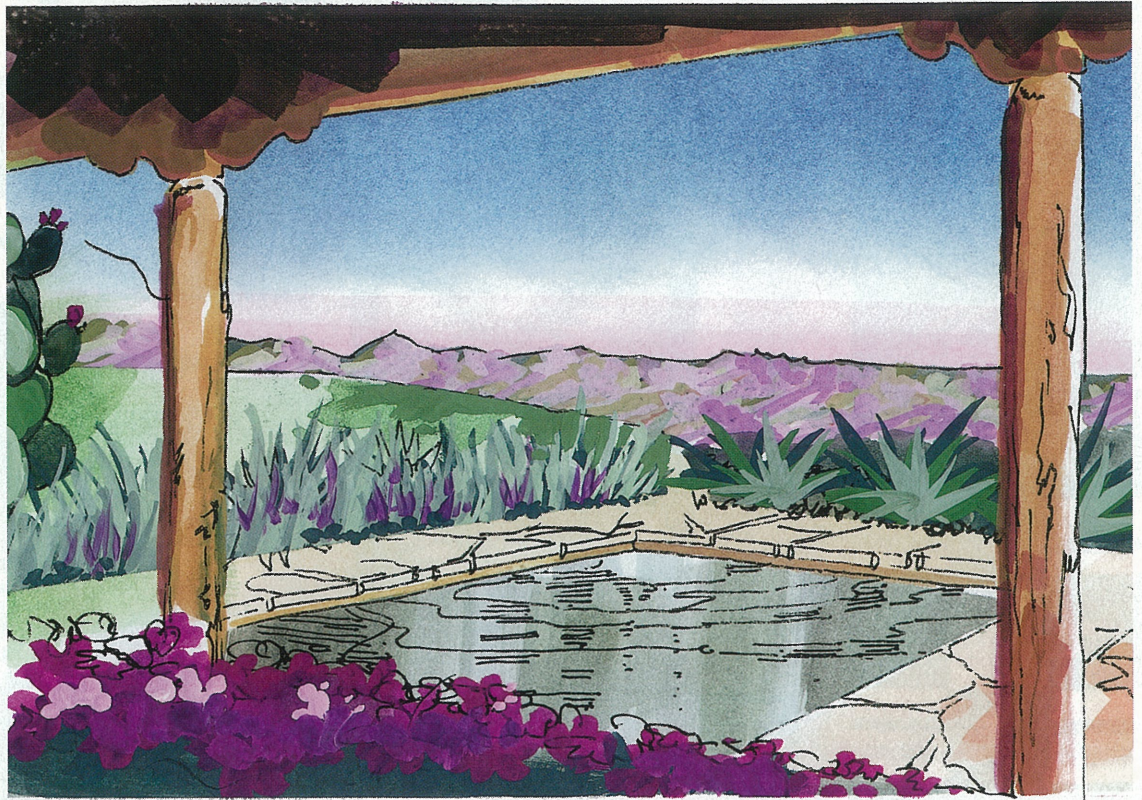


? outdoor escape

We just moved into a home with minimal landscaping. Can you offer some suggestions for creating a private retreat outside our master bedroom?



Text by Troy Bankord • Illustration by Clint Miller

Bedrooms and bathrooms have become sanctuaries from our busy lives. Homeowners are incorporating wet bars, fireplaces, refrigerators, whirlpool tubs, flat-screen televisions and other niceties to create luxurious retreats in the private areas of the home.

The same can be true when designing outdoor spaces. There are many ways to create a calming, private outdoor retreat. The most important thing to remember is to keep it simple. Use no more than two or three varieties of plants, and allow room for open space such as expanses of grass or finely raked gravel, where the eye can rest. Walls painted in olive green, putty or light tan provide a serene feel, as does a backdrop of bamboo. Following are more ideas for creating an outdoor sanctuary.

- Since this space is private, it is ideal for a hot tub. If the spa you choose is above-ground, soften its hard edges by planting ornamental grasses nearby. Some varieties to try are purple fountain grass, *Muhlenbergia rigens* and *M. capillaris*.

- An outdoor shower is another fun option for a secluded area. Often, at least one wall is avail-

able for supporting a showerhead. If this is the case, try including a few openings in the wall so plants can poke into the bathing area, for a more organic experience.

- A specimen tree creates visual interest and shade. Consider ironwood, mesquite, palo brea, Japanese black pine, or one of the many interesting varieties of eucalyptus. Eucalyptus trees have a refreshing scent, and some varieties have colorful seed capsules. One variety to consider is *Eucalyptus spathulata*, a smaller type with narrow leaves and a reddish-brown trunk.

- Masses of agaves or aloes lend a sculptural, meditative feel to a space. For sensory stimulation, try mass plantings of jasmine, sage, rosemary, gardenia or scented geranium.

Subtle berms and perhaps an interesting boulder set on end as sculpture are other nice touches to consider. Remember, to keep the space at its relaxing best, avoid anything too eye-catching or busy. 🌿

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