Clockwise from above: Leanne Phillips enjoys the serenity of her labyrinth garden. Dried agave stalks create dramatic silhouettes and offer perches for birds. Phillips designed her garden to include a stone labyrinth for meditation. Black and white rocks form the Chinese yin-yang symbol in the foreground.

Javelinas, packrats, rabbits and deer traverse Leanne Phillips' desert foothills property in Cave Creek, Arizona. She welcomes their presence and supplies them with a secluded watering hole. "I've been pleasantly surprised by how many diverse bird species started coming for water," she comments. "I feel like I live in the midst of a bird sanctuary."

Sanctuary is an important concept to Phillips. She has grown and tended plants for 20 years and believes in their power to create healing spaces within a landscape. Since construction of her current residence was completed three years ago, Phillips has gradually incorporated plants and other elements to enhance the feeling of sanctuary, serenity and healing. Examples include an
organic vegetable and herb garden, as well as beautiful sandstone slabs to sit upon while meditating or enjoying spectacular desert views.

An unusual element in her backyard is the labyrinth she created for meditation. She laid it out using native rock from the property, as well as white quartz, crystals and sandstone she has collected over the years.

"Walking a labyrinth helps balance one's energy," according to Phillips. "I designed mine to allow 10 people to walk it together, which I believe amplifies its beneficial effect." In addition to personal use, she offers the labyrinth as part of her energy-healing consulting business, Life Energy Awakenings. She also helps clients design their own gardens to promote healing and rejuvenation.

Clockwise from above: A view from the home's roof reveals the layout of the front garden. Wok-shaped bowls filled with glass beads and rocks simulate flowing water. They are positioned to enhance the movement of energy in the garden, says Leanne Phillips. Plants near the home's "oasis zone" provide a feeling of lushness and a sense of seclusion.
PLANTING PLAN

Phillips appreciates the desert’s beauty and strives to keep her improved garden areas as natural as possible. “I’ve been adding just enough plant material in an oasis zone near the house for a feeling of greenery and lushness, while still maintaining a seamless look that flows into the surrounding natural desert.”

Because she used to grow cacti for resale, Phillips had many “leftovers” that she installed in her landscape. She planted small saguaros, envisioning that someday they will grow into a stand of statuesque cacti. She also added golden barrel, organ pipe and senita cacti, as well as numerous agave and aloe species.

Of course, all this new plant material attracted wildlife visitors, who proceeded to chew or dig up plants, seeking moisture and sustenance. “It’s interesting how unpredictable animals are when

Above: When temperatures drop, a fire pit near one of the gazebos offers warmth. To the left, stone slabs serve as a bridge over a dry wash. Below: A pendant-shaped iron piece filled with natural fibers hangs in the yard.

WILDLIFE-RESISTANT PLANTS

- Agave lophantha
- Black-spined agave (Agave macrorhiza)
- Blue euphorbia (Euphorbia rigida)
- Candelilla (Euphorbia antisiphilitica)
- Mexican fencepost cactus (Pachycereus marginatus)
- Moroccan mound (Euphorbia resinifera)
- Octopus agave (Agave vilmoriniana)
- Ponytail palm (Beaucarnea recurvata)
- Sago palm (Cycas revoluta)
- Slipper flower (Pedilanthus macrocarpus)
- Totem pole cactus (Lophocereus schottii f. monstruosus)
- Variegated Yucca aloifolia

Foliage Plants
- Artemisia sp.
- Bower vine (Pandorea jasminoides, P. jasminoides ‘Variegata’)
- Creosote bush (Larrea tridentata)
- Easter egg emu bush (Eremophila racemosa)
- Germander (Teucrium chamissoi)
- Lemongrass (Cymbopogon citratus)
- Mt. Lemmon marigold (Tagetes lemmonii)
- Rosemary (Rosmarinus sp.)
Elevation changes were incorporated throughout the property to give visitors the feeling that there is more to explore. Rocks and natural stone form retaining walls along the stairs.

it comes to their eating habits,” observes Phillips. “They will go after some aloe but leave others alone. A plant they graze on in my yard may be left alone in another landscape. I’ve lost plants to trial and error, but I’ve also found many that they don’t bother.” (See Page 58 for her list of survivors.) She protects some plants by encasing them in window screen material or wire until they become established. For her patio containers, she covers their top layers of soil with heavy rocks to prevent ground squirrels from unearth the plants. Spraying peppermint oil around vegetation sometimes keeps packrats at bay, although Phillips finds it needs to be reapplied to maintain a strong scent.

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The stones for this sacred geometry disk where laid out with the help of Leanne Phillips’ son, Miles. She uses the area in her energy-healing practice.

FOUND ITEMS

The gardener stockpiles a wealth of odds and ends that she finds or that people give her until she discovers a purpose for them. “I have about two-and-a-half acres, so there’s plenty of room to accumulate things,” she jokes. For example, she couldn’t pass up several free pallets stacked with tons of assorted stone from a local rock yard. “They didn’t want it, so I just had to pay them to deliver it. I’ve been enjoying incorporating the pieces throughout my landscape ever since.”

Included on the pallets were flat pieces of slate she used to top stone benches she built herself; lengths of thick stone slab that turned into a footbridge crossing a small chasm between the home and front patio; and all sorts of random pavers that she laid as the patio floor.

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Daughter Amanda works in the enclosed organic vegetable and herb garden that she and her mother constructed.

Using other reclaimed materials from her cache, Phillips constructed naturalistic perches to attract birds closer to the house. She cemented 18- to 24-inch sections of hollow metal pipe—left over from the building of her carport—into the ground as "vases." They support towering dried agave flower stalks collected from her landscape. Birds perch on them to survey their surroundings, just as they do in the wild.

Phillips used some of her other stockpiled materials to build a makeshift greenhouse to protect daughter Amanda.
Above: Side-by-side gazebos provide an expanded covered seating area. Phillips laid a bridge made from scrap wood for access across the wash. Right: Large slate rocks and an Agave victoriniae-reginae create an artistic statement in the back garden.

da's organic vegetable and herb garden from devastation by desert creatures. The mother and daughter took random pieces of wood and metal posts to build a frame, incorporated an old metal door, and enclosed the structure with a mix of shade screen, hardware cloth, and chicken wire left over from other projects. The garden's offbeat style melds into its site as if it has been there for decades.

AREAS FOR RELAXATION

Phillips installed two matching gazebos side by side to create a shady patio area for enjoying splendid views of nearby Cave Creek Regional Park. "It was less expensive to buy two smaller struc-
Colorful rocks help define spaces within the backyard. The stacked stone in the foreground doubles as a retaining wall. A large pot in back serves as a focal point.

In the backyard, she and son Miles laid out stone pieces in a circular pattern that she refers to as a sacred geometry disk. "I've developed a guided meditation to go with it," she explains. "It is meant to be a fun, playful space to help expand one's natural creativity and empower the spirit."

Phillips plans to continue enhancing her garden areas gradually. "I work on a project, step back and enjoy it for a while, and then decide on the next segment. It's fun to let garden spaces evolve," she concludes. 

See Sources.