

PHOENIX HOME & GARDEN

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Ranch Revival

32 INSPIRING
BEFORE & AFTER
PHOTOS

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A photograph of a backyard patio. In the foreground, a wooden post holds a square lantern with a lit candle. To the right, a large patio umbrella shades a table with wicker chairs. The table is set with a bottle of wine, glasses, and a plate of grapes. In the background, there are lush green trees and a stone wall. The overall scene is bright and sunny.

RISING TO THE OCCASION

*A Phoenix Couple Test Their
Landscaping Skills and Discover They
Have a Knack For Gardening*

BY JILL SCHILDHOUSE PHOTOGRAPHY BY ART HOLEMAN



A walled-in yard comes to life with distinctive garden spaces, a flourishing vegetable bed, vibrant outdoor fabrics, and plant pairings that combine unusual shapes, colors and textures.



Sweeps of plantings in differing textures of green soften the front of the home and mimic the arch over the entry. Landscape designer Troy Bankord chose the white-blooming iceberg floribunda roses because they are exceptionally long-blooming, flowering almost year-round. They're also resistant to most pests and diseases and tolerant of salty and nutritionless soils.



ALL TOO OFTEN, WHEN YOU WIN A BID ON

a silent auction, you go home with a fancy bottle of wine that you end up regifting or perhaps a glitzy little trinket you soon lose. But David and Karen McConachie's top bid at a Habitat for Humanity charity event won them a free consultation with landscape and interior designer Troy Bankord—and this introduction to the man who would transform their front and back yards was a gift they cherish more and more as each day passes.

The couple, who had previously added a ramada and barbecue to the backyard, as well as remodeled the pool with a water feature, felt something was still missing.

“When I visited for my initial consultation, I saw the bones of the property,” says Bankord, a *Phoenix Home & Garden Masters* of the Southwest award winner. “I like to explore the inside of the home to understand the owners’ lifestyle and personalities because I think the inside and outside should connect. I wanted to design a garden that was befitting of them, and the original plain-Jane front and unbalanced backyard just weren’t it.”



Karen and David McConachie head out for a drive through their picturesque Phoenix neighborhood.

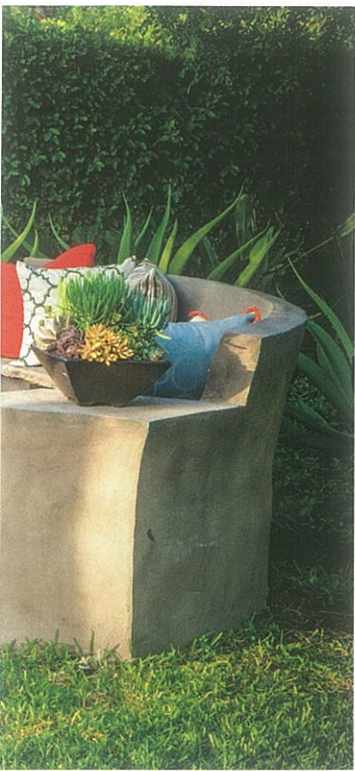
Once Bankord drew up the design proposal and plans, the McConachies got to work, literally. The retired couple did most of the heavy lifting themselves, from digging the holes for plantings to installing the majority of the sprinkler system to moving all the river rock. And, no, they weren't experienced gardeners.

"We did this project over a three-year period," Karen says. "But we didn't always know what we were doing. Troy was a very good supervisor. He would come back and check on us to see how the various stages were coming along. He would oftentimes show us how to better prune, for instance, rosemary and how to treat the white roses. It was a total learning experience."

The trio first tackled the backyard, which originally had a pool and stonework on one side and grass and a big elm on the other. To adjust the scale and balance, Bankord designed several distinct areas to create a more functional living space.

In the pool and spa area, David's favorite spot, they kept the existing purple leaf plum tree and Texas sage and embellished with Tuscan blue rosemary, deer grass, Little Ollie olive trees, Berkeley



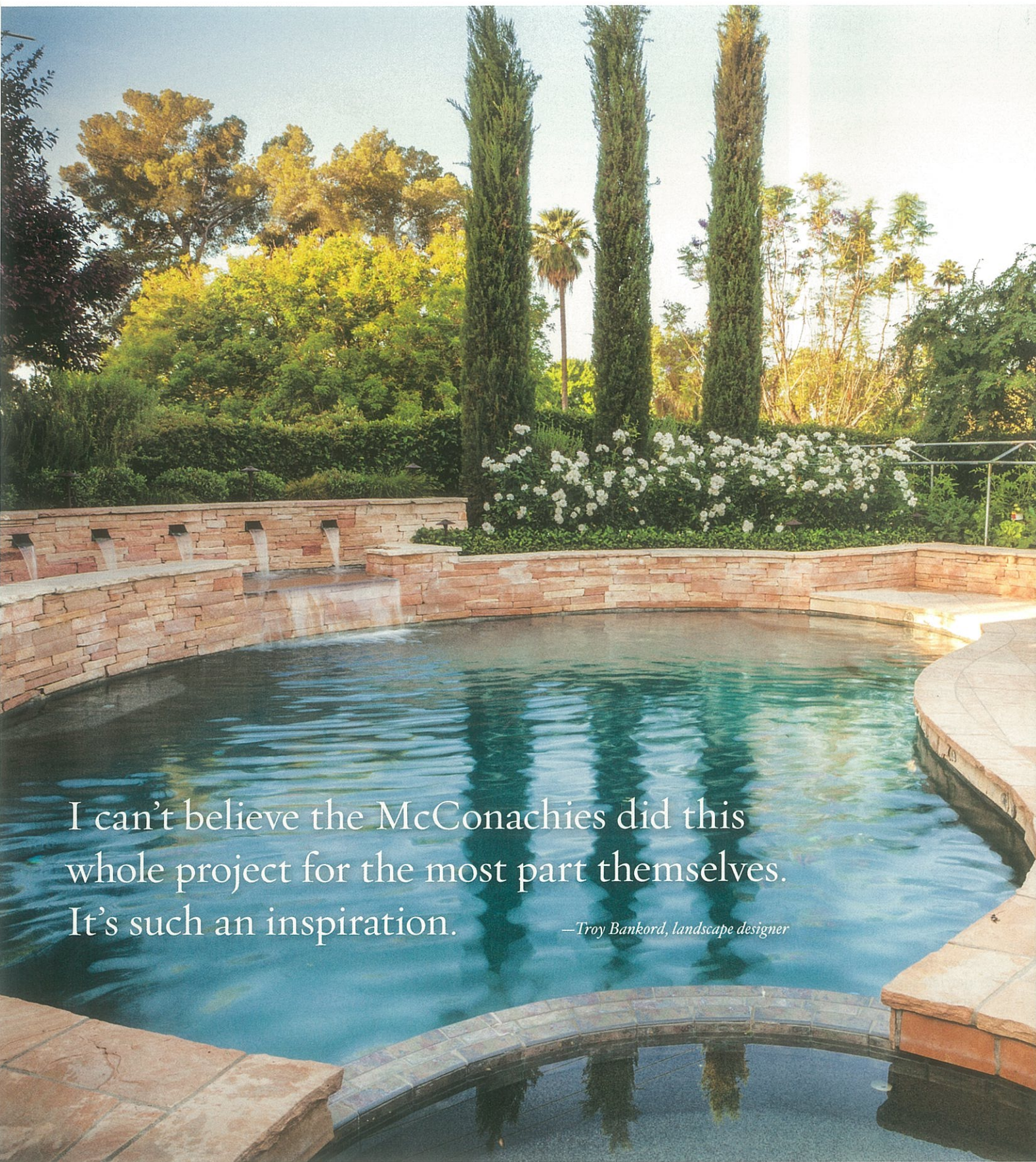


RIGHT: For the back wall of the home, Bankord designed a large-scale sculpture in a brown that matches steel edging in the lawn and draws attention to the soft planting palette below.

ABOVE: A J-shaped steel fire feature that Bankord designed using concrete block and flagstone suits the modern feel of the newly added curved sitting area. A hedge of creeping fig vine grows behind it.

LEFT: The framework over the raised organic garden supports shade screens in summer and protects plants from birds and vermin. At the base of the bed is Berkeley sedge grass.





I can't believe the McConachies did this whole project for the most part themselves. It's such an inspiration.

—Troy Bankord, landscape designer



To make the backyard more attractive, the pool was refinished, and a flagstone deck and tiered water feature were added. When Bankord came on board, he enhanced the setting with plantings of Italian cypress, iceberg roses, Asian jasmine and a purple leaf plum tree.



sedge, Asiatic jasmine and white iceberg roses. An adjacent raised garden, which serves as the eye-catching midpoint in the backyard, is where the McConachies try their hand at growing herbs, tomatoes, watermelon, lettuce and beets.

On the right, a steppingstone pathway over St. Augustine turf leads to a J-shaped steel gas fire feature that Bankord designed. It is filled with broken glass and encased by a conversation-friendly seat wall. From this cozy arrangement, the main focal point is a large-scale steel sculpture affixed to the chimney that Bankord says helps visually balance the weight of the stone in the pool area.

A covered patio finishes the space, providing a seating and entertainment area complete with a TV and gas barbecue. Karen says this is her favorite place to sit and watch a summer thunderstorm.

ABOVE: This dynamic duo of pots includes a variety of aloes, elephant food, geraniums, lady slipper, petunias and trailing banana plant. Located near the south-facing ramada, the plants receive just the right amount of filtered light to avoid being scorched by the desert sun.



ON THE WEB
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A close second is the fire pit area in fall and winter, enjoyed with a glass of wine. Colors from inside their house were pulled outward onto the seatwall pillows, outdoor dining table accessories, pots and flowering plants.

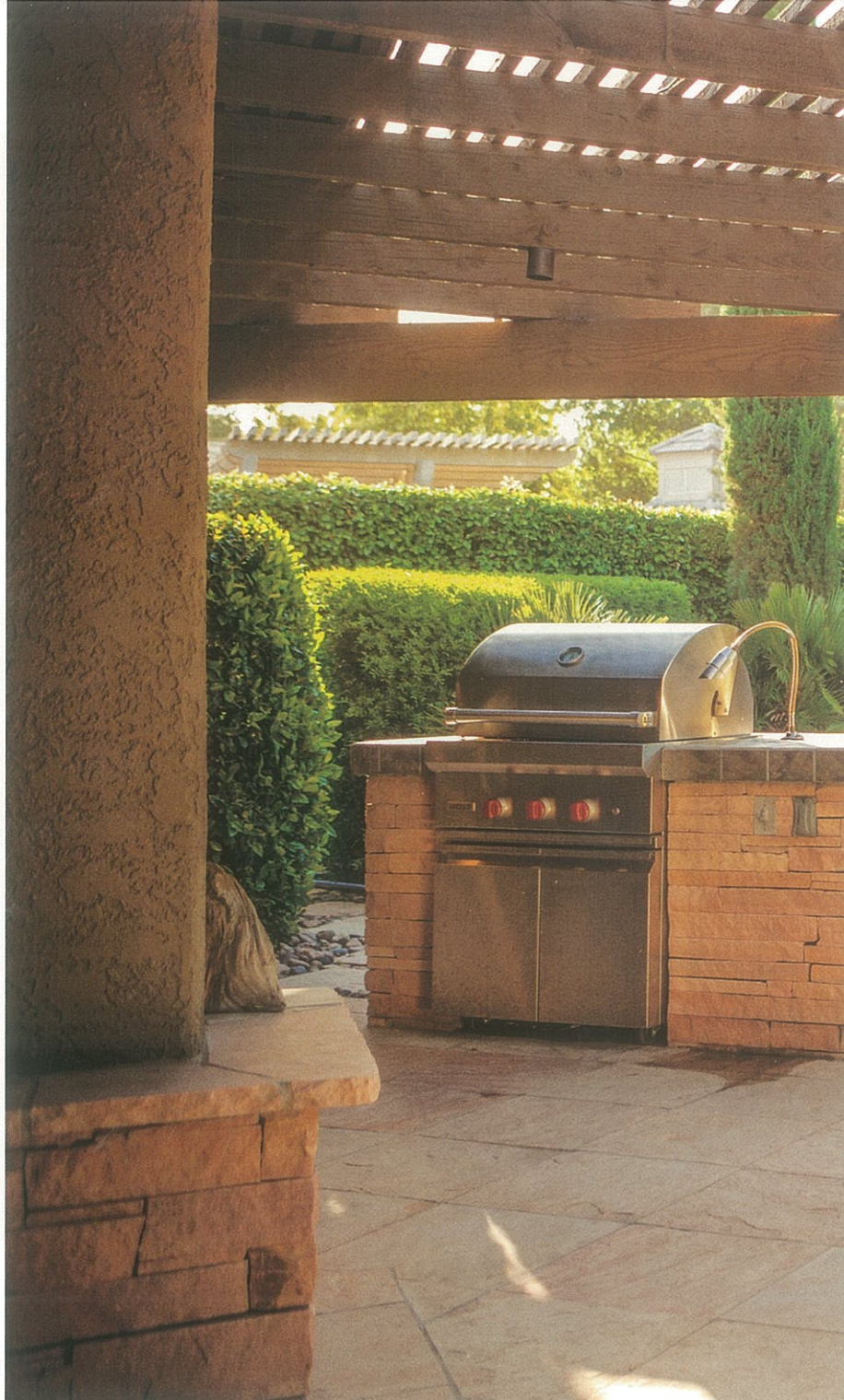
Bankord goes on to describe the original look and feel of the front yard as nondimensional, mainly due to the wall-to-wall grass and the fact that the existing plant material was pushed up against the house, creating a flat, lackluster look having no dimension or interest. So, he used the stone archway over the front door as his inspiration for the curved lawn and metal edging and the sweeping effect of massed plantings.

He chose steel edging because it is a clean and minimal way to separate the lawn and planting beds. He also kept some of the original vegetation—sago palms, bird of paradise and star jasmine—while adding in iceberg roses, mastic and Wilson olives trees, rosemary, pistachio hedges and Asiatic jasmine to enhance the curbside appeal. The McConachies say they couldn't be happier with the end result, which much to their delight is green and inviting.

"Now, it has a very Napa meets Southwest meets Mediterranean feel. It's lush, organic and compatible with the desert," says Bankord. "I can't believe the McConachies did this whole project for the most part themselves. It's such an inspiration. I told them, 'Look across the street. Those people have hired landscapers, and look at what you've created with your own two hands.'" ■

Prior to updating the landscape, the homeowners added a ramada with a stacked-stone barbecue island. Bankord filled in the area with attractive potted plants and installed a palo blanco tree (*Acacia willardiana*) that helps soften the space with its graceful arching branches.

See Sources.



BEFORE & AFTER GALLERY



