



# BEAUTY BY DESIGN

A showy waterscape and lush vegetation  
rejuvenate a boring back yard

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**This page:** Situated on a substantial slope, this water feature was devised by landscape designer Susanna Smith as both a swimming pool and a retainer wall. •

**Opposite:** Enlivened by various desert plantings, the tiered poolscape is awash in color.





When Ralph Wills purchased his Paradise Valley home more than three years ago, he realized he probably got such a great deal because the back yard had absolutely no landscaping. "There were a few creosotes, but that's about it," he reports. "And because the front door looks directly out to the back, the lack of landscaping was very noticeable."

Fortunately, Wills was able to see the potential of the acre-plus property and took some time researching his options. In the end, he hired landscape designer Susanna Smith of Summer Winds™ Landscape to create the vision in his mind.

Smith, a 22-year veteran of the landscape design profession, was energized by the challenge of creating something spectacular out of so little. As part of the project, she also had to deal with a slope that nearly dropped into the middle of the yard.

Because of the grade change, Smith needed to create a retaining wall to keep the hill from eroding. The addition of curved steps, boulders, a pool and spa help shore up the incline and create a multiuse space. Now the view from the front door is quite spectacular. The saltwater chlorinated pool looks like a freshwater pond with an upper waterfall cascading into a cool blue lagoon below. A lower reverse negative-edge waterfall feature, delineated by earthy moss rock, flows into a gurgling stream running the length of the yard.

"The pool is definitely a focal point," says Smith. "And it is fantastic for parties." With its misters, strategic lighting and an outdoor barbecue area, the space boasts an inviting atmosphere

for an intimate party of two or a group of 50.

Smith designated the space above the swimming pool as a sitting area to capture the prominent views of Squaw Peak and Camelback Mountain. Just below, a spa offers the same breathtaking views and is easily accessible from the patio as well as the master suite.

Boulders were placed throughout the yard and poolscape to provide shape and density and serve as a natural screen for pool equipment. Flagstone was used to create meandering walkways, as well as bridges that lead to two pool entrances and the sitting area. Smith planted several Chilean mesquite trees far enough from the water to discourage leaf and bean pod litter, but close enough to provide ample shade when they mature.

*Myoporum*, one of Smith's favorite plants to use around water, hugs boulders, crawls around walkways, and spills to the water's edge. Dwarf bottlebrush, green cloud sage, purple fountain grass, yellow and purple lantana and red yucca offer texture and color variations, even throughout the brutal summer. Autumn sage (*Salvia greggii*), red (Baja) fairy duster and blue hibiscus add splashes of color and contrast to the small patch of grass just outside the living room windows.

"Susanna has done a wonderful job," says Wills, owner of several Valley auto body shops. "She listened to what I wanted and then made it happen. Now, when I look through my front door or living room windows, the landscape definitely catches the eye. It's stunning." 🌿

See Resource Guide.