Exploring Local Flower Farms
A Landscape for All Seasons

PHOENIX HOM E & GARDEN

Fresh
Bright Interiors
Colorful Gardens
Peaceful Places
The Right Fit

Once dated and underutilized, an oversized lot with unobstructed mountain views is transformed into a family-friendly paradise.

The cozy front porch, which offers unobstructed views of Camelback Mountain, conforms to the neighborhood's bright and inviting yard style and includes covered outdoor seating, where the homeowners can relax and read a book on a sunny afternoon, as well as a fire pit for gathering on cool spring evenings.

BY SHANNON SEVERSON   PHOTOGRAPHY BY IAN DENKER AND ERIC KRUK
FINDING THAT JUST-RIGHT “forever home” takes time and patience. For many buyers, one of the most important features is the location. Houses and landscapes can be remodeled, but the setting and views are permanent. After two years of searching for perfection in Phoenix’s Arcadia neighborhood, Carri Baca was ready to give up when her husband, John, asked her to view “just one more” property.

Upon arrival, the couple weren’t that excited about the single-story ranch-style abode set below street level. The interiors featured low ceilings and a choppy layout, while the grounds were eaten up by a massive hardscape driveway. However, the house was situated on an oversized wedge-shaped lot on a double cul-de-sac with mature trees and a never-to-be-obstructed view of Camelback Mountain. “We stood in the driveway, and we knew,” John recalls. “We put in an offer the next day.”

The Bacas immediately began planning renovations that would result in a home rich with detail and character. Their top priorities included opening the house to take advantage of the mountain views; creating flexible, free-flowing indoor spaces in which to entertain family and friends; and developing multiple zones for outdoor living, gardening, and play, while also retaining the existing mature trees. “We wanted something classic that wouldn’t go out of style,” says Carri. “It should be luxurious with rustic wood, glass and metal elements, but it also needed to blend with the neighborhood and not stand out as brand new.” Carri also wanted to

ABOVE LEFT: Entry gates open to a wide terraced walkway that was built around an existing Aleppo pine tree. Reclaimed Chicago brick, gables braced with wood corbels, and varied rooflines add texture and cottage character to the home’s facade. ABOVE: Vaulted ceilings punctuated with rustic scissor trusses frame a French country fireplace, which showcases a botanical painting by Phoenix Home & Garden Masters of the Southwest award-winning artist Dyanna Hesson.
relocate the kitchen to the front of the house, creating a greater con­
nection to the friendly, walkable neighborhood and allowing the couple to
easily host gatherings or visit with neighbors in the front yard.

With guidance from Phoenix Home & Garden Masters of the Southwest
award-winning architect Michael Higgins, a decision was made to tear
down the existing dwelling and start fresh. And because John and Carri
weren't set on any particular architectural style, Higgins' designs were
driven less by appearance and more by how the couple and their two
young children live.

"Rather than start from the style, we started with the materials, includ­
ing Chicago brick, a composite shake roof and raw wood," the architect
explains. "We used scissor trusses inside to add height to the spaces. It's
inexpensive volume and gives the house more street appeal." Adds
builder Ryan Patten, "We were able to achieve something that was unique.
It's not an off-the-shelf look. It was a five-step process to get the beams
just the right color so they didn't look brand new."

The end result is a 5,200.square foot, four-bedroom, five-bath English
Country home with an established feel. It's cozy, not cavernous, and is
built to withstand many years of use by active children, pets and guests.

The interiors offer a decidedly European feel, with wide-plank French
oak flooring, a central fireplace and an all-white kitchen with a dish pantry.
The dining room, framed by arched entries and cloaked in Chicago brick,
“When we’re in the backyard, it feels as though we’re at a resort.”
—JOHN BACA, homeowner
Both the monster bedroom and both are fresh and serene thanks to the use of neutral hues, worm wood accents and sumptuous textiles. "The pecky cypress ceiling is something unique that I haven't seen done anywhere before," says builder Ryon Patten. "The entire master suite is really a jewel box."

"I had never done a brick dining room before, but I love the idea of bringing the outside in when you have the opportunity," says interior designer Krissie Young. "I adore old homes, so I enjoy creating spaces that feel like they've been there for a long time. Carri wanted texture in the room, and the brick brings warmth while the arches give architectural value. The dining room feels like an enclosed porch and having it entirely in brick just finished it, in my mind."

Charming details abound, including Dutch doors and custom reproductions of antique doors, leaded-glass windows, cubbies for the children's treasures and window boxes full of bright blooms. "Nothing was left out," says Young. "Carri thought about every single little corner. The focus was on her and John's children and creating a place they'd never have to leave. She had a list of the types of features she wanted, including a porch swing and a place to sit by the pool, while John was interested in having a space to watch a game or eat outside."

Landscape architect and Masters of the Southwest award winner Russell Graye maximized the property's outdoor living potential. A wooden entry gate opens to a circular stepped terrace that descends from the street to the grand front entrance. Rising up from the center of the terrace is a towering Aleppo pine. "The house is an Arcadia ranch style opens to an outdoor kitchen and entertaining area."

"Verdant korupia (Lippia nodiflora) grows between stepping stones set just outside the laundry room. Planters burst with potato vine, ice plants, hibiscus and annuals. TOP RIGHT Reproduction antique French doors lead to the master bedroom. BOTTOM RIGHT Inside and out, no detail was overlooked. Pale green garden shutters and a window box brimming with cheerful blooms bring attention to a custom leaded glass window."
A formerly unused side yard was transformed into a family paradise with a lush lawn, playhouse and covered poolside ramada where guests can lounge in front of a fireplace or watch TV. A small citrus garden includes Meyer lemon, orange and lime trees.

The homeowners' daughter wanted a "playhouse in the trees" and that's exactly what architect Michael Higgins created. The delightful space features a cushioned loft, reading corner and a fold-up table. The room is air-conditioned for year-round use.

Higgins designed the sweet escape for the Bacas' daughter. Inside, it offers enough room to relax with friends, do homework at the flip-up desktop or even enjoy a nap in the loft bed. "The treehouse turned out better than I ever expected," remarks Higgins, who gave the family a rendering of it as a housewarming gift. "The Dutch doors and heart-shaped windows were part of my sketch. I draw these all the time and people rarely build them, so to see it done so well is a real treat."

The Bacas took a run-of-the-mill ranch and created a place where every detail—from a spacious kitchen that invites family to gather for Saturday morning pancakes to a lush garden bursting with juicy tomatoes and fragrant roses—was carefully considered.

The process of starting from scratch can be hard and stressful," says Carri, "but I felt as though every member of our design team really wanted us to have the home of our dreams—and now we do."