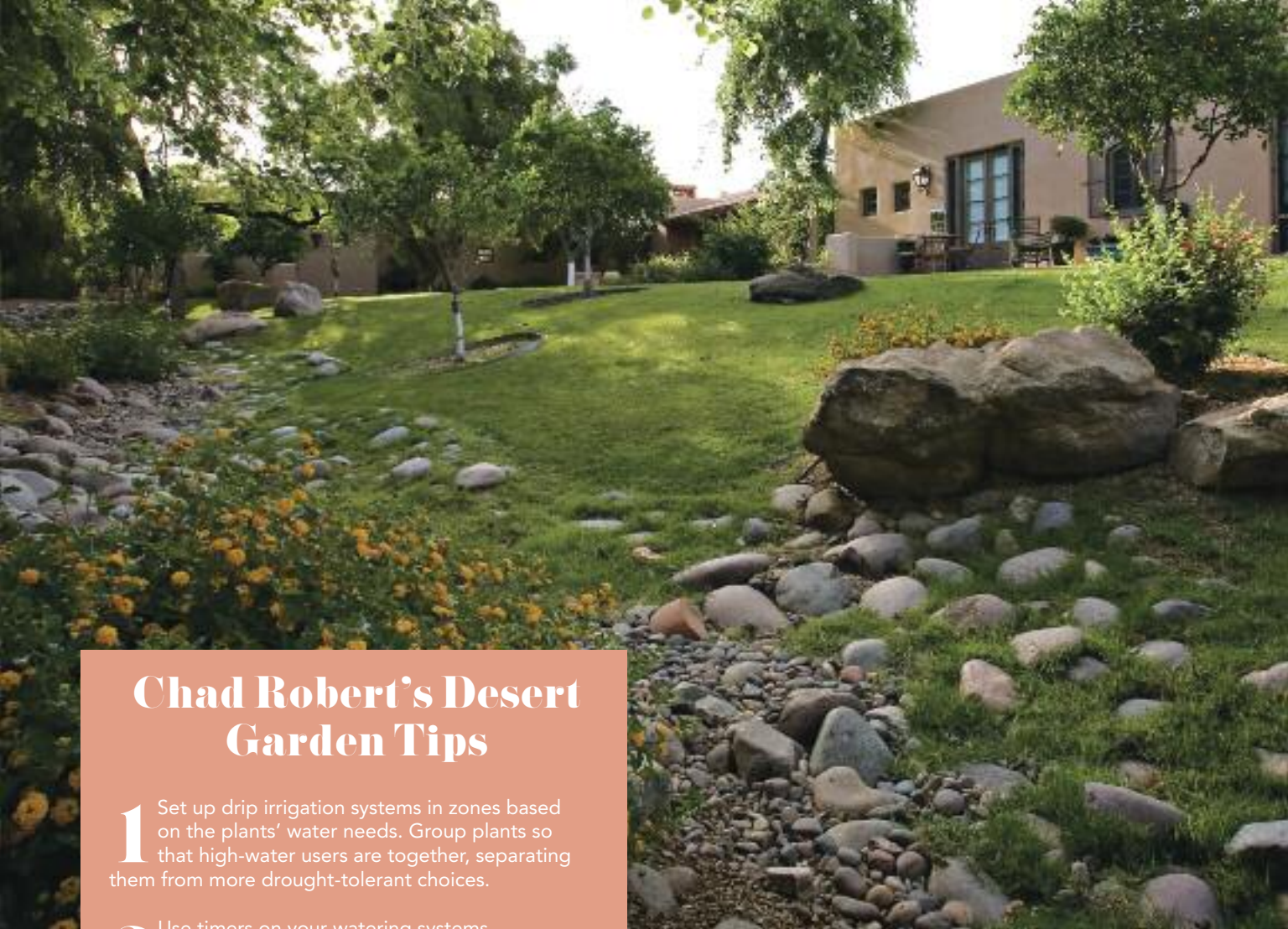
The house footprint includes a kitchen wing that juts into the garden space, creating two distinct garden rooms. On one side, a large, partly covered patio has views to the distinctive Camelback Mountain. Paved with salvaged Mexican street cobbles, it is a comfortable outdoor sitting and dining room. A water feature—a Corinthian capital resting on a fluted column in a tile-lined basin—marks the focal point at the end of the patio. Custom-made of hand-carved Adoquin stone, the architectural element emits a gentle flow of water. At night, uplighting highlights the intricate design and the glistening wet stone.



CLOCKWISE, FROM OPPOSITE FAR LEFT: An organ pipe cactus (*Stenocereus thunbergii*) and Angelita daisy (*Hymenoxys acaulis*) enhance the landscape. The pink blossoms of *Chitalpa tashkentensis* echo the color of the house walls. The hand-carved fountain was inspired by one at the nearby Royal Palms Resort and Spa. Garden blooms include the Texas Olive (*Cordia boissieri*).

THIS PAGE: The hand-carved fountain seen from the patio, visually leads to the striking form of Camelback Mountain beyond the garden wall. OPPOSITE: Citrus trees dot the sloping lawn that dips into the dry stone riverbed.





Chad Robert's Desert Garden Tips

1 Set up drip irrigation systems in zones based on the plants' water needs. Group plants so that high-water users are together, separating them from more drought-tolerant choices.

2 Use timers on your watering systems, and turn them off when it rains.

3 Use in-ground spray watering systems only for lawns. Water all trees, shrubs, and beds with drip irrigation.

4 In sloped areas where the ground does not absorb moisture easily, run the water for frequent, short time periods. For example, instead of running a sprinkler for twenty minutes, run it for four to five minutes, wait five minutes, and run again, cycling four times.

5 Water early in the day, around 4:00 a.m. or 5:00 a.m., before the sun comes up.

6 Minimize the amount of lawn in your design, and choose a drought-tolerant grass such as Bermuda grass, which goes dormant in the winter, turning brown in late fall. For green grass during the winter months, cut the Bermuda grass to no more than one inch tall and overseed it with winter rye. Keep the seeds moist until they sprout and a good root system develops. You'll have a rich green lawn all winter long.

On the opposite side of the kitchen wing, a simple, rectangular swimming pool is painted a dark color to enhance its reflective properties. The smoky gem in the green lawn is a masterpiece of understated elegance, softened by the nearby beautiful *Chitalpa tashkentensis*. Its soft pink, tubular blossoms echo the color of the house.

The periphery of the garden, which wraps itself around the house like a cat curled up to sleep in the warm sun, is wilder than the inner portions. Here you'll find the citrus orchard; a dry stone riverbed to handle the occasional "gully washer" rains; a desert stroll garden filled with an intriguing and diverse assortment of cacti, succulents, and drought-tolerant desert flowers; and a sloped grassy area where the children can run and play.

"The clients had a wish list and an idea book with photographs they had collected of designs and garden features they liked," says Robert. "That was really helpful." Robert and his clients worked together to create a garden that is harmonious with the house and its desert surroundings, and that provides a series of delightful and often surprising garden experiences and outdoor living spaces. ■