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# All the By Elizabeth Exline Small Things

RARELY DOES AN 8,300-SQ.-FT. RESIDENCE CALL TO MIND COZY ROOMS WHOSE CEILING HEIGHTS AND DIMENSIONS GIVE WAY TO INTIMATE SETTINGS. BUT IN THIS STONE-AND-STUCCO ARIZONA RETREAT, EACH TIDY AND MODESTLY-SIZED SPACE BELIES THE HOME'S SQUARE FOOTAGE AND WRAPS YOU IN A BEAR HUG OF A WELCOME.

WHEN A HOUSE MAKES such a strong impression on its creators that both the builder and the interior designer easily count it among their favorite projects, it's enough to whet one's design appetite. Such was the case with this rural Mediterranean-style home nestled inside Scottsdale's upscale DC Ranch community. Anthony Salcito, vice president of Salcito Custom Homes, and Bess Jones, owner of Bess Jones Interiors, readily admitted this particular dwelling's pet status without prompting or knowing each other's preferences. "We've built more than 250 [homes]," Salcito says of his company, "and there's no question that this house is in my top five. It is absolutely one of the best we have ever done."

Happily, the house lives up to its reputation. As it snakes its way along a steep, mountainous site, it bows to European architecture in a way that resonates with the homeowners' approach to life. "The casual way they live lends itself to practical spaces," Salcito observes, "which [in turn] lends itself well to the architecture that they picked."

Salcito has had ample opportunity to become acquainted with the homeowners' joie de vivre. Not only did he collaborate on the three-year design/build process of this

house, but he'd worked with the husband beforehand to construct a Tuscan-style spec home on a golf course lot, also in DC Ranch. "[My wife and I] used that house to learn a lot about how to build a home out here," says the husband, who came to Arizona by way of Michigan. "From looking at that house, we decided [we] wanted to build a house that would have small-scale rooms rather than large-scale rooms, and we wanted a house with color."

They also wanted simplicity. Given that their Tudor home in Michigan celebrates all things shiny and high-maintenance, the wife especially was ready for a home requiring less upkeep. So instead of covering the floors in marble, the couple opted for rich, textural sycamore that was reclaimed from an 1800's Illinois barn. Also, they selected heavy, reclaimed Michigan timber for mantles in the husband's office and the master bedroom. Even the custom-designed furniture features carving and distressing for an easygoing yet impressive look. "The [homeowners] have children, and they wanted the house to be very child-friendly," Jones says. "So this spectacular furniture can basically just live through this family's life without ever looking any different than it does." The furniture's painted



## Center of Attention

From California to Hawaii, contemporary to Old World styles, custom to tract homes, courtyards are increasingly fusing the great outdoors with the even greater indoors. "Courtyards are not style-dependant," says architect Dale Gardon, principal of Dale Gardon Design, "but they're climate-dependant."

Fireplaces, water features, seating, painted walls, murals and sculpture are just a few of the elements to include in a courtyard, and because it serves as an extension of the home, each of its components should adhere to an aesthetic similar to that behind the surrounding walls. Here, courtyard design specialist Joan Grabel, president of Park Slope Design, breaks down the must-have pieces for three different courtyard styles.

### CONTEMPORARY

- **Walls:** Smooth stucco, slate, stone or a combination of stainless steel and wood.
- **Floor:** Slate or concrete cut into oversize squares or rectangles, or smooth or salted concrete.
- **Fountain:** Geometric shapes in stainless steel, wood or stone.
- **Trees:** Bamboo, palo verde, fruitless olive.
- **Plants:** Those used in mass quantities—

horsetail, kangaroo paws, papyrus, Irish moss, liriopé—work best.

### SPANISH

- **Walls:** Smooth or textured stucco, depending on the home's exterior stucco.
- **Floor:** Salttilo tile interspersed with talavera tiles or flagstone, or flagstone with brick patterns or brick planting spaces.
- **Fountain:** Spanish/Mediterranean wall-mounted designs or a freestanding version with an old stone feel.
- **Trees:** Fruitless olive or potted dwarf olive, magnolia "little gem," dwarf lemon or dwarf lime.
- **Plants:** Either drought-tolerant types like bougainvillea, lavenders, flax and santolina, or those of a tropical persuasion (think cannas, hibiscus, tupidanthus and red banana).

### OLD WORLD/MEDITERRANEAN

- **Walls:** Stone or stucco.
- **Floor:** Stone or brick.
- **Fountain:** Provencal style that can be built into a stone wall.
- **Trees:** Fruitless olive, magnolia soulangiana, citrus, carrotwood, evergreen pear.
- **Plants:** Boxwood, topiary azaleas, topiary privet, climbing rose.

No matter how spot-on your finishes and plants are, however, Gardon says the most critical aspect of any courtyard may be its accessibility to the rest of the house. "The secret to making a good courtyard is engaging the internal spaces," he explains. "If all you do is create a hole in the middle of your floor plan and don't allow the rooms to engage it properly [via doors and windows], then you haven't created a great courtyard."