

TRADITIONAL HOME

Holiday 1997

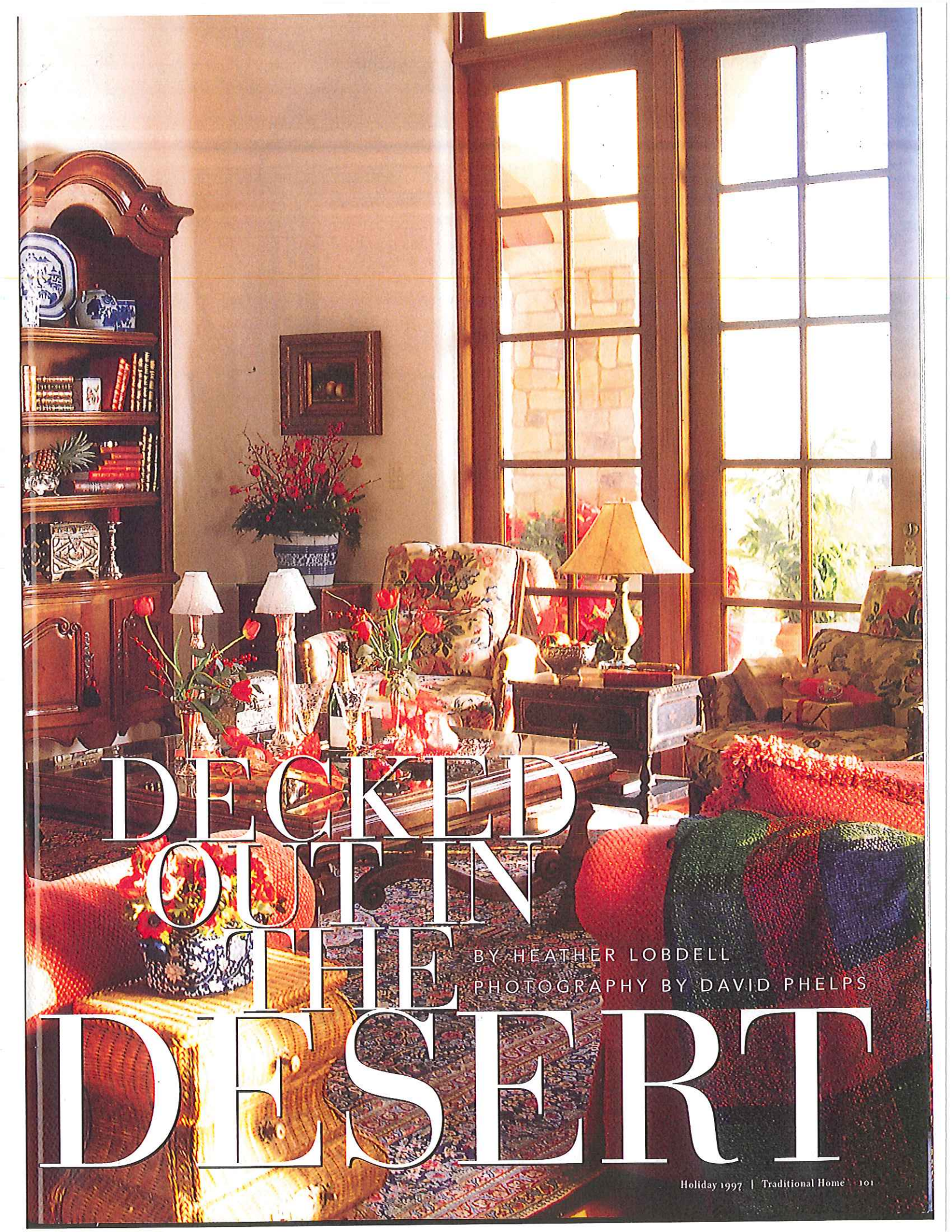
DRESSED
FOR THE
HOLIDAYS

THE QUEEN MOTHER'S
NEW GARDEN

GARLANDS, SWAGS, AND WREATHS



Old World meets New World in Iris and Bryan Updegraff's Arizona desert home. A brilliantly carved Mexican stone mantel gleams next to French-inspired bookcases and plump rosy chenille sofas. The large room is wrapped in fresh holiday decoration.



DECKED OUT IN THE

BY HEATHER LOBDELL
PHOTOGRAPHY BY DAVID PHELPS

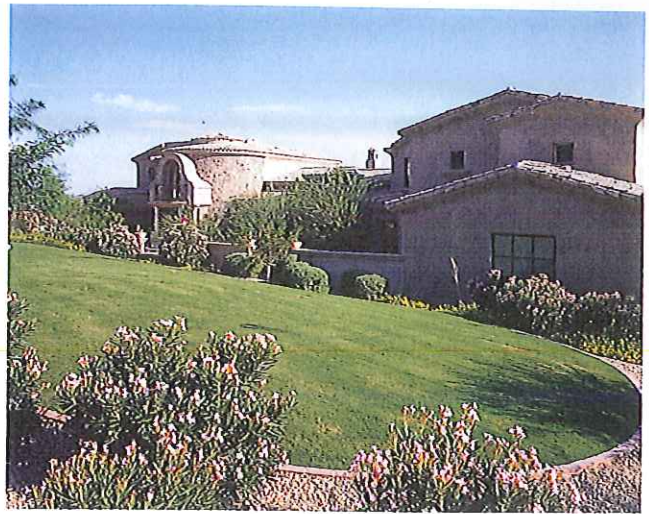
DESERT





Left: The living room's cocktail table is made from antique Indian grillwork covered with glass. It is dressed with silver candlesticks with shimmering beaded shades, tulips in trumpet vases, and the makings of holiday dessert for two. **Above:** The 20-foot-tall foyer is the perfect setting for a Christmas tree. **Above right:** The Updegraffs' three-year-old Spanish colonial-style home in Arizona mixes stone, stucco, tile, and brick. **Right:** Bryan and Iris Updegraff.

PHOTOGRAPHS ABOVE RIGHT AND RIGHT: TOM VENEKLASEN



The warm climate and casual nature of life near Phoenix are two

major reasons Iris and Bryan Updegraff settled in the Arizona desert 18 years ago and never left. "This place just felt right," Iris says. "The living is easy here; we felt at home with the relaxed mood." It is only at Christmastime that Iris might admit to fantasies of being somewhere snowy and more formal. But these thoughts are fleeting. Iris, an interior designer with two teenagers, is too busy creating her own brand of Yuletide magic, Arizona-style. No, this isn't Currier & Ives, but it's magic nevertheless.

"Bryan and I see Christmas as a time to make dreams come true," Iris says. "For us, it's both a private family time and a time to open our doors wide to entertain our friends." Christmas Eve is reserved for church and a private family dinner, but during the days leading up to the holidays, the Updegraffs like to gather their friends near. "I like holiday parties to be very dressed up," Iris reports. "Since Arizona is so casual, it's nice to have an excuse to get really decked out."

The Updegraffs' three-year-old Spanish colonial-style home is also dressed up for the holidays. The grand stone and stucco structure, with its red-tiled roof, balconies, and intricately worked iron and brick, lends itself to dramatic decoration. In the soaring foyer just beyond antique wooden doors, a 14-foot pine tree welcomes family and friends. Sparkling with handblown ornaments and twinkling lights, the tree sets a tone of warmth, abundance, and good cheer. The tree takes Iris and her 17-year-old daughter Devon two days to decorate. "I love to bring out my collections and Christmas things," she says. "It always feels like sifting through a scrapbook—each ornament has its own history, and we recount many of the stories each time we decorate the tree."

Whatever the season, this house is built on memories. After





NO, THIS ISN'T CURRIER & YES, BUT

nearly three decades of collecting, the Updegraffs needed a place designed to showcase their antique furniture and artwork. "Bryan and I have been collecting since we first got married," Iris says. "We've always thought it better to do without than to buy for some temporary need. That's the way we ended up with so many pieces we truly love." This house is a reflection of what it holds within: a harmonious blend of regional desert style and timeless European tradition. Under one roof, Mexican architecture and artifacts are at home with furnishings gathered during the Updegraffs' sojourns to France, England, and the Mediterranean.

The living room illustrates Iris' ability to mix regional and old-world elements beautifully. A dramatic Mexican stone mantel is flanked by two French-style bookcases (which have the appearance of furniture, including faux feet, but are actually recessed built-ins). The mantel, carved by local artisans, and crowned by a 19th-century Mexican mirror, is dressed up for the season with Chinese ginger jars, juniper greens, tall natural twigs ripe with berries, and red tulips—a fanciful indulgence. Iris splurges on fresh flowers for Christmas parties, but is practical, too. The rest of the arrangement, minus the tulips, is bountiful and looks good all through the holidays. John Johnstonbaugh, a Scottsdale floral designer with a shop called Fleur de Lis, created the mantel dressing and other fresh Christmas tablescapes here.

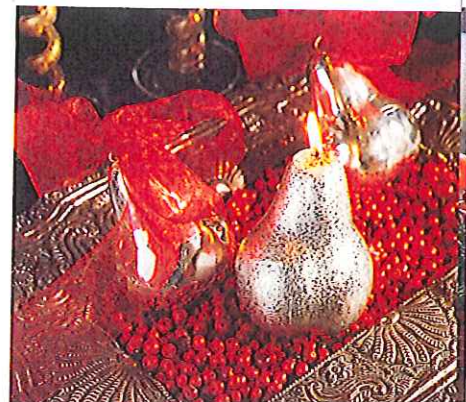
"John delivers a little extra punch," Iris says. "His work is lovely; it's whimsical." Johnstonbaugh added a seasonal pop to already elegant vignettes throughout this house. Using fruit, flowers, twigs, bark, and other mostly natural elements, Johnstonbaugh sought to evoke the romance of a Tuscan villa. "By using citrus and other fruits grown in Arizona," he says, "we got a natural feeling and kept costs down."

The Updegraffs' dining room and breakfast area illustrate several of Johnstonbaugh's fresh and colorful Arizona-grown holiday floral ideas along with other ways Iris has gracefully blended indigenous influences and European traditions. In the dining room, a plaster beehive fireplace climbs to meet a spectacular arched brick ceiling. The ceiling was constructed by an Arizona stonemason who worked on his back on a scaffold for nearly four weeks to create the old Mexican design.

Against these dramatic architectural elements, an 18th-century French armoire that Iris and Bryan discovered in Provence and an antique table and chairs brought home from England are especially striking. The top of the armoire is dressed with juniper greens and berries, its shelves with swags of tiny lady apples, cranberries, and kumquats strung like beads, and large French ribbon bows adorn cupboard doors. On the table, a pedestaled Mexican angel forms the centerpiece of a tablescape that combines soft fabric, juniper, and long strands of limes, tangerines, lady apples, kumquats, and cranberries with sprigs of bright red berries, shiny ornaments, and wrapped gifts. "This is a wonderful place to enjoy



Opposite: In the dining room, Mexican architectural elements form a dramatic backdrop for elegant European antiques Iris and Bryan have gathered during trips to France and England. The holiday decorations here are natural, readily available, and very colorful. Above: Blooming plants bring year-round cheer to the home office niche just off the kitchen. Below: Silver pears sitting on a bed of cranberries in a silver tray make a bold Christmas decoration.



T'S MAGIC NEVERTHELESS.



BRYAN AND I SEE CHRISTMAS AS A TIME

a big Christmas dinner," Iris says. "We always go overboard with a turkey and a ham and all sorts of trimmings. We eat and eat and eat some more."

The airy breakfast area, just beyond the kitchen, is a place that everyone loves to be. The Updegraffs eat most of their meals here at the welcoming banquette, which also doubles as a family room couch. There is usually at least one person sitting here talking with Iris while she cooks dinner. During the holiday season, a tablescape often adorns the breakfast table.

The breakfast room's bright blue and paisley pillows play lyrically to whimsical painted draperies and iron rods. "The real thing would have just gotten in the way," Iris explains. "But the room needed some softening, and this really worked." A plaster wall niche, a common southwestern architectural feature, is treated to a little European twist: its painted motifs are inspired by Italian ceramics.

The Updegraffs' kitchen is just beyond the breakfast area. The large space, with its luminous cherry cabinetry, wood beams, and brick backsplashes, has as its focal point a dramatic fluted plaster hood with a rim edged in tile. Just to the left of the range is a grill



Opposite: Iris, a dedicated cook, designed this kitchen, including the large granite island and cherry cabinetry. Left: Having a kitchen grilling station was another must-have. This one looks old but isn't and makes healthy cooking easy. Above: Behind the very real iron chandelier, the window's draperies and rod are a trompe l'oeil paint treatment. Below: A paisley shawl and a large green platter are topped by long strands of fruit strung on thin wire and wrapped around a base of fruit that includes pineapples.

For more information, see the Reader's Resource on page 124.



center designed to look aged, but actually is state of the art. A bountiful wreath, red and green roosters, poinsettias, paperwhites, and more colorful fruits bring the holiday spirit flooding into the kitchen. "Since I spend so much time here, especially during the holidays, I want it to be Christmassy, too," Iris says. "Since Christmas comes just once a year, why not make it really special?" Why not, indeed. ❧

Regional Editor: Barbara Mundall

TO MAKE DREAMS COME TRUE.

—IRIS UPDEGRAFF

