

The Arizona Outdoor Living Guide

A 20-year Valley builder's playbook for pools, hardscape, shade, fire, lighting and entertaining spaces — calibrated to Arizona heat, monsoon and HOA reality.

How to use this guide

This is the companion PDF to our online pillar guides at aeoutdoordesign.com/learning-center. Each chapter below mirrors a long-form web guide where you can dive deeper. Keep this PDF for offline reference and share it with anyone weighing in on your project.

1. Pool design & equipment

Variable-speed pumps now pay back in 14–20 months at current APS/SRP rates. Salt systems make sense on 70% of new Valley builds. Cyanuric acid (CYA) management is the single most overlooked maintenance variable in Phoenix.

2. Desert backyard design

Sun-path matters more than square footage. Plant for microclimates: shade trees on the west/southwest, low-water groundcover under deck spillovers, and never put a Texas Sage where it gets afternoon reflected glare.

3. HOA & city approval

Most Valley HOAs require an ARC package with site plan, elevations, materials list and neighbor notification. Cities (Phoenix, Scottsdale, Chandler, Gilbert, Mesa, Peoria) have separate permits for pools, gas, electrical and structural shade.

4. Outdoor kitchens

Plan around your real cooking pattern, not Instagram. A 36-inch grill plus sink plus 30 inches of landing space on each side covers 80% of how Valley families actually cook outside.

5. Pergolas, ramadas & shade

Louvered aluminum is the right answer when you want the option of full sun. Solid ramadas win when you want a true outdoor room with fans and lighting. Wind load matters — check city engineering before you commit.

6. Hardscape & pavers

Travertine reads cooler underfoot than concrete pavers in July. Porcelain pavers are the dark-horse winner for pool decks if budget allows. Avoid sealed concrete around heavy splash zones.

7. Fire features

Warming Trends crossfire burners produce a flame 3–4x taller than equivalent BTU rings. For an 18-inch diameter pit, target 90,000–125,000 BTU.

8. Casitas & cabanas

A true casita with bathroom and sleeping needs a building permit and full residential code compliance. A cabana with only roof, electrical and water can usually be permitted as an accessory structure.

9. Outdoor lighting

2700K warm-white is the standard for residential outdoor living. Layer path plus accent plus ambient plus task. Lutron Caséta and Control4 both integrate cleanly with low-voltage transformers.

10. Putting greens & sport courts

Crushed-stone base depth (3–4 inches compacted) determines whether your green survives monsoon drainage. Cheap installations fail in year two.

Your \$500 Design Credit

Submitting the form on any of our pillar guides reserves a \$500 credit toward your design consultation when you book this month. A designer will reach out within one business day to schedule.

Questions: (623) 300-2589 · aeoutdoordesign.com