



Spines, Prickles, Thorns and Teeth

Topics: Pots Up! Planting Annuals, Perennials and Succulents

Garden History:

We bought a vacant lot full of prickly pears, chollas and acacias about 20 years ago. Our first stab at landscaping was heavily influenced by our midwestern backgrounds. We planted bushes, trees and flowers that were lush, green and tropical looking. It took a while to develop an eye for succulents and natives.

Now, along the street front is a mostly native wildflower garden that includes desert marigolds, bluebells, dogweed, triangle leaf bursage, penstemons and cacti. I stay away from annuals that seed heavily and may invade my neighbor's property. Closer to the entrance are non-native Texas rangers, rosemary and yuccas.

Inside the wall is a javelina and rabbit proof garden. It includes walls of pyracantha and Lady Banks roses. Raised beds are filled with roses, evergreens and potted plants. Pomegranate bushes, heavenly bamboo, Texas rangers and a native sandpaper bush line the fence. In between the plants are plants in pots and rusty metal sculptures.

Most important of all is the growing collection of unusual cacti and succulents- a bonsai aloe, crested cacti, beautiful spines and living rocks all competing for attention.

The Arroyo path is a wild collection of native plants that can be viewed from the patio above or as walked through. The latter is the coolest and quickest way to get back to your car.

Garden Basics

Soil Mix: In the ground, I use what nature provides. In pots and raised beds I use commercial potting soil. For succulents, I mix commercial potting soil with native sand.

Fertilizer: I use time-release fertilizer for roses. In addition, I give flowering plants, including succulents, a boost seasonally of a dilute, higher phosphorus fertilizer weekly. Succulents in pots receive a dilute general-purpose fertilizer. Natives in the ground are on their own.

Pest Control:

My two major pests are pack rats and leaf cutter ants. I use snap traps for the former and diatomaceous earth for the latter. Weeds are harvested and everything else is only treated if I see a problem. I use water, soapy water or just crush big destructive bugs.

Personal Gardening Secrets: Google! They have answers for everything. See extension.arizon.edu for publications about any of the topics mentioned here.