

MATCHING FOOD AND WINE • STYLISH CHINA • FRENCH GARDEN

# PHOENIX HOME & GARDEN

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**WATERFRONT  
LIVING IN  
THE VALLEY**

**POOLS, PATIOS,  
OUTDOOR ROOMS,  
& LAKESIDE LIFE**

**DESERT  
TROPICALS**



**This photo:** Pink trailing trumpet vine forms an arbor over the entrance gate to the courtyard.

**Opposite:** To accentuate the Old World feel, owner Dorothy Kilburg hired local artists to paint a mural depicting the Austrian Alps on her courtyard wall.

# Picture





*Impressions of a  
French garden*

# Perfect

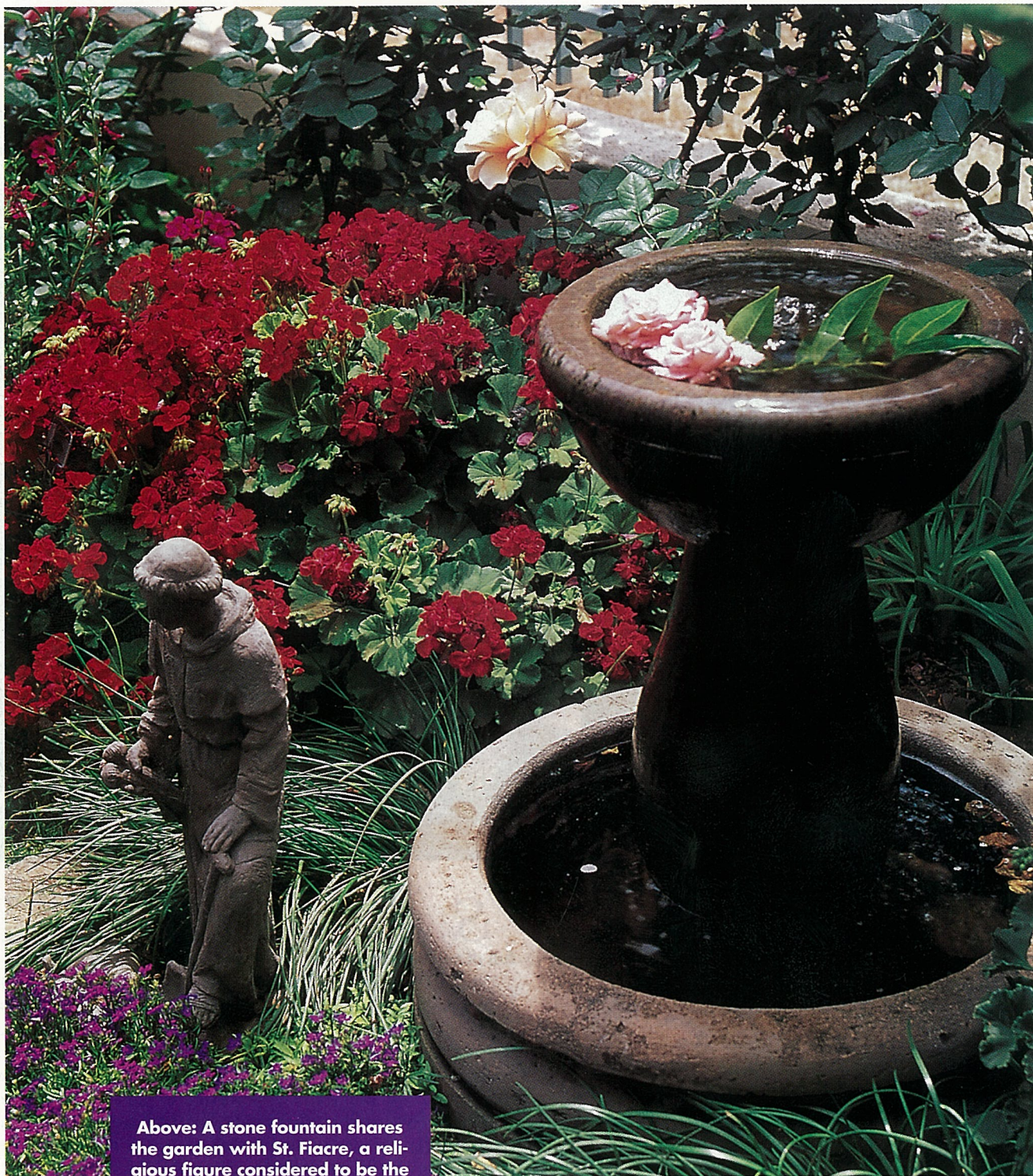
**TEXT BY NANCY ERDMANN  
PHOTOGRAPHY BY CHARLES MANN**

*S*omeone once said that the best way to create a garden full of soul is slowly.

When Dorothy Kilburg built her house in Gainey Ranch three years ago, she dreamed of a French garden. It was to have lots of roses and plenty of bulbs, perennials, annuals, and herbs. She needed a grassy area for her dog and a place for her religious stone figures and an old iron settee she had saved from childhood. She wanted plants that would attract birds so that her 91-year-old mother could see them from inside. The front courtyard was to sport wicker. It was to be a warm, peaceful, romantic atmosphere.

Her house, however, despite a hint of Italian and French architecture, is full of contemporary lines. And her tiny backyard overlooks Gainey Ranch Golf Course where there always seems to be someone zooming along in an electric golf cart. It's not exactly the kind of place where one imagines a European garden might be.

So she brought in landscape designer Troy Bankord of Bankord Landscape Management, with whom she had worked before, to do the design and installation. "The first thing I noticed about her property was this stark entrance gate," says Bankord, "and I knew the look needed to be softened. So I set about to design an arbor." By anchoring chicken wire over the top of the gate, a structure was formed. Pink trumpet vine was



**Above:** A stone fountain shares the garden with St. Fiacre, a religious figure considered to be the protector of animals.

**Opposite above:** A set of wrought-iron furniture, purchased by the owner as a young girl, offers the perfect spot for afternoon tea, while climbing roses provide a sense of privacy from Gainey Ranch Golf Course.

**Opposite below:** Lobelia and geraniums make a stunning combination in a weathered urn.

planted at the base of the gate and wrapped up and over the wire net, creating a lush thicket of greenery. “It’s really quite enchanting,” Kilburg says.

Once inside, a courtyard—formed by the main house, the guest house, and a property wall—offered plenty of possibilities, despite its bare concrete walls and patio. For starters, old brown bricks salvaged from a razed building in Tucson were brought in and used to form borders for the planting areas and to create a half-moon design at the entranceway. Then brown-pigmented concrete was poured on the courtyard floor. “Dorothy was concerned about it cracking or



staining,” says Bankord. “But that’s exactly what I was looking for. I wanted a weathered look.”

To accentuate the design, he suggested using a mixture of pots (some chipped or marred for character) wherever possible, filling them with cascading lobelia, salvia, geraniums, and swordtail fern. Dwarf pomegranates trimmed into topiaries, twisted myrtle, mint, and rosemary added a formal touch. Throughout the back patio and front courtyard, additional bricks were set into the concrete haphazardly, and lobelia, alyssum, and nasturtium were randomly placed to appear as though they had grown through the cracks.

Bankord encourages the use of permanent plantings in pots so that there will always be something green growing. He then supplements them with colorful annuals and perennials to make the pots look lush and substantial year ’round. “And I plant lobelia wherever possible because of its incredible shade of purple,” he says.

Kilburg’s desire to turn a plain courtyard wall into a canvas for a European mural became a reality when she hired local artists, Bernie and Chantal Benton. “I wanted to look out into the distance and see the mountains of Europe,” she says. “My mother’s from Austria, and I thought it would help her feel a bit more at home.” The pastel painting offers a partially open gate at the bottom of a path that leads up a hill to a castle located at the base of majestic snow-capped mountains. “The mural really captures that Old World feel,” Bankord says.

A board member of the Scottsdale Rose Society, Kilburg loves cut flowers. So her backyard garden, although no big-



ger than twenty-by-seventy feet, is full of climbing roses—forty-five bushes to be exact—many of exhibition quality. And nobody touches them except the keeper of the house.

“I have one rule and it’s that *I* take care of the roses,” says Kilburg, who often enters hers into competition. “I’m always putting in new rose bushes or moving ones out if they’re not performing well.” Due to a bad back, however, she allows Bankord to help with seasonal pruning, which she oversees.

“A lot of people don’t think roses will do well in the intense Valley heat, but Dorothy’s get full sun against a west-facing wall, and they do beautifully,” says Bankord. “We water with a drip system equipped with spray heads instead of drip emitters. The theory behind this is,

if we mist the plants from above and cool the whole atmosphere, everything will do well.”

The landscape designer admits that the biggest obstacle of the project was, and still is, the soil. “It’s a very heavy clay soil with a lot of rock in it. I had to rework the ground with loads of mulch, potting soil, compost, fish meal, sand, and a little steer manure before we could start the garden,” Bankord says.

Although it appears to be finished, Kilburg always seems to have a new project in the works. A raised herb garden was recently installed in the backyard and a container herb garden is taking shape in her courtyard. Now she’s toying with the idea of taking out the grass in the back and replacing it with more roses and a gravel path.

Is a gardener’s work ever really done? ■