

PHOENIX HOME & GARDEN

The Magazine of Southwest Living

OCTOBER 2010

OUTDOOR LIVING



www.phgmag.com \$4.99

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SET IN STONE

A GEM OF A HOUSE SPREADS OUT A WELCOME MAT WITH MATERIALS PLUCKED FROM THE EARTH



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I

f you think these homeowners have had a rocky relationship, they won't be offended. Both are geologists, and their penchant for rocks is reflected in their north Scottsdale home.

Here, copious amounts of stone are used both indoors and out. Even the powder room pays tribute to the treasures of Mother Nature, for the sink is a sparkling geode.

Raised in the Midwest—she is from Oklahoma and he from Iowa—the two had been living in Colorado before becoming Arizona snowbirds. They tried out a Scottsdale condo, got hooked on the state, and decided to build a home. Having already gone through the joys and challenges of erecting a custom residence near Denver, “We felt we had one more house in us,” says the wife.

Bringing their desert dream home to fruition was a design team composed of architect Lee Hutchison, AIA, builder Phil Nichols, designers Dorothy and Eric Bron, and landscape designer Mark Wdowiak.

The residence, which the homeowners call Ranch Hacienda in style, was created with indoor/outdoor living in mind. “We entertain quite frequently, so large covered patios were critical to the design of the home,” the lady of the house explains. Says her husband: “Fabulous views warranted an outdoor great room outside the kitchen, complete with TV, fireplace, seating for 16, gas heaters, ceiling fans and two barbecues.” Nichols recalls the homeowners asking for a gas grill next to a charcoal grill, “because meat tastes better over charcoal.” He observes that the two, unlike many clients, use their outdoor environs daily.

And there are plenty of spots to enjoy. “We have a variety of outdoor dining options,” notes Hutchison, a Phoenix Home & Garden Master of the Southwest. In addition to the large covered back patio, there is a dining patio in front of the house, right off the interior dining room, he notes. “It is protected from the elements,” he says. “You can see the front entry courtyard from here, and you still have views of the mountains.”

Most of all, the couple wanted their home to have a welcoming feel, which each of the design pros understood. “We are not formal people,” the wife points out. “We wanted a very comfortable, homey atmosphere,” where no one has to remove their shoes before entering.

Lending that sense of informality are sandstone on some interior walls, and Oklahoma flagstone for much of the flooring; in warm desert hues, they mirror the same stone used outside. “It is always a gift to work with materials drawn directly from nature,” notes Dorothy Bron, a nationally known color expert and member of the international Color Marketing Group. She adds, “Rock is a favorite. Carefully chosen stone actually has much color to use as a springboard for interior color schemes.”

How the homeowners live—they have two Labrador-mix rescue dogs and a cat—also was a deciding factor in choosing interior elements, according to Eric, a member of ASID and, like Dorothy, a Phoenix Home & Garden Master of the Southwest. He says finishes and other accoutrements were picked with the fur and dirt factor—or “FURT”—in mind. All the various cabinet finishes are antiqued or distressed, and floors are reclaimed vintage wood or natural flagstone. That means “Wear-and-tear by people or pets is not noticed, or can easily be repaired,” the designer suggests.


The residence is everything they hoped it would be, the homeowners report. “Our houseguests feel immediately at home when they come in, with a glass of wine and a dog or cat to greet them,” the husband states. And, his wife happily adds, “People who know us say this house is us.”

Above: A limestone fountain and desert perennials add atmosphere and color outside this north Scottsdale home's gated entry courtyard. **Opposite:** Located inside the entry courtyard, off the interior formal dining area, is this sheltered outdoor dining patio with a stone-clad fireplace.



A photograph of a dining room. In the foreground, a round wooden dining table is set with dark leather chairs. On the table are several decorative items, including a stack of books, a vase with yellow flowers, and some pinecones. A large, dark, floor-standing vase is on the left. In the background, a stone fireplace with a large arched opening is visible. The ceiling has exposed wooden beams, some of which are painted red. A chandelier with multiple white candles hangs from the ceiling.

Opening to the front-courtyard dining patio, the interior dining room has a pitched-and-beamed ceiling that is painted red. Undercoatings of burlap and a red base paint poke through the walls' plaster finish. The carpet, from Pakistan, also is grounded in red. Not arbitrarily chosen, the color is found in the home's many rock-faced surfaces, say designers Dorothy and Eric Bron. The pair worked with the homeowners in selecting the residence's finishes, palette, lighting and more. The homeowners say the outsize floor-standing jar was a real "find."

A large, open-plan kitchen with a barrel-vaulted brick ceiling. The kitchen features two islands: one with a blue granite countertop and dark wood base, and another with a zinc top. The walls are a mix of stone and brick, and the ceiling is made of brick. There are several pendant lights hanging from the ceiling. In the foreground, there is a dining table with red chairs. The overall atmosphere is warm and welcoming.

Warm and welcoming, the kitchen is dressed with a diverse mix of cabinet styles and finishes and an appealing blend of materials. The barrel-vaulted brick ceiling is reminiscent of one the homeowners had seen on a trip to Italy. The lady of the house, who loves to entertain, desired a "huge kitchen" outfitted with two islands. One is a bi-level dining island with an Azul Bahia granite counter. The other, for food preparation, is near the stove and has a zinc top.





Opposite: An airy space, with doors that accordion open to a large covered back patio, the living room displays the signature spoked ceiling beams and sculptural walls of architect Lee Hutchison. The setting, with its carpet and leather-and-fabric sectional placed on the diagonal, is furnished with eclectic Craftsmanlike appeal. Fred, a Labrador-mix rescue dog and one of three pets in the house, seems to enjoy the "animal-friendly" ambience, a factor the owners built into their home's design scheme. The couple also wanted a special area for their century-old Steinway piano. The family heirloom sits on a raised circular dais (left rear). **This page, clockwise from above:** Sandstone-covered walls of the rear dining patio overlook the couple's herb and vegetable garden. "We grow tomatoes, cucumbers and all kinds of herbs," says the wife. ■ With its Brazilian orange citrine geode sink and other specimens, the powder room speaks of nature and the homeowners' geological backgrounds. Walls here are covered in grasscloth. ■ Items born of Mother Earth hold special significance for the couple. For example, the top shelf of this display area (foreground) contains crystalline barite rose, named the Oklahoma state rock. It was discovered on an outing by the geologist grandfather of the Oklahoma-bred lady of the house. On successive shelves below are Chinese quartz and coral.





Left: An antique ski lift seat has found new life as an outdoor porch swing. **Below:** Clad in blue glass tiles that sparkle under the desert sun, the infinity-edge pool is rimmed with a low shelf. A circular spa and a fire pit in the same shape straddle the pool. Under the stone-encrusted ramada is one of several outdoor spots for a repast or relaxation. **Opposite:** The covered back patio holds two full-size dining tables made of doors from Mexico, and a collection of mismatched chairs. The homeowners say they "live out here most of the year." Overhead heaters fend off seasonal chill, and fans keep air moving when needed. A TV hides behind doors above the chunky wood fireplace mantel. Flooring is the same Oklahoma flagstone found in main areas of the house.

See Sources.



