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Prime Time

An Arizona Biltmore-inspired

TEXT BY SUE BREIDING ■ LANDSCAPE PHOTOGRAPHY BY RICHARD MAACK

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Landscape architect Greg Trutza fashioned a front garden to complement the linear design of this home by incorporating compatible plants such as foxtail fern, palo brea, Texas ebony and wandering jew throughout the area. The meditative feel is further emphasized by a water sculpture featuring a trio of granite pillars.

home and its Zenlike garden offer year-round beauty



Above: Red scarlet bush and purple globe amaranth bring color to the garden in summer.

Below: Low walls define an intimate seating area around a raised fire pit filled with amethyst-color broken glass.

Opposite: In the foyer, a geometric-patterned rug is a fitting counterpoint to the Frank Lloyd Wright-inspired leaded-glass door and window. A shiny silver-leaved ceiling contrasts with the matte suede-finish walls.

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HEN YOU FIRST SEE Eddie and Debbie Smith's home, you sense something familiar. To the left, you see the Arizona Biltmore Resort & Spa just 200 yards away. Then, it clicks. "We call it the little sister of the Biltmore," says the home's architect, Mike Higgins. The clean lines, exposed masonry columns, copper roof, and Art Deco touches invoke the spirit of the world-famous resort.

Architect Frank Lloyd Wright lent his expertise to the design of the Biltmore, so when the Smiths hired landscape architect Greg Trutza, his focus was clear: Reflect the Contemporary Wright-inspired architecture in the design of the outdoor spaces. "The bold, clean lines of the home resonate in the planting palette and hardscape," Trutza explains. "Through mass plantings, the overall composition is calming, as the eye is not distracted by divergent shapes."

Trutza considered Zenlike spa retreats around the globe as he planned. "People need a real respite from the world," he says. "The architecture here is, in a sense, minimal. To me, that invokes the Zen sensibility. There are not a lot of unusual shrubs all juxtaposed one after another."

The lot around the home allowed for certain themed areas. In one garden, where palo blanco trees supply shade, glazed ceramic Vietnamese stools provide a spot for contemplation. The front garden offers furnishings for meditative reflection. Here, three granite towers rise from a shallow, pebble-filled fountain. A massing of Texas ebony trees surrounds a honed-granite fire pit filled with amethyst-color broken glass. In yet







This page: An earthy palette prevails in the living room. Walls combine smooth Venetian plaster with textural bands of tinted masonry block. **Opposite:** Light from a bank of windows streams across honey-color oak plank flooring connecting the dining room with the main living area.





Above: Located upstairs, the master suite has a penthouse feel. French doors open to a furnished terrace. The dark-brown leather sleigh bed stands out against pale bedding and ice-blue walls.

Below: Globe amaranth brightens garden beds.

Opposite: Bench seating provides a picniclike ambience in the breakfast room, which looks out onto the garden and an outdoor room.

another spot, the sun peeks through branches of a lone palo verde tree, and Mexican beach pebbles replicate a stream bed. "I love gardens that call you to take a deep breath, to relax and enjoy the space," says Trutza. "Each pocket garden draws you in, and you feel like you're in a special part of the garden without seeing the rest of the it."

The variety of plants provides beauty in every season and demonstrates the possibilities of what can thrive with little water. The Smiths' landscape is one of six featured on *Phoenix Home & Garden's* Grand Tour of Gardens on April 9.

Thanks to Higgins' pavilionlike architectural design, the landscaping also can be enjoyed from inside the home. He explains: "It's basically a glass house, so one of the successes is how the house is married to the exterior, and how open it is when you are inside. A vertical grid of 16-inch masonry columns aligns and organizes the home. It was very difficult to put together in that regard because everything had to line up." Exposed masonry block columns are found inside and outside the home. They match the color and texture of the block that gives the Biltmore resort its signature look.

Sharply detailed angles on the roof and metal trellis extensions placed horizontally over windows were Higgins' playful way to announce that this is an Arizona home. "They are a metaphoric reference to cactus needles," he comments.

Built in 1929, the home's "big sister" has been a popular resort for celebrities and American presidents throughout its colorful history. "It's nice to have a resemblance," says Eddie Smith. "When we were looking for







Architect Mike Higgins used angular rooflines to emphasize his pavilionlike design. The rectangular swimming pool becomes a dramatic reflecting pool by night. Flowering Hong Kong orchid trees on either side of the pool and a weeping acacia tree behind the barbecue add spring color. A row of pink-flowering zinnias can be seen in the foreground.





Above and top: Drought-tolerant agaves border a stone patio accented with ceramic stools. A covered pool pavilion can be seen in the distance. **Opposite:** Clustered together on a Texas olive tree, these striking flowers are in bloom much of the year.

property and we saw our home, my wife said, 'It looks like the Biltmore,' and that's what got our attention. But it's a totally different architecture than we would ever think in a million years we would be attracted to."

The Smiths thought the house would be temporary living quarters while they built a Southwest-style dream home. However, once the gardens were finished and interior designer Melinda Chipley transformed the inside, Eddie and Debbie realized something unexpected: "Now, this is our dream home," Debbie says assuredly.

The Smiths say Chipley matched the home to their personalities. Using Eddie's guidance to "make the house feel alive," Chipley first focused on brightening neutral spaces. "Color is very much a part of your feelings and your psyche; there are restful colors and there are colors that are uplifting and exciting," she explains. In the living room, splashes of red in a grouping of four paintings catch the eye. The walls are an earthy green Venetian plaster. In a kitchen eating area, lime-green accessories awaken the senses. The entire second floor is the master suite, and here the color choice changes to a calming pale blue.

Chipley's second goal was to add decorative contrasts. "Eddie and Debbie are used to a more traditional feel. I wanted to bring that warmth but not compromise the beautiful, modern style of the house," she says. In the living room, a thick, textural sisal rug contrasts with smooth quarter-sawn oak floors. In the dining room, a long, sleek table stands out against an old wood vendor's cart wheel on the wall. "It's round, and everything else is very linear. It's just a refreshing change," notes Chipley. In the kitchen eat-





Above: The pool pavilion's centerpiece is a four-sided fireplace. Rows of natal plum and Mexican heather shrubs border the pool. **Below:** Scarlet bush exhibits its crimson flower. **Opposite:** Water spills into the pool through scuppers and into a detached spa through a runnel-style water feature.

ing area, three rustic clay pots on a buffet table play off the Contemporary architecture. This space is among Debbie's favorites because floor-to-ceiling windows on three sides provide a panoramic view of her backyard oasis, where a trio of water spillways graces a rectangular pool. Bordering beds of poppies and petunias fill the air with fragrance.

The Smiths entertain in their backyard, in the garden at the front of their home, and in a game room decked out with a pool table, TV and fireplace. Although detached from the main dwelling, the game room matches the home's architectural detailing, including lofty windows and block columns.

Two outdoor rooms add yet another nod to Frank Lloyd Wright's indoor-outdoor design sensibility. The balcony off the master suite boasts brown and aqua furnishings, a sisal rug and picturesque views of the golf course and Camelback Mountain's Praying Monk.

Below, on a patio off the breakfast nook, drapes with tiebacks enclose another furnished space. "It reminds me of a beach cabana," Chipley says.

"I can see this house finished, and it will be beautiful," Chipley told the Smiths three years ago, when the home was brand new and its owners were skeptical. Eddie and Debbie say Chipley's vision was correct. "It is our sanctuary, a very calming, very comfortable home," adds Debbie. "You actually feel like you're in a resort." □

See Sources.

Sue Breiding hosts the Home Sweet Home segment of KTVK's Good Morning Arizona on Wednesdays at 7:45 a.m.



