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Inside: Built to Last – Allied Homes • PAGE 9



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EDITOR'S NOTE

The Shemer Art Center was originally part of 640 acres owned by a group of investors who had visions of selling plots of land for citrus farming and homesteading. These investors called the area Arcadia, founded the Arcadia Water Company and began digging wells.

In 1919, the first "Arcadia" home was built for the foreman in the field. In the 1920s, those original investors went broke. The home changed hands throughout the years, and in 1984, was purchased by Martha Shemer, a real estate investor who was looking to buy a property she could give to the community.

Fast forward 40 years, and the Shemer Art Center has grown and thrived in that very spot. The nonprofit holds classes for kids and adults, art workshops and lectures, exhibits – including the New Horizons High School exhibit that showcases our young artists – and events throughout the year.

Story ideas and feedback are always welcome – reach me at editor@arcadianews.com. Until we meet again in November, thank you for reading Arcadia News and Arcadia Home & Design!

Mallory

– Mallory Gleich



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Art lives here!

Celebrating 40 years of the Shemer Art Center

By Mallory Gleich

In 1919, the area we now know as Arcadia was little more than a few rough roads, citrus groves and a few scattered family estates. The first of those homes is still standing today and you can actually check it out, because it's part of the Shemer Art Center (the classroom on the east side of the building). Its original occupant was the foreman of the Arcadia Water Company, who was stationed there to oversee the new community infrastructure of pipes and wells being built.

In 1925, the house and its 40 acres was purchased by an investor named Henry Coerver, who added a

“The Shemer Art Center is right here in the neighborhood, and it offers the opportunity to learn about, experience or enjoy art to residents and visitors of all ages.”

bedroom, bathroom and kitchen. He nicknamed it “Casa de Wanda” in honor of his wife. Coerver would go on to purchase and subdivide much of Arcadia. In 1928,

Charles Suhr – then-president of Pennzoil Company – bought the home for his family and doubled the size of the house, building rooms that are now used as galleries and offices.

In 1984, Martha Shemer, a real estate investor looking to invest near a recognizable landmark, purchased the property. Before that, Shemer had “shopped around,” researching 1,100 properties for her specific requirements. First, it had to be a spot where all the winter visitors to the Valley could stop by. Second, it had to be scenic. Third, it would have to be something she could give back to the community, which she dreamt about even as a child in the small town of Ames, Iowa.

The location of this property was perfect, near the base of Camelback Mountain, the most well-known landmark in the Valley of the Sun. This checked off the first two requirements. The third item on the list would depend on the City of Phoenix.

After securing the sale, she reached out to then-Mayor Terry Goddard’s office, telling the secretary that she wanted to gift the home to the city. The secretary thought it was a joke at first, but after some back-and-





Martha Shemer

forth, Shemer was able to fulfill her dream and gave the building to the City of Phoenix, stipulating that it be used for the city's brand-new arts and culture initiative. They named the building after Martha.

"It was determined by the City – in partnership with the family – that it would become a visual art center named the Shemer Art Center," Executive Director Shonna James said. "It became a historical landmark in Phoenix and was voted a City of Phoenix Point of Pride. Immediately, it began to offer visual art classes and art exhibitions."

In 2010, budget cuts nearly forced the City to close the center, but a group of dedicated residents came together to form a nonprofit organization that would take over the daily operations. When Martha purchased the

home, the neighborhood feared it would be turned into a commercial venture. Her son, Barry, remembers responding to letters of concern to dispel that fear.

Back then, the City was largely responsible for day-to-day operations. In 2011, the Shemer formed SACAMA – Shemer Art Center and Museum Association – which took over full control. Carol Houston was the first director, and Shonna took over in 2015.

"In the period leading up to the nonprofit, several members and my brother and I spoke at public hearings held by the city," Barry said. "Our purpose was to gain more support and voice our opinion that the city should continue to support the center – which they have!"

The Shemer survived and thrived and even expanded. It now operates as an art gallery, offering classes, workshops, lectures, exhibitions and events.

"One thing that influenced my mother – other than wanting to give back to the community – was her memory of that home," Barry said. "When she was in high school around 1936, her parents took her on picnics in that area, when the house was the only structure for several miles around."

Barry and his brother, Jack, always felt their role within the center should simply be to provide input and help SACAMA make decisions. The Shemer continues to be a family affair, with Barry's son Ryan volunteering and assisting Shonna in setting up for events.

To address the need for more space, larger classrooms, and an annual waiting list for its Summer Art Camps for children, the Shemer is currently raising funds for its

Expansion & Legacy Campaign, offering everything from bricks to naming rights for its new educational building. The Arcadia Camelback Mountain Neighborhood and Arcadia Osborn Neighborhood associations have set up a GoFundMe to assist.

"The Shemer Art Center is right here in the neighborhood, and it offers the opportunity to learn about, experience or enjoy art to residents and visitors of all ages – just what Martha would have wanted," Shonna said.

shemerartcenter.org

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What can you do at the Shemer?

- See some of the structure of the first house built for Arcadia.
- Tour the property and check out some unique art.
- Take an art class or a workshop.
 - Listen in on an art lecture.
 - View exhibitions, like the New Horizons High School Art Exhibition.
- Attend events like the Furry Friends Fine Arts Festival, Art in the Garden and Sparkling Tea on March 23 and 24 or the Shemer Arizona Arts Festival and Shemer Honors event in November.
- Shop at the on-site gift shop for unique gifts and cards created by Arizona artists.
- Relax in the sculpture garden.



The gallery hosts events throughout the year, including the Furry Friends Fine Art Festival and the New Horizons Art Exhibit.



Since its inception, the Shemer Art Center has provided a place where people can learn about the visual arts through classes, exhibitions and events.



Spaces fill up fast for its Summer Camps for kids ages 6-13.



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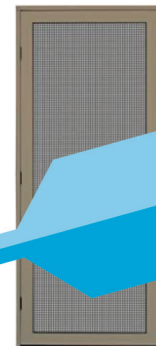
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Built to last

One of the first developers in the Valley still has roots in Arcadia



By Mallory Gleich

It was the late 1940s and the country was shaking off the economic pinch of World War II. The suburb was coming to life and Phoenix was earning the moniker, “air-conditioning capital of the world.” Home development and city expansion was about to explode at an unprecedented rate. One man sensed this – and it was his drive and timing that was the impetus behind his highly successful company, Allied Homes.

Some of the most durable homes in the Valley were crafted by Allied – including their very first “luxury house” in Arcadia – which listed for \$19,900 when they put it up on an acre in 1954.

Robbie Gilbreath is a third-generation resident who grew up riding her bike around Chicago Avenue (44th Street) and swimming in the irrigation ditches. It was a time when kids left the home at sunrise and didn’t come home until sunset. Those were also the days when Robbie’s grandfather, C.F. Robbins (who Robbie is named after) was unveiling his latest venture: Allied Homes, a collection of neighborhood subdivisions spread throughout the Valley.

Robbins – or Roby, as his friends called him – moved to California in 1911 after graduating from the University of Minnesota. His first job was as a deputy engineer for the California State Highway Department. Then, he worked as a consultant for the firm Petit-Robbins. After that, he began his own construction company: C.F. Robbins Construction Co.

During WWII, Robbins received national attention when he developed a new type of light surfacing (like runway lights) for airfields. This brought him

to various bases across the country, including the Thunderbird and Falcon airfields. It was then that Robbins fell in love with the Valley.

He moved his family to Phoenix around 1947 and bought a 185-acre dairy farm that spanned between 40th and 44th, from Thomas to Oak. His days as an engineer were over – now he wanted to try his hand at raising cattle.

“I remember this, as a kid, because I hated the smell,” Robbie laughed. “He had some of the first stainless steel appliances at the farm, and also piped in music for the cows!”

It was a short-lived adventure. Robbins decided that farming wasn’t for him, and instead he got involved in the construction industry – and he wasn’t afraid to take risks, according to Robbie.

Shortly after Robbins came R.M. Chase, a man who – with Robbins – had owned two lumber mills in California that met a fiery end. After the mills burned down, Chase and Robbie’s uncle (Robbins’ stepson), Dell Traylor, headed to sunny AZ, and the three came together to create Allied Construction Company.

Traylor became the secretary/treasurer and Chase was in charge of the financials. The trio set up shop in a house in Rancho Ventura and got to work...but plans almost ended before they began.

“The Federal Housing Administration didn’t want to approve my grandfather’s plans for the houses because they said the area was ‘out in the sticks,’” Robbie said.

After some convincing, approval was met, and Allied Homes started with 20 acres on Palm Lane, between 40th and 42nd Streets. One house to an acre. It was called Ventura Manor and had 29 subdivisions

at completion – but before then, the trio discovered that one acre was far too much to tend with a single lawnmower, so the plots were minimized: 30 houses to 10 acres, starting at \$10,000-\$12,000.

“This subdivision also had the first model home that was all electric,” Robbie said.

These new homes were all the rage and each included myriad features, like built-in ovens, double sinks, central heating and air conditioning (one of the biggest draws), insulated ceilings, and a choice between interior and exterior paint colors.

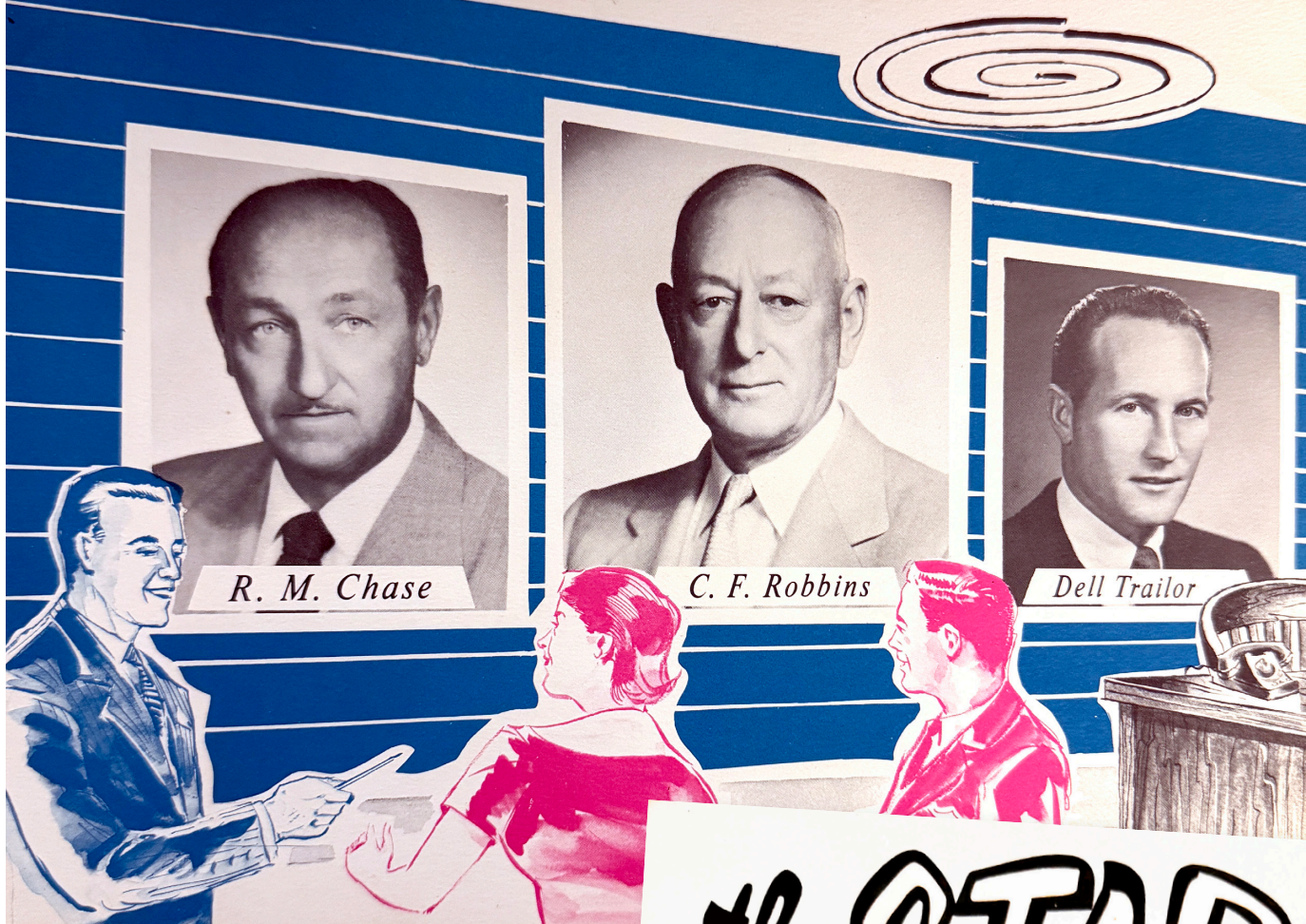
Thousands of families descended on the Phoenix area, moving into “Allied Quality” homes in Rancho Ventura, Robbins Estates, Royal Palms, Hidden Village (which had 16 subdivisions), Del Ray Estates (named after Dell and R.M. Chase), Village Grove, Village Meadows and Paradise Meadows.

In reminiscing about the beginning of Allied Homes, Robbie mentioned that she was still trying to figure out where the name came from. She found out that when her grandfather was in the military, he worked for “something Allied Armed Forces.”

“I also found an article about my grandmother’s brother, and he worked for a place called Allied Grocers – or something close to that,” Robbie said. “I’m still trying to figure it out.”

Robbins retired in the 60s after selling his company to a national builder, but his legacy lives on.

Allied Homes were built to last, as evidenced in the various neighborhoods around Arcadia. Lush greenery, carports, large living room windows and bountiful backyards are a nod to the past and a trend that will continue into the future. After all, as Robbins said, “If it’s Allied, that’s all you need to know.”



R. M. Chase

C. F. Robbins

Dell Trailor

PRESIDENT C.F. ROBBINS

Robbins was involved in general engineering from 1917 to 1925. From there, he worked in an engineering and contracting business, building roads, highways and bridges in California. He was instrumental in defense construction work during WWII. In 1949, Robbins formed the Allied Construction Company in Phoenix, Arizona.

VICE PRESIDENT R.M. CHASE

Chase worked on the early development of Commercial Aviation in California while also helping to organize and manage the Aviation Training School for civilian pilots in WWII. He worked with Ventura Engineering Company from 1941-1944 and moved to Arizona in 1949 to join Allied Construction Company.

SECRETARY-TREASURER DELL TRAILOR

Trailor served in WWII from 1943-1945. Afterwards, he moved to Tucson and attended the University of Arizona. He became the construction superintendent for Ventura Engineering until 1949, when he joined the team at Allied.

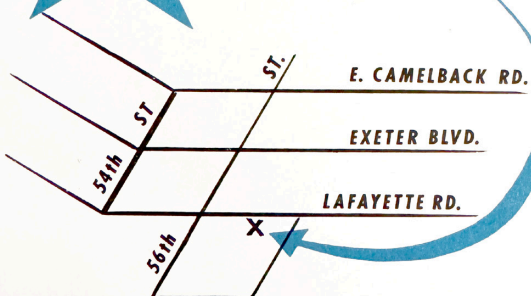
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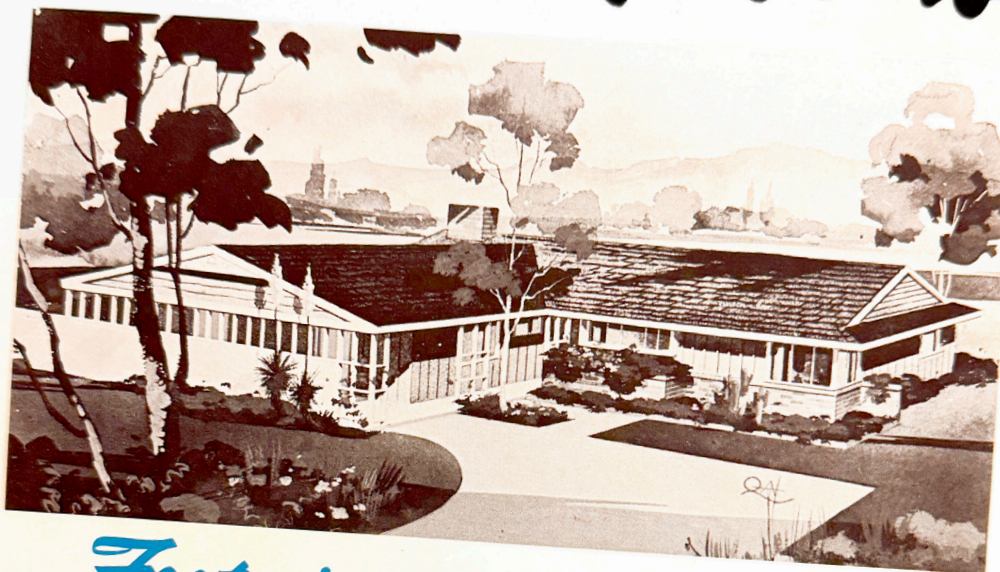
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The “plus sign” has always stood as a symbol of “more” or “better,” an indication of overall increased value. Throughout the years, Allied has consistently striven to give Arizonans more home value for their dollar.



This is a medieval Guild sign representing a “straight edge.” In those days it was a symbol of accuracy and honesty, as the skills of the draftsmanship and chirography (the art of handwriting) were limited to a very few. Today, as then, it symbolizes Allied’s honest measure of craftsmanship.



These symbols have been combined to form Allied’s present trademark. It stands for Arizona’s most respected builder. It represents quality construction, careful planning, and meticulous attention to details. It is, literally, the “spirit” of Allied Construction Company; and it is our pledge to you...our promise to provide the best homes in the best locales in The Valley of the Sun.

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Home away from home

Arcadia's treehouses bring nostalgia to the neighborhood

By Mallory Gleich

The Sandlot. Now and Then. Stand by Me. Jack. Bridge to Terabithia.

Quick trivia question: what do these films have in common? Aside from a host of talented actors and coming-of-age plot lines, each movie has scenes around or inside a treehouse.

The treehouse isn't a new concept – the idea of living up in the branches dates back to the Roman Empire and Emperor Caligula, who built a “dining room” in a tree to use during banquets. In the Middle Ages, treehouses were used as hideouts for outlaws.

During the Renaissance, Europeans like the Medici family built platforms in oak trees to see across the land. Treehouses might have lost their touch in Europe after the 1600s, but thanks to a famous book called *Robinson Suisse* (better known to us as *The Swiss Family Robinson*) published in 1812, the lofty abodes made a comeback.

In America, treehouses started gaining popularity in the 20th century. In the 1960s and 70s, they were used to connect with nature and escape the pressures of modern society. Some hotels and resorts in places like Ohio, Virginia and New York added treehouses to their roster to attract customers.

After all, treehouses invoke a sense of nostalgia, a time when fun was at the forefront and cares were thrown to the wind. Two Arcadia families use their tree- and clubhouses for those purposes exactly.

Danielle Denton and her family inherited their treehouse when they bought their home in 2020. According to Danielle, the treehouse was originally built in 2010.

“At the time, our daughter was just under a year old, and we loved the idea of having something so special and fun for her to play in for many years to come,” she said.

The house is made mainly of wood, and Danielle and her husband, Tyler, replaced the stairs, the rock wall and the swing.

“One super cool aspect of this treehouse is that it actually has electricity running to it. There are working lights and outlets,” Danielle said. “Our daughter, Peyton, loves the secret door from the treehouse to get to the slide. She also loves the bunk beds – particularly the top bunk!”

Megan and Zach Van Wolvelaerd took a different approach. Since their backyard didn't have a tree able to withstand a “house,” they decided to build a clubhouse for their children, Rory and Penn, in 2022.

“After Penn was born, we decided to add a clubhouse to our backyard. We always knew we wanted one for our kids to play in while growing up and making memories together,” Megan said.

The duo bought a clubhouse kit from Costco, then they painted and modified it to be “just right” for the kids. Zach put the building together in about 12 hours. What's unique about Penn and Rory's clubhouse is that



The Denton family's treehouse has electricity – and a secret exit!

it's painted the same color as their actual house.

“We also added little house numbers to mimic ours: 6622 ½ - the half because it's a mini version of ours,” Megan said. “We added a flower box to the top and filled it with flowers. We also added a little sign that says ‘Rory and Penn's Playhouse.’”

Every holiday season, Megan and Zach decorate the clubhouse for the kids. They turn it into a gingerbread house for birthdays, Halloween and Christmas.

“We have a large bubble machine running from the top level that fills the yard with bubbles. It's magical,” she said.

Penn and Rory love “cooking” and making meals in the upstairs kitchen – and since Penn can now climb the stairs and use the slide, the brother and sister play in it every day after school.

“It's truly the best part of our backyard,” Megan said.

Far from the platforms used in the olden days, treehouses today are equipped with rope bridges, zip lines and swing sets. Companies around the country sell treehouse kits with everything a family needs to set up their new “home away from home.”

Treehouse kits can be found at hardware stores like Home Depot and Lowes, or at Costco or Walmart. Basics start around \$1,500 – and climb as high as your imagination will take you!



The Van Wolvelaerd family's clubhouse is painted to match their home.

The Science of Soil

How to improve Arizona's soil for plants and trees

By Eric Warchol

Desert soil can make growing trees and shrubs a challenge, as soil is where everything starts for a plant. Thankfully, plant growers can manipulate soil to provide a better growing medium for non-native plants. Healthy soil = healthy plants.

Our caliche (a mineral deposit of gravel, sand, and nitrates found in southwest climates) contains a calcium carbonate that “cements” the soil together. Anyone who has tried to dig a hole in the ground in Arizona knows this well. This is not the only problem with trying to grow plants in clay. Our soils have high salts that are low in organic matter and high in alkalinity (pH 8 and above). Most plants – especially citrus – like neutral or slightly acidic soil conditions (pH 7 is neutral).

Native plants have adapted to these soil conditions. When planning a landscape, there are plenty to choose from: palo species, mesquites, agave and yucca are a few examples.

One topic that has recently come to light is non-native trees that were thriving in years past are slowly declining. Clay soil and water contain salts, is high in pH, has limited organic matter and lack of proper drainage or water penetration. Other offenders are the weaker monsoon storms of recent years and an increase in temperatures during the summer. Trees and shrubs are struggling for many reasons, but the good news is they can be helped.

Every year, plants utilize what is in the soil; if we don't replenish what the plants use, they will struggle to survive. At a bare minimum, most should be fertilized in spring and fall – citrus and flowers (like roses) should be fertilized three times a year.

One of the biggest concerns is the lack of proper watering and salt buildup in the soil. Symptoms show as browning along leaf edges and tips and premature leaf drop. One important thing to do is water plants slowly and deeply to get down to the roots.

Use a long screwdriver (or equivalent) and push it into the soil close to the emitter after watering – the tool should go down easily two feet into the ground for trees. If it doesn't, water longer. Leach salts from



the soil by watering twice as long as normal every six months to push the salts below the roots.

When you fertilize, make sure there is some soil sulfur in your product if you're using granular fertilizer. When using granular fertilizers (these encourage soil nutrient levels and create healthy turf), use the proper amount – typically a lot more than you think.

Professionals usually use liquid fertilizers mixed with a pH-reducing product for quicker absorption into the plants.

At A to Z Tree and Turf, we have Plant Healthcare Programs that provide plants with what they need at specific times of the year. Our citrus treatment includes fertilizers, pH reducers, soil amendments, biostimulants, and a biological preventative fungicide all mixed and applied to the soil.

Make sure you add organic matter to your lawn. Although granite has a nice, clean appearance in a yard, there is no benefit to the roots of your valuable landscape plants or the soil. I recommend placing a border: rocks, steel edging, etc. and adding mulch around your trees, especially citrus. The mulch holds water better than granite, cools the roots during the

summer, breaks down over time to add organic matter to the soil and can reduce soil compaction.

Mulch is a great benefit to all plants but should not be placed directly against the trunk and will need to be refreshed as it breaks down – yearly is typically sufficient.

Proper watering, lowering the soil pH, fertilizing at the correct times of the year with the proper nutrition and adding organic matter will benefit the landscape and plants.

Most of the dead or dying plants we see in winter result from the temps and lack of humidity during the summer. We are trying our best – professionals and homeowners alike – to help plants grow and thrive, but the adage remains true: “Right plant in the right place.”



Eric Warchol is the head of A to Z Tree and Turf's Plant Healthcare division. His background includes vegetation management, tree care and golf course management. eric@atoztreetandturf.com



Take a dip, take a dive

Arcadia's poolside trends for 2024

By Mallory Gleich

In other parts of the country, it would feel strange to say “getting ready for pool season” in March – but in Phoenix, the start of spring means the start of pulling out the chairs, tubes, noodles and floaties from storage: pool season is upon us.

In that spirit, Arcadia News decided to dig into the trends surrounding a backyard oasis and what families

are doing to update the pools in their backyards.

One of the most common trends we found was new automation systems. These systems connect to apps like Google and Alexa to control waterfalls, colored pool lights, spa heaters, and adjustable speed pumps. Some systems can monitor, in real-time, a pool's pH and sanitizer levels.

Energy efficiency is also on the rise. Whether it's saving electricity

or water, the government is making moves to ensure that manufacturers are producing environmentally friendly products.

Pool owners are opting for energy-efficient pool equipment such as variable-speed pumps, LED lighting and solar-powered heaters. These options decrease energy consumption and cost while reducing environmental impact.

Grace Dunlop is the marketing director of Presidential Pools, a company that's been around for over 30 years. The founder, Tim Murphy, grew up cleaning pools and started his own business as a teen.

Dunlop said one of the most popular additions are fire features around or near a pool, like fire pots/bowls or fireplaces.

Fire bowls function as accent pieces that blend two elements to create a dramatic effect – some come with lights to really make the water pop. These fire bowls can also be connected to your automation system for easy operation.

“Wet edge pool designs are another popular trend that will continue in 2024,” Dunlop said. Also known as infinity or vanishing edge, this design creates the illusion that the water continues infinitely to the horizon by having one or more edges appear to blend with the surrounding landscape.

Another innovation is the improved efficiency of in-floor pool cleaning systems. Set into the pool's infrastructure, the systems distribute water in a pattern across the pool floor to clean up dirt and debris and improve water circulation.

“Other ongoing trends include water sheers – a type of waterfall feature, darker pool interior finishes, and baja shelves, which are almost a given with every pool now,” Dunlop said.

Some of the things that are losing popularity, according to Dunlop, are traditional artificial boulder grottos and waterfalls.

“Most customers want a modern version of this that is not built with boulders,” she said. “As for the trends, we consider the ‘simple rectangle’ the



PHOTOS COURTESY OF GRACE DUNLOP



Backyard pool trends are constantly changing, but some current ones include baja shelves, fire bowls and waterfall features.

most popular. The freeform tropical lagoon vibe doesn’t seem to be what homeowners want anymore.”

Other trends on their way out are traditional chlorine pools, as pool owners are looking into saltwater systems, UV-C sanitation, and natural filtration systems. Fiberglass or plastic pool slides – once known as the place to be when summer hits – are declining in popularity as well, most notably for safety concerns and aesthetic appeal.

Advancements in technology, sustainability, and design encourage pool owners to create – and update – their perfect outdoor oasis.







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