

Serenity on the Mountain

*This Garden is only accessible via a provided shuttle

Topic: Living and gardening with wildlife

Garden History

We purchased our home in December of 2014. The home was built in 2002 and while no landscaping was done at that time the original owner installed irrigation to the existing bosque of mesquite trees. In 2006 the next owners constructed a walled courtyard that surrounds the house and installed brick pavers in the front and back as well as an outdoor fireplace. Those owners had a professional landscaper create the front and back courtyards as well as the south facing walkway. When we moved in, much of this original landscaping was overgrown. The property was freshened up by removing some crowded plants, planting shrubs and small trees more suited to the location. We have tried to create "garden rooms" and small vignettes that are pleasing focal points. The general theme of our garden is peaceful serenity using many native and desert adapted plants. On the south side of the property, we installed flagstone steps leading down to a patio surrounded by benches with views of the mountains. We also built a small, enclosed vegetable and herb garden. Most of the plants on the south side of the property are rescued, neighbor donations, or ones that we've divided or propagated.

Garden Basics

The courtyards and the front circle next to the road have drip irrigation. On the south side of the property is the mesquite bosque which is no longer irrigated so we hand water in between rainfall. Two 55-gallon rain barrels on either side of the barn capture rain off that roof as well as a 65-gallon rain barrel/planter that captures rainwater off the roof of the ramada. We have an informal compost pile where we put oak leaves and mesquite leaves. We also have a barrel tumbler where we compost coffee grounds and vegetable scraps. In the vegetable garden, I mix native soil with potting soil and compost from the tumbler along with $\frac{1}{4}$ # ammonium phosphate and $1 \frac{1}{2}$ # sulfur. The vegetable garden is irrigated with bubblers on a timer and shaded with a retractable sunscreen. Grubs have been a problem, so we put beneficial nematodes in the garden every quarter.

Critters are abundant here in the country! We have rabbits, voles, rats, mice and occasionally deer. We control the rats and mice in the courtyard with traps set inside locked boxes. Our dog also does a good job of chasing the rabbits if they are inside the courtyard. Outside the courtyard I place wire cages around new plants to keep the rabbits at bay. Once the plants are established, I remove these and occasionally sprinkle blood meal around the plants.

Garden philosophy: This garden was designed with respect for the Sonoran Desert and has aesthetically pleasing vignettes. Living in an open range, the garden showcases native plants and cares for the wild animals while maintaining a beautiful landscape. Shade-loving plants and those that need more sun are provided with harvested rainwater, natural rainfall and the occasional use of tap water.