



The Wild Side

Topics: Composting and Water Conservation

Garden History:

Our nearly 1-acre property started out full of landscaping gravel, caliche, and a few suffering plants when we moved in 5 years ago. Starting with only a few plants at a time, we would plant a tree, a shrub and some ground cover in a little cluster together. With young children around, our garden has grown by working in short increments, frequently. Originally, there were 4 mature African Sumacs, 2 Italian Cypress Trees, some woody rosemary plants, and aloe patches stricken with aloe mites that required removal in the first 2 years. The soil was barren and could barely grow weeds. We also continue to remove drooping mature agaves infested with Agave Snout Weevils. With a lot of Caliche in the soil, we invested in a jack-hammer to help dig when adding new plants

Our landscape and gardens are wild! Mature Velvet Mesquites, Palo Verdes, and Whitethorn Acacia anchor the property and provide essential shade. There are Desert Willows, Brittlebush, and lots of native perennials everywhere. There are citrus, young fig trees, pomegranates, mulberries, stone fruit trees, vines, and vegetables. There's a tortoise enclosure tucked in as well. As a plant enthusiast, you can find nearly one of everything here if you look closely.

Irrigation: There are drip systems throughout the property separated into many different zones to carefully manage water use. Higher water use plants are generally closer to the house to make it easier to manage their needs. The cisterns and laundry-to-landscape systems offset the higher water-use plants like fruit trees. Passive rainwater catchment basins capture the flow of street run-off and nurture native plants.

Fertilizer: Fruit Trees and the vegetable garden are routinely fertilized with an all-purpose organic fertilizer, fish emulsion, and seasonally with worm castings tea. The landscape is fertilized by the fauna that visit and leave their droppings under the plants, and if something needs a boost it gets some organic fertilizer.

Pest Management: This garden is working toward restoring a balanced ecosystem. We avoid herbicides and pesticides, remove invasive plant species, and welcome all wildlife. This includes brush piles for bird habitat, minimally pruning trees and shrubs, providing wildlife water sources, and respecting the balance of predator/prey. New plants are protected with hardware mesh cages/fencing, and damaging rodents like packrats are encouraged to the outer edges of the property by eliminating nesting opportunities near the home. Lots of bugs eat through the plants at various times of the year, and we focus energy on plant care, so they bounce back readily.

Garden Philosophy: We are reducing waste and respecting the flora and fauna that need a home here as much as our family does.