



## Courting a lifestyle

**Old European charm graces Tulsa home, national magazine**

By Penny Cockerell  
Staff Writer

TULSA — Jack and Susan Arnold built and designed hundreds of high-end homes for families across the country. Then it became time to build a place of their own.

The quest began with an empty lot in a midtown Tulsa neighborhood near Utica Square. It ended with their European-style abode as the cover story for the May/June issue of *Veranda* magazine.

"We wanted this to be for us and how we live, and so it was fairly easy from that standpoint to just do things we love," Jack Arnold said.

*Veranda* editor Lisa Newsom said the Arnolds' home was chosen for its beautiful Country French architecture and interior design. She especially liked the wonderful access to the outdoors that French doors in the living room provide.

All rooms on the main level of the Arnolds' home have doors that open onto one of the four courtyards. That was a must for the Arnolds and a great place to start planning.

Building the ideal home starts with a few simple questions: Where do you spend the most time at home? What are your focal points? What can you simply not live without?

For the Arnolds, the courtyards were a focal point, and they made sure to use every inch of the lot to create them. These outdoor gems include flowers, foliage, outdoor furnishings, fountains and a pool.

The Arnolds gathered many ideas from their travels abroad, particularly to France. Susan Arnold, a designer, also owned a French antiques shop.

"The way they maintain courtyards and the way they accessed those courtyards is something we wanted to do," Jack Arnold said. "We wanted to walk out of our master bedroom into the courtyard, and that's what we do."

The courtyards were designed to withstand Oklahoma's weather. A fireplace was added to keep seating areas warm in winter. Ceiling fans help keep the summer heat at bay.

They graded the land then positioned the courtyards to block the afternoon's intense western sun and included a north wall to keep out winter wind. The result is outdoor space that can be used nine months of the year.

Indoors, the great room has four sets of French doors that lead to two courtyards: The front courtyard contains gravel and the garage; the back courtyard is the

ILLUSTRATION BY STEVE BOALDIN  
THE OKLAHOMAN  
PHOTOS PROVIDED BY  
VERANDA MAGAZINE

**Above:** Tulsa residents Jack and Susan Arnold designed their home around four European-style courtyards, using their entire lot.

**Right:** The entry of Arnolds' home features stained concrete flooring and country French furnishings.

**Below:** This outdoor room is near the home's swimming pool.



# House

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pool area. The sides of the house also have courtyards.

In planning the home, the Arnolds also asked themselves where they spend the most time. If they spent less than 10 percent of their time in a room — in their case, a formal dining room — then they cut out that room.

The Arnolds also learned from the hundreds of clients for whom they've built homes.

"I see rooms that are segregated from the rest of the house, like a formal living room. Then they find that their families are always in their living room and the kitchen," Jack Arnold said. "I always find people gathering in the kitchen, so knowing that, I wanted the kitchen to be a big part of the house."

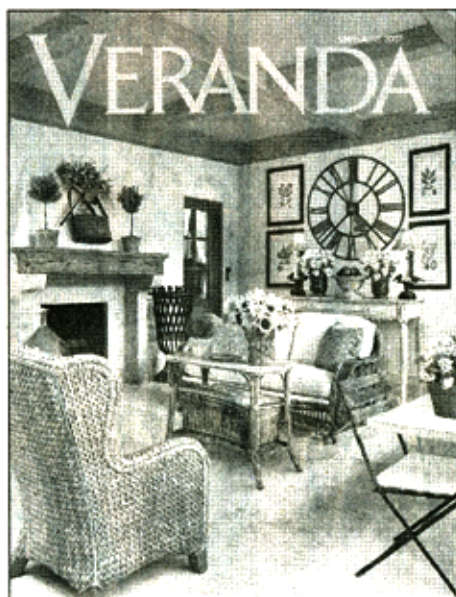
They treated themselves as their own clients and made lists of what was important to them.

The interior focal point of their home is primarily the kitchen, with a great room as a close second. The Arnolds wanted a home where family and friends can gather in the kitchen while the meal is prepared; where everyone can watch television in the great room or gather around the fire.

The beamed ceilings give the interior a casual feel. The stained concrete floors required patience in the Arnolds' attempt to replicate reclaimed limestone from France. So did the installation of radiant heat underneath all the main-level flooring, but Jack Arnold said it was worth the trouble.

Having lots of natural light was also important, so the Arnolds designed the home to be one-room deep to ensure light flowing into each room.

They put the master bedroom on the main level and added a sitting area as a buffer. Upstairs are two guest bedrooms, a home office and exercise area. The couple



built a guesthouse near the pool.

Jack Arnold said he never considers square footage when designing a home and is reluctant to reveal the square footage of this one. More important, he said, is using all the space and adding quality that sets the home apart.

On the exterior, for instance, the Arnolds attempted to create a finish that gave the stucco an older feel. "We spent weeks trying to come up with a cocktail, if you will, to try to get this stain work on the stucco. We made it appear much older than what the property is," he said.

Inside, the home includes all kinds of custom features such as cabinetry and finishes. The Arnolds included their custom copper chimney pot, which sits high on the outside chimney for a better draw. The chimney pot also keeps birds, animals and rain out of the fireplace and is aesthetically pleasing.

For anyone designing a home, Jack Ar-

nold suggests keeping it simple and not overreacting. Think about how you live. Build that into the design.

"Things are changing; times are changing," Arnold said. "What was important when my parents were growing up was the formal dining room. Today it's the home office, the kitchen, and the living room and being with the family. You've just got to listen to people and figure out how you live."

Arnold also suggests hiring professionals.

"I think you need an architect, a landscape architect and an interior designer. Some say, 'I have a budget, and I can't afford it.' And I say you can't afford not to do that," Arnold said. "They'll guide you and listen to what you want."

In considering what he'd do differently in his home, Arnold said the only changes he'd make are ones he left off, such as a birdbath he planned but didn't include. Those that gave him headaches, such as the radiant flooring, are things he'd do again.

Planning, he said, is everything. For instance, if you want a low-maintenance home, consider clad windows that don't need repainting or a drip irrigation system so sprinklers don't wear down the home's exterior.

And if you cannot afford to finish everything at once, plan for it anyway and finish it later.

"You may not be able to do the landscaping, but maybe you can later," Arnold said. "Maybe you have this room, and you can't furnish it now, but you can plan it later on."

The Arnolds consider it a huge compliment to be selected for the Veranda cover.

"In our field, we think of it as being the major magazine," Jack Arnold said. "We're fielding calls from every part of the country now."

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