

garden guide

terraced oasis in Phoenix

■ Before John and Pat MacNeil renovated their Phoenix yard, a 60- by 20-foot swimming pool took up most of the space, leaving little room for anything else. Wanting more outdoor living space, the MacNeils decided to sacrifice the pool. So they sought help from landscape architect Chad Robert.

Robert replaced the pool with a series of terraces paved with Arizona flagstones. The terraces step down from the entrance to a railing at the rear of the property, which overlooks Camelback Mountain. The middle one shown here re-creates the mood of a desert oasis. Water spills from a boulder-rimmed spring into a pond. The island bed in the foreground is planted with cactus, purple verbena, and yellow angelita daisies. A circular spa is tucked on the far side of the waterfall.

The sitting areas are located to the right; a walkway



along the left side connects them. When the weather is fair, the MacNeils like to open the sliding doors of their house and use the walk as an outdoor hallway as they move from one indoor room to another. In fact, the terraced space is "like having another room to live and entertain in," says Pat. It looks good at night, too, when uplighting creates dramatic shadows on the neighboring wall. — S.C.

mangoes in the low desert

■ The Sonoran Desert might seem like an unlikely place to cultivate mangoes, but Steve Flowers stocks 30 kinds at his Tropica Mango Nursery in south Phoenix. If you'd like to try growing your own mangoes, you'll probably want to start with one of the two varieties shown in the photo below left.

'Keitt', an Indian variety, has large round dark green fruit with great flavor and little fiber. Unlike the mangoes sold at supermarkets, 'Keitt'

does not change color when ripe but stays green. This variety is used to dry heat and loves Sonoran Desert summers, says Flowers.

'Nam Doc Mai', a Southeast Asian variety, has kidney-shaped fruit that turns pale yellow when fully ripe. It is considered one of the best-tasting mangoes in the world. Like 'Keitt', it is nearly fiberless. Though this mango originated in the humid tropics, it adapts well to desert conditions, Flowers notes.

Provided they're supplied with enough water during warm weather, mangoes have few problems in the desert. "We don't have the insects or disease problems they do in the tropics," says Flowers. "Birds—even the cactus wren—leave them alone too."

Cold temperatures are the only real challenge, since mangoes tolerate little frost, especially when young. But even that's getting easier. "Once a mango is well established, it takes a major frost—eight hours or more at 32° or colder—to kill it," notes Flowers, "and we haven't had a freeze like that since November 1978."

Flowers also carries banana, guava, papaya, longan, and dozens of other subtropical edibles, plus many ornamentals. *Tropica Mango Nursery: 3015 E. Baseline Rd., Phoenix; (602) 576-6948. — S.C.*

