

CENTER STAGE

A revamped patio is an entertainer's delight



TEXT BY ANNE O'BRIEN ■ PHOTOGRAPHY BY MICHAEL WOODALL



This page: A 4-foot-wide landscaped space between the house and back wall of this Phoenix home was dubbed "the diamond path" to reflect the shape of its steppingstones. Bougainvillea, yellow dot and iris line the walk on the left and creeping fig vine climbs the wall at right. **Opposite:** In front-patio beds, flower stalks of *Agave desmettianas* rise up behind a sitting area with a raised fire pit.

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hen I tell you that we designed our patio for entertaining, it doesn't mean what you think," laughs attorney Pat Martin. "I love costume parties, murder-mystery parties, trailer-trash parties, dead rock-star parties—I transform the place into a setting. Our patio is part of the stage."

With this in mind, Martin and husband Tim Berg, also an attorney, redesigned the front patio of their 1973 Biltmore-area home. They hired landscape architect Chad Robert to create a plan that would make the entry area of their small urban lot a comfortable venue for entertaining. The unusual nature of the property, which sits in a cul-de-sac like a wedge in a pie, required the couple to host friends, neighbors and guests out front, rather than in the backyard.

"Usually, the front of a home is more public and the back more private," observes Robert. "But Pat's the kind of person who likes to do things that no one else has done. People can come and go and hang out right inside the entrance."

The entry patio offered little charm prior to the remodel. It consisted of a concrete pad surrounded by grass, a few rose bushes, and a line of Italian cypress trees that followed an angled property wall. A pool and spa were walled into the back third of the yard. Tim recalls, "The patio was not usable. I just mowed it and paid the water bills."

Robert drew up plans that incorporated function and good looks. The property's location influenced his selection of plants and



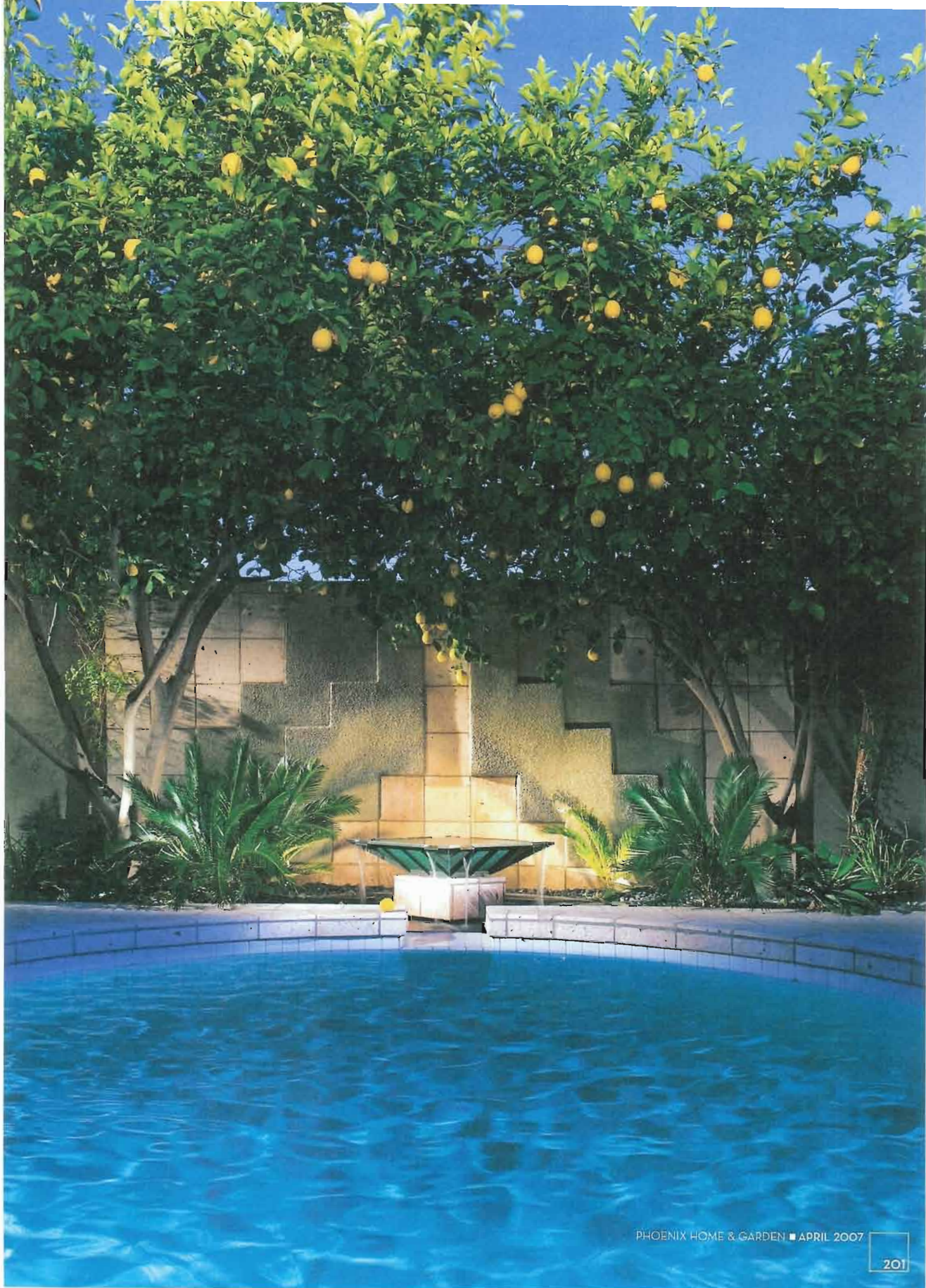
materials. "We had to consider the queen palms, pine and citrus we see over the walls, and preserve the feel of an older Arizona area," Robert recalls. "The proximity of homes to each other and to businesses made it essential to have an elegant and defined entry that would belong only to this house."

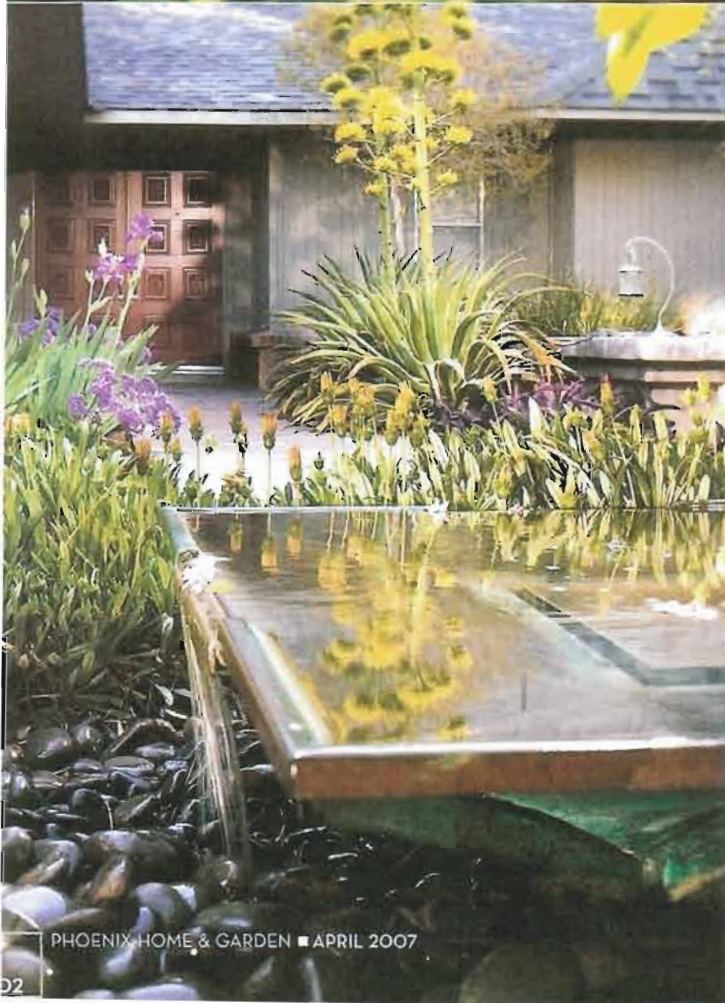
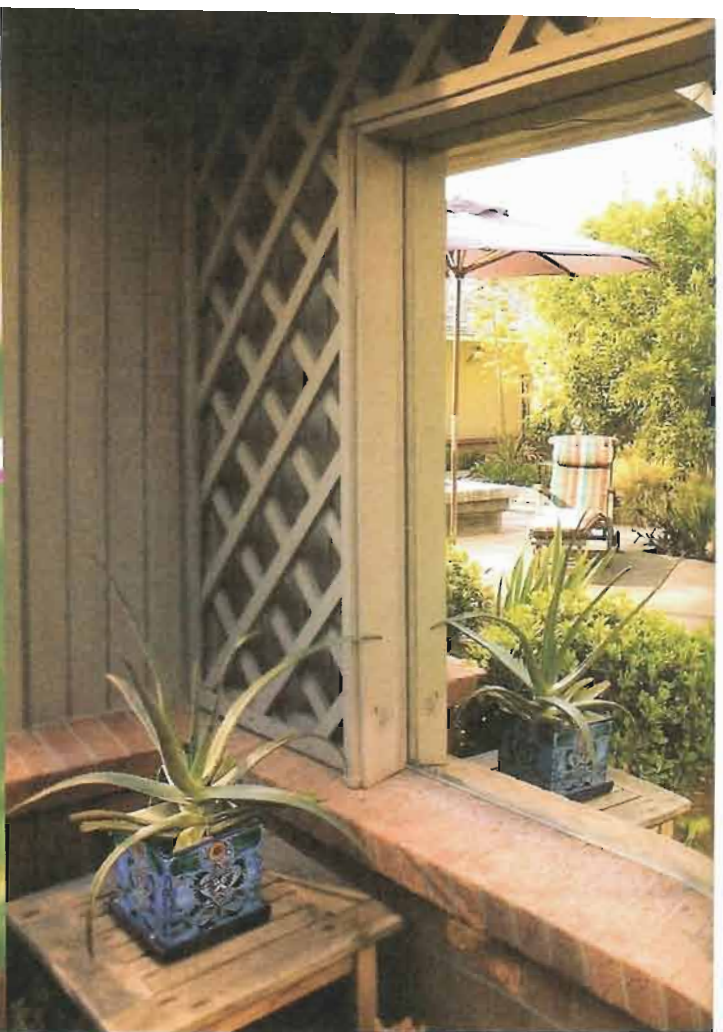
The focus of the new patio is a dramatic raised gas fire pit capped with a seating-level stonework ledge. Plant-filled garden beds enhance the geometric layout of the space. Water from a Frank Lloyd Wright-inspired copper fountain bubbles onto river rock, softening ambient urban noise. The homeowners selected a warm, neutral exterior paint color and variegated cantera pavers to unify outdoor surfaces and provide a background for greenery that includes grasses and agaves, as well as pots of slipper flower and hibiscus plants.

The couple plans to install a cooking and dining area just off their indoor kitchen but first need to solve the problem of a neighbor's overhanging pine tree, which serves as a roost for "big birds," notes Martin.

In the meantime, their renovated patio continues to provide a versatile setting for entertaining dramas that star their own friends and neighbors. ☐

Above: Adding drama in the garden is a blooming *Agave desmettiana*. **Opposite:** A Frank Lloyd Wright-influenced copper fountain graces the pool area. Citrus trees are situated carefully to block security lighting from nearby businesses.





This page, clockwise from above left: Homeowner Pat Martin favors the color purple, so decorative plants were selected for their purple blooms, including German irises (pictured), crape myrtle, ruellia and statice. ■ Previous owners had used trellis-framed mirrors to make tight outdoor spaces feel more open. Here, the front patio can be seen in the mirror's reflection. ■ Water from a copper fountain flows into a bed of Mexican beach pebbles. A rich mix of plants includes gazania, iris, purple heart and statice.

Opposite: The geometric feel of the entry area is accentuated with decorative rock set between cantera pavers in a zigzag pattern. The pool area is accessed through a door at the far end of the patio.

See Sources.

