

SMALL HOUSE LIVES UP TO ITS BIG POTENTIAL



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The Quail Manor, home of Steve and Ann Berthe, is loaded with green features and outdoor living spaces. The backyard features passive landscape water harvesting to capture rainwater.

West-side home is full of tricks to maximize its 813 square feet

By Gabrielle Fimbres

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When Steve and Ann Berthe first saw the home at the base of "A" Mountain, the sad little 1963 ranch-style house was infested with termites and sagged under the weight of age and neglect.

But there was something about the tiny home's place in this world: It was at the foot of the mountain, surrounded by nature and a solid neighborhood.

So the couple bought the home for \$55,000 in March 2014. They thought it needed a new roof and a full remodel. But soon after they started work on the three-bedroom house with 813 square feet of interior living, they realized it needed a whole lot more.

"The block walls were crumbling," Steve Berthe said. "They had to come down."

By Christmas, the Berthes, along with Tucson architect Jake Boen of In Place Architecture and general contractor Craig Bemis, had created what the Berthes are calling The Quail Manor, loaded with "green" features and outdoor living spaces.

After months of construction at a cost of about \$200,000, the home is, well, perfect.

"It has changed drastically, but the main footprint stayed the same," Steve Berthe said, standing in the breakfast courtyard at the front of the home, admiring views of the mountains and the city.

Still tiny, the home has two bedrooms, two baths, a comfortable great room and kitchen, and a one-car garage spacious enough for a laundry bay, exercise area and bicycle storage.

The home nearly doubles in size when you include outdoor living spaces, where the Berthes spend most of their time.

"This is where we eat nine out of 10 of our meals," Steve Berthe said, under the shaded pergola overlooking the expansive backyard garden carefully designed by Ann Berthe. She transformed a dirt backyard with a couple of sparse plants and a dead eucalyptus into a blooming desert paradise that attracts hummingbirds and other winged creatures.

She planted a couple of young saguaros that she helped rescue from being demolished in construction projects through the Tucson Cactus and Succulent Society. The dead eucalyptus was sculpted and transformed into a sanctuary for birds, with copious offerings of bird seed.

The couple split their time between Tucson and Denver, where Ann Berthe is a plant recorder at the Denver Botanic Gardens and Steve is a retired consultant.

The Berthes were involved with each step of the project. While they initially hoped to keep costs low, they soon realized they wanted to make the most of the project, incorporating green and high-tech features.

The line of the roof, originally a low-sloped gable roof, was reworked to follow the natural grade



The kitchen maximizes storage space by incorporating floor-to-ceiling cabinets. All the kitchen furnishings are from IKEA, which cut down on costs.



Vaulted ceilings give the living room the feeling of a much bigger space.



The kitchen features top-of-the-line countertops and a glass hood.



The one-car garage also includes a laundry bay and an exercise area.

TIPS FOR WORKING WITH A SMALL SPACE

- Get creative with wall space. Consider cabinets and shelving that extend to the ceiling.
- Avoid hallways and swinging doors. Pocket doors and sliding doors save space.
- Optimize bathroom space with storage up high, and place electrical switches outside of the bathroom, to maximize wall space.

Jake Boen, owner, In Place Architecture



A kitchen table tucks into a corner outside the second bedroom/office at the Berthe home.

of the site, allowing for a mounted solar array on the southern roof slope. The Berthes make as much electricity as they consume.

Other green features include gray-water plumbing, a 2,500-gallon water-harvesting cistern, a real-time weather-sensing irrigation controller, LED lighting and passive landscape water harvesting.

The entire house is wired and automated so that "you can live there without actually being there," Boen said. Garage doors and entry locks can be controlled via smartphone.

A corrugated metal roof adds character, as do poured concrete floors in shades of brown and Craftsman features throughout the home.

Boen knew that vaulted ceilings would add to the feeling of spaciousness. At its highest, the

ceiling is 12½ feet tall, adding to the home's open-air feeling.

Careful thought was put into space-saving features, including barn doors that slide open, pocket doors in the bathrooms and towering cabinets for additional storage. All of the kitchen features came from IKEA.

"We had never been in an IKEA store," Steve Berthe said. "We spent not more than \$15,000 in the kitchen, including the appliances and the top-of-the-line countertops."

The home was planned to take advantage of every square inch of space, Boen said.

"When you are working on a small home, there is a lot of attention to detail," he said. "It's probably more challenging than a 5,000-square-foot home."

The entire team worked well together, said Ann Berthe.

"When issues came up, everyone had a neat idea," she said. The Berthes enjoy the cozy home.

"It's comfortable," Steve Berthe said. "You can see everything and you are not wandering around. I have always liked small spaces. And it's easy to clean. You can vacuum in five minutes."

And they are in love with their new neighborhood.

"There is something special here," Steve Berthe said. "Everybody knows everybody. All around us are people who have lived here all of their lives. They all look out for each other."

"This neighborhood has turned out to be incredible," he said.

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