

## [Glamour from an unlikely source -- cement blocks](#)

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By Sharon Cohoon, [Sunset](#) senior garden writer

Southwest landscape designers seem to have a special flair for turning ordinary industrial materials into sophisticated garden elements. Christy Ten Eyck's gabions, Margaret Joplin's industrial rebar, Steve Martino's corrugated metal, to name a few. And now it seems [Troy Bankord](#) is on his way to becoming the King of Cement Block.

Bankord used 2OPE (double open-ended) cement blocks, more commonly used in commercial construction, to build the short wall separating his driveway from the front yard at his own home. [Read about the remodel here](#). And see a [close-up](#) of that wall here.



In the Tempe, Arizona garden shown below [Bankord](#) used an even more common type of cement block to create a privacy screen. The trick in both cases, was tipping the blocks sideways so that their open spaces become integral to the design.



All those empty spaces provide an opportunity to play with light, says [Bankord](#). Here, with trees behind them blocking the sun, during the daytime the openings are dark voids and light bounces off the remainder.

At night, though, because of uplights behind the wall, you get just the opposite effect. The squares are bright and the rest of the wall goes dark. Either way you get a dramatic pattern.

Better air circulation is another advantage over a solid wall. "Just more energy overall," he says. "There's a flow." It's economical material, too, always an asset.



a closer look