

Desert Oasis

10380 E Rancho Del Este Drive
Tucson, AZ 85749

Topics: Who's in a name? Meet Wynne Brown as 'Botanist Sara Lemmon'

Garden History

Our home is situated in a mesquite bosque on riparian habitat near the Agua Caliente Wash. The land behind the house has been left in its original wild state, so we have native wildlife visitors from time to time.

We built our home in 1998 and soon after began the landscaping with design and implementation help from local consultants. The pool has a central position in the backyard with plants surrounding it including an impressive Thompson's yucca. To some of the original mesquites, we've added ash, vitex, hackberry, Mediterranean fan palm, and palo verde trees. The backyard area features more than 80 boulders of Catalina gneiss composition that form



many nooks and crannies for shrubs, perennials, and succulents to hide and show off. We have a special interest in native bunch grasses and have set up a display of nine different varieties along a dry streambed. The raised-bed vegetable garden is of cinder block construction, but due to tree root invasion, has been converted to a stock tank design with good results and better control. We prefer cool weather vegetable gardening because of fewer pests, less watering, and more nutritional vegetables. Beets, carrots, and arugula are special favorites. In 2020 we submitted our yard for certification by the Tucson Audubon Society's Habitat at Home Program. Many of the shrubs and trees in the front courtyard and backyard have been selected to attract a wide variety of birds. While Nancy is not a Master Gardener, she is a major contributor to the landscape design and maintenance. In addition to her interest in plant choices and garden art, she is in charge of river rock design, gravel hygiene and general tidiness (a difficult job). Overall, we describe our garden style as: Southwestern Native mostly.

Garden Basics

Watering: Most plants in front and back requiring water receive it through a 20-year-old drip irrigation layout (which springs leaks weekly). Water harvested from half of the roof drains to a 650 gallon tank, used for additional watering via hose, wherever and whenever needed.

Soil: The mix for the vegetable raised beds is equal amounts of potting soil, compost and perlite

Fertilizer: For most plants including cactus, we use a diluted Miracle Gro 10-10-10. For Adeniums and canna lilies, we use Bloom Booster high phosphorus.

Pest Control: Most pests are controlled with soapy spray and BT.

Garden Philosophy: We get great joy from working together in the landscape and admiring the results of our labor. Our advice to newcomers to Tucson: "Don't let plant failures get you down. They go with the territory, and they are part of your education."