

A Desert Sanctuary

12460 E. Mesquite Trail
Tucson, Arizona 85747

Topics: Irises in the Desert

Garden History

I have lived at this property for a little over 20 years. I fell in love with the unique little house and guest house and I soon became enamored with the surrounding desert plants and animals. The property is open desert except for a patio and a small fenced garden. There are visiting javelinas, coyotes, bobcats, deer and occasionally a cow from a neighboring ranch.

I had a few false starts in planning what to grow, but I finally succumbed to my love of roses and irises. I have many roses and over 60 irises in the beautiful gardens. Most recently, I have planted pollinator plants, both garden and desert varieties. I have been rewarded with many pollinators that are not only beneficial, but delightful to watch. The gardens are certified by The North American Butterfly Association.

My house and gardens have been sold to new owners in 2021, but the gardens are maintained by another Master Gardener and the new owners. The new owners have agreed to show my gardening skills on the home tour.

Gardening Basics

Watering: Auto irrigation is used by way of drip, bubblers, sprayers and soaker hose. All other watering is done by hand.

Soil: Except for desert plants which are planted in natural soil, garden plants are in commercial potting soil or in-ground mixtures.

Fertilizer: Roses: I use fertilizer specifically for roses in spring and fall. Irises: Use super triple phosphate in fall and one month after blooming. Encourage bloom by applying Super Bloom every two weeks, February through March. All other plants are fed a balanced fertilizer as needed. Pollinator plants should not be sprayed with chemicals, as that could harm the pollinators.

Pest Control: I plant plants that the javelinas don't like and I keep the yard clear to discourage snakes. I put out water in pot saucers for the animals so they won't be tempted to chew leaves to get water. I don't have much of a problem with tiny critters that are damaging thanks to all the lizards and birds.

Gardening Philosophy: I garden for the pure pleasure it gives me, although digging holes is not my favorite thing to do. I like being outside and enjoying the results of my labors. There is seating throughout the yard that invites one to spend time being part of this mesquite shaded haven, I call my Desert Sanctuary.