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SLICE OF PARADISE

Attention to detail brings rhyme and reason back into the garden

Text by Suzanne Pickett Martinson • Photography by Jeffrey Green

Opposite: Such simple touches as a tiered fruit stand and pretty plantings highlight this Paradise Valley landscape. • This photo: A large fountain, now flanked by palm trees and surrounded by a circular flower bed, was replanted to accent the water feature.



"Mummy Mountain looks like 24-karat gold when the sunlight hits it in the evening," says Barbara Perkins of the view from her garden. "I just love spending time outside."

Barbara and her husband, Jim, purchased their Paradise Valley home nearly 10 years ago. They always had imagined creating a secluded oasis of lush plants and flowers. Although it took them nearly seven years to find the right person to help them realize their vision, the homeowners can now relax and enjoy their slice of paradise.



"It looks so different than when we started," Barbara says of her colorful garden, which was part of *Phoenix Home & Garden's* 2001 Grand Tour of Gardens. "You really can't tell it is the same place at all."

Troy Bankord of T.M. Bankord Inc., a Phoenix-based environmental design and construction firm, began working with the couple about three years ago. Even though several other landscapers had tried their hands on the property, Bankord says that time and attention were needed to establish a solid foundation. "The landscape was having an identity crisis. Things were planted with no rhyme or reason. The sprinklers were above ground, and nothing had been trimmed for years," he recalls.

The first order of business was to develop a plan that would

take into account nearby streets, a golf course, mountain views, and the desires of the owners. "Barbara was in the process of creating an Italian-style home, so it was a natural to use wonderful Mediterranean foliage," says Bankord. "She also wanted a tropical feeling with lots of color."

To create a transition from the surrounding desert vegetation and a verdant golf course for the newly remodeled home, Bankord removed a portion of the cobblestone driveway. In its place he added a semicircular band made of river rock and concrete around an existing palo verde tree. Removing a portion of the driveway allowed the palo verde's roots to grow without causing the cobblestones to heave.

Existing olive trees flanking the driveway were of all heights



and sizes when Bankord first saw them. "We have shaped and reshaped those olives and, finally after two years, have them in sync," he says. "They help ease the progression from the desert to the Old World charm of the gardens."

The sounds of three fountains placed around the entry enhance the Mediterranean ambience. "The fountains really put you in the right mood," notes Barbara. "And they help keep the traffic noise to a minimum. I'd have more if I could."

An abundance of stone and concrete pots in colors borrowed from the home's Old World finish are scattered throughout the entry. Ken Howey of Relics Creative Works designed the finish to resemble that found on 18th-century European homes.

Roman myrtle (*myrtus boetica*), chosen by Bankord for its

evergreen foliage and the unique way it bends and twists, adds character to the expansive area. "It even looks great trained into small trees," he adds. Boulders salvaged from the property and sago palms provide continuity to the overall landscape.

"I believe it is very important to have continuity and a feeling of calmness and peace in a garden, not a conflict of interest," says

Opposite: Olive trees line a section of the driveway, along with masses of clipped myrtle and box-leaf euonymus. "When using plants in a linear fashion you can create the illusion of drama without all the fuss and maintenance," says landscape designer Troy Bankord.

Above: Outdoor art, a Tuscan-inspired fireplace, and a large ramada are just a few of the eye-catching elements in the garden.



Bankord. "There are ways to include a variety of different plants, but this needs to be done with careful planning."

In the back yard, where orange and grapefruit trees already stood, tangerine, lemon, mandarin orange and dwarf kumquat trees were added. Flower beds cleared of a hodgepodge of plants were filled with the annual color Barbara so enjoys. The addition of the couple's collection of iron sculptures, gates and art is an elegant touch in the garden setting.

Oleanders, which run the length of the back yard, visually separate the property from the golf course. Initially infested with gall

(an infection that starts at the flower and moves from limb to limb), the shrubs had to be cut down to the ground to make sure they came back healthy.

Likewise, existing bougainvilleas were cut back, with only a few leaders left to promote strong growth. "Exposing the gnarly trunks of the bougainvillea is another benefit of cutting back. The key is to get the leaders up to the sunlight," Bankord advises. "So clipping back will actually make the plant double in growth, if it gets some sun."

One of Barbara's—and Bankord's—favorite spots in the yard



is the rose garden. Featuring mini-roses and hybrid teas, the space is contained by a small hedge of rosemary and features an obelisk in the center. “The rose garden is so unexpected, meditative,” Bankord says. “It is a very intimate room, yet it has a powerful effect.”

“You know, I really, really enjoy this,” Barbara says of her outdoor space. “I wanted a different feel—eclectic, not all desert—but a little bit of what I love from different parts of the world. And when I’m traveling, I am always excited to come back to my garden.” 🌻

See Resource Guide.

Opposite, clockwise from top, left: Hybrid tea and miniature roses flourish in the garden. • A set of gates designed by the homeowner and finished by Relics Creative Works opens to the lushly planted back yard. • A long covered patio adjacent to the pool offers plenty of cover in summer. • The circular fireplace with multiple openings resembles a tiered fountain. • **Above:** To ensure that plants receive adequate water, Bankord reinstalled the existing drip-irrigation system to add more zones. He also incorporated low-wattage lighting, so the homeowners can spend as much time outside as possible.