

Natural



Prickly pear cacti line a covered walkway leading from the front yard to the back.



This photo: A magnificent blue myrtle cactus draws attention to the backyard patio. **Opposite top:** A mound of pink-blooming *Dalea greggii*, and yellow-flowered *Damianita* enliven the front yard.

A well-orchestrated garden renovation re-creates the pleasures of desert living

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Homeowners who are struggling with making landscaping decisions can take a cue from Mother Nature.

That's exactly what Michael and Marsha Ford did when they revamped their Paradise Valley property. They looked around at what grows naturally and then traded in a yard full of paving for one brimming with native flora.

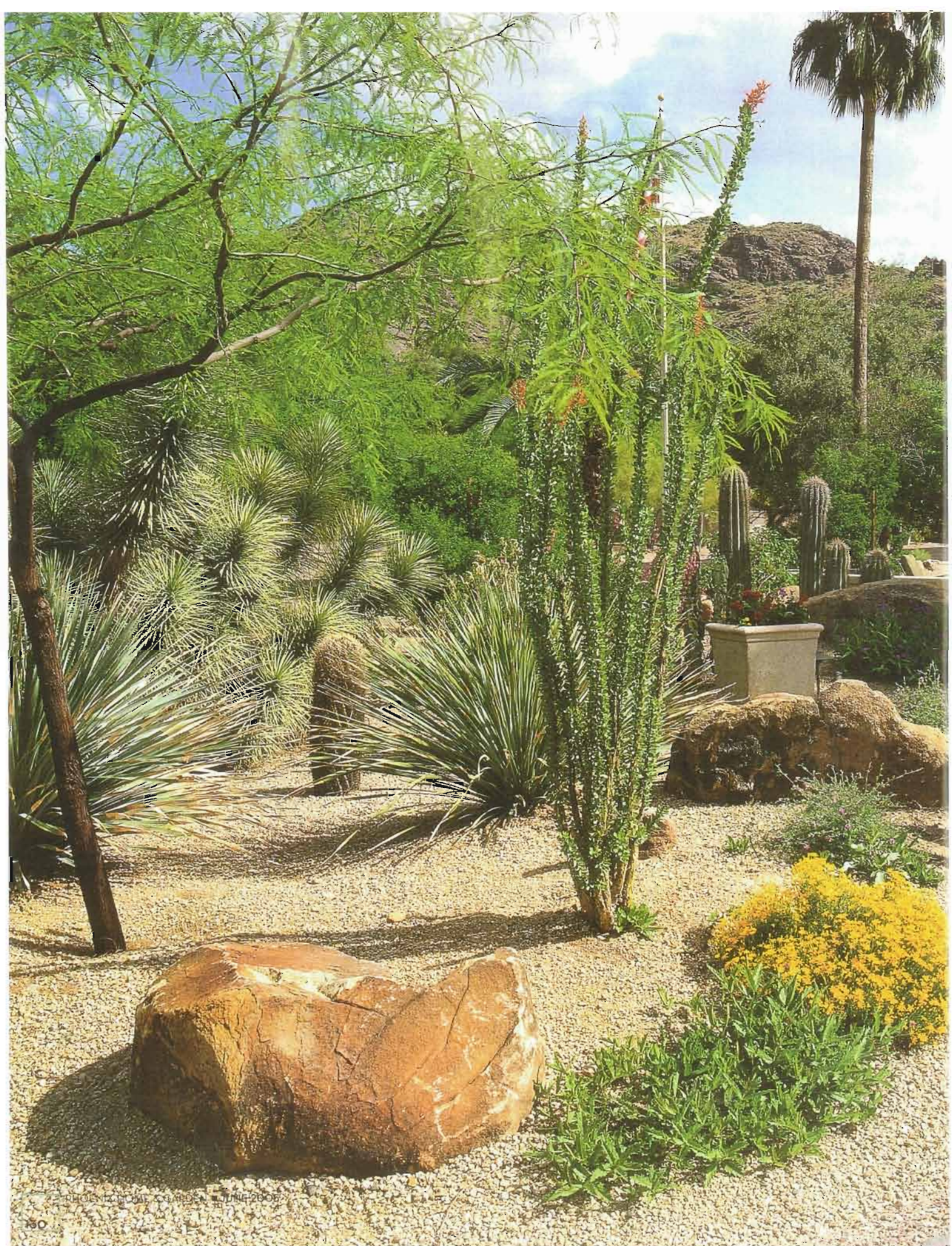
The Fords live in a 30-year-old home with teen-agers Patrick and Alison, and enjoy the surrounding desert and views of nearby Mummy Mountain. But when they moved into their home eight years ago, they didn't like what they saw directly out their front door. Despite a number of mature cactus specimens, the yard was dominated by asphalt. "It was like a big parking lot," recalls Marsha Ford. "There was absolutely no curb appeal." The back yard, too, was due for updating. Its pool required resurfac-

ing, and a courtyard enclosed by a gray wooden fence did little to improve the setting.

"Our vision was to enhance the front entry to the house and minimize the impact of the driveway," she explains. "We also hoped to open up the back courtyard, create some comfortable living spaces, and maximize the mountain views. We wanted the completed project to look as if it were installed at the same time the house was built."

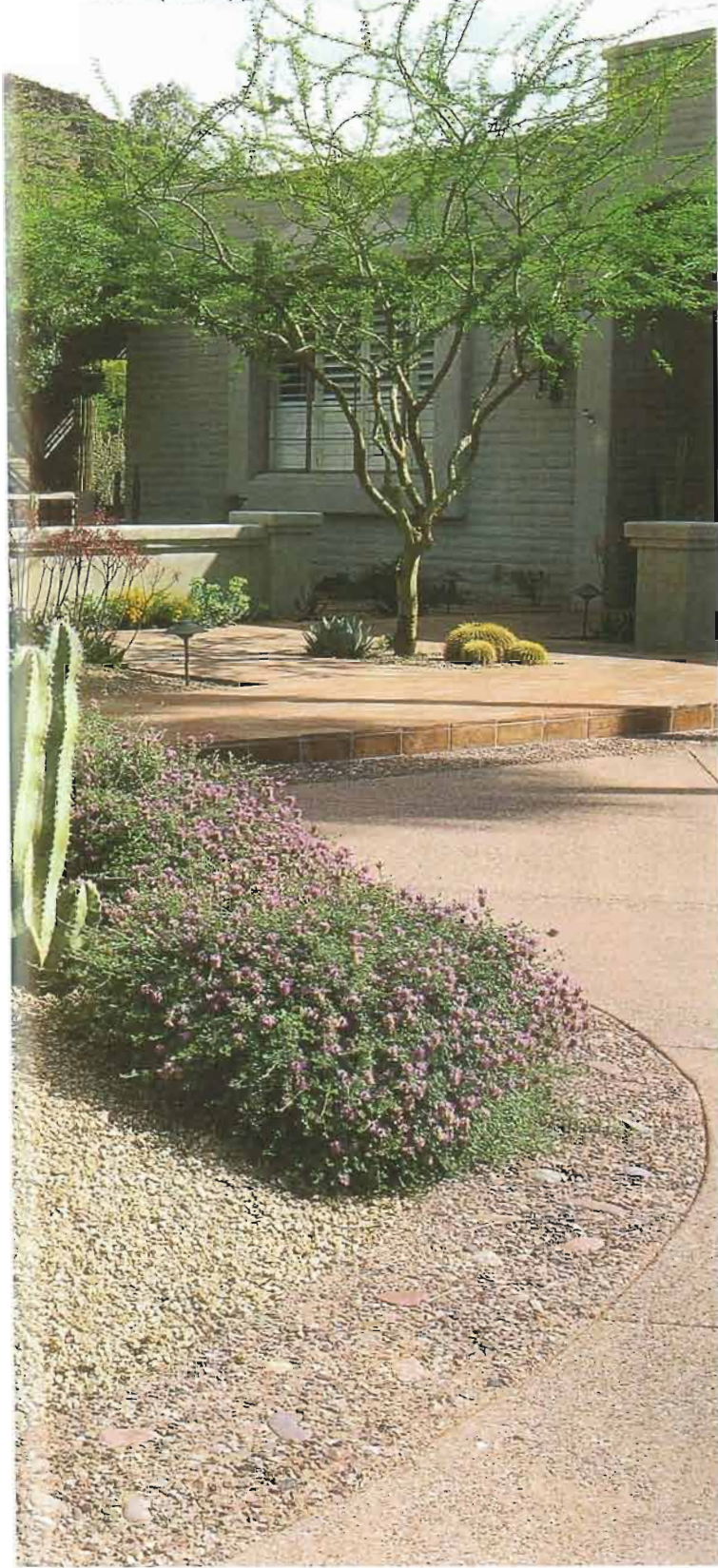
To render the property more usable and make the needed design changes, the couple hired landscape architect Chad Robert. The driveway was the project's starting point. "Some of the best views were from there, and they weren't being taken advantage of," notes Robert. By reorienting the drive and paving it with scored aggregate, he was able to minimize its impact and soften its appearance.

A new front patio was added to provide a comfortable place to



This photo: Views of Mummy Mountain and the newly planted landscape can be enjoyed from the nearby front patio. A mix of Saltillo tile, scored aggregate, colored concrete and decomposed granite help define hardscape areas.

Right: The back yard was updated with the addition of a ramada and new decking. Mediterranean fan palms lend tropical appeal.



relax and take in the views. Visitors are drawn to the area by a meandering walkway of upside-down Saltillo tile. "I think the idea of the front porch has been lost," says Robert. "The courtyard allows the Fords to sit in their yard and reconnect with their neighbors." Desert trees planted to define the driveway and provide shade augment existing palms, saguaros and yuccas.

Realizing a good thing when he saw it, Robert chose to leave a rustic covered walkway that leads to the back yard just the way it was. Bordered by colorful bougainvilleas and prickly pear cacti, "It provides a connection from the front of the house to the back," he states.

With its slightly more lush plant selection, the back yard underwent a subtle but effective transformation. Here, a renovated swimming pool brings a refreshing splash of color to the hardscape with its cool blue water. A ramada and fireplace constructed at the far end of the pool serve to draw people out of the house and to help anchor the yard, Robert notes.

California fan palms, oleanders, aloes and salvias make up much of the plantings here. In addition, several mature palm trees were relocated to balance out the space; a large native mesquite was brought in to filter sunlight; and seat walls, a barbecue grill, sound system and lighting were installed for entertainment purposes. "The overall effect is to take one from a Sonoran Desert landscape in front to a more lush, tropical feel in the back," says the landscape architect.

"The project has certainly enhanced our living spaces," adds Ford. "Our family, friends and many house guests can enjoy being outside all year long." □

See Resource Guide.