

Sonoran Desert Show

Topic: Creating Spaces While Being Good Stewards of Our Land

Garden History

We purchased this property, just south of Sabino Canyon Recreation area, in late 2018. We have wonderful views of the Catalinas and Rincon's to our north and east, canyons and ridges to our west, and at night city lights to our south. Our first goal was to add outdoor living spaces to allow us to enjoy all these views. Most of the acre property had been left in its natural or unattended state. We have a large wash bordering the back of our property which serves as a wildlife corridor for animals of all sizes. Our second goal was to make certain we created a landscape that includes cover and shelter for our animal visitors.

We implemented a three-zone approach recommended by the University of Arizona for desert landscaping: Oasis, Transition and Natural. We want to preserve the natural (native zone) on our periphery to allow the animals to traverse undisturbed while we enjoy watching them. Adjacent to our house, we created an oasis zone where we have areas of plants that are Sonoran Desert natives as well as desert-adapted plants that are regularly drip irrigated, and we can easily provide supplemental water when extreme conditions warrant. In our front yard, we have added native mesquites and kidney wood trees, as well as desert-adapted eucalyptus to begin building an over-story of shade and privacy screening. Our transition area is populated with native plants that benefit from a bit of shade, and regular but less frequent irrigation than the oasis zone. The front transition zone also contains a collection of cacti, agave, and other succulents that are not on drip irrigation, but are manually watered every couple of weeks during the dry summer, less frequently at other times.

We have added entertainment areas throughout the property so that we can enjoy the outdoors at different times of the day throughout the year. Although we primarily have added ornamental plants, we have included citrus trees that benefit from our warm west exposure, and deciduous fruit trees on our north and south sides that benefit from the chill hours that we get at our approximately 2750-foot elevation and the cold winter winds coming from the Catalinas. We have also added a vegetable and herb container garden enclosed inside our pool yard along with grape vines that provide shade and heat relief on our west side patio.

Garden Basics

Irrigation: We have installed drip irrigation systems with multiple zones throughout the property. We also passively collect as much rainwater runoff as possible to minimize the irrigation system use. All our cacti and succulents are watered via passive runoff and supplemented as needed by hose.

Soil: We use native soil for all our ornamentals in the ground, mix native and amended soil for raised bed ornamentals, and use organic rich amended soil for container raised herbs and vegetables.

Pest Control: We practice all aspects of Integrated Pest Management (IPM) throughout our property, and rarely use chemical agents on ornamentals, and never on any of our edible plants and trees.

Gardening Philosophy

Our goal is to serve as good stewards of our property, and we practice the seven principles of Xeriscape landscaping promoted by the University of Arizona: Good planning and design, low water use plants, appropriate turf areas, efficient irrigation, soil improvements, use of mulches, and appropriate maintenance.