

# MATT & MOLLY'S DESERT GARDEN

## From Nothing to Diverse Cactus & Succulent Garden

### Our Journey

October 15, 2022 - Oro Valley off of Linda Vista



We moved into our first home in February 2020. It is  $\frac{3}{4}$  of an acre, but probably only about  $\frac{1}{3}$  maintained and the other  $\frac{2}{3}$  kept more natural. We arrived to a landscape that had a few agaves, palo verde, and mesquite trees around the periphery. A great starter pack,

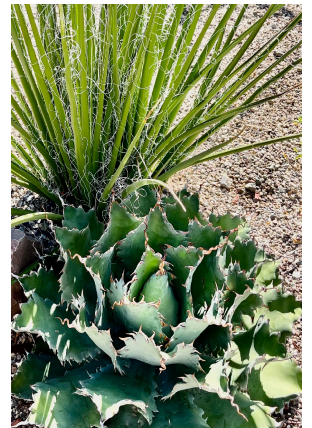


but the land around the house was pretty much a blank slate. It was an exciting thought to be able to make it our own, but also a bit overwhelming to start from scratch.

Our first step was to spruce up the existing landscape trimming overgrowth/decay, weeding, and giving a much needed drink to some thirst plants. The next step was to put together a loose design of the essential elements. Lucky for us, a family friend was a talented artist and designer who helped put our descriptions into picture form. The key elements we wanted to include were diverse group of plants, low maintenance and water use, SHADE, support wildlife in a natural way, and to add some contour to the flat piece of land. From there we hit the ground running. Brought in 10 tons of fill dirt to build a kidney shaped mound. Invested in a relatively large tree (Acacia Aneura) to provide some shade. We would ask for cuttings or pups from generous family and friends who had extra. We went on TCSS rescues. We did not have to spend much money on plants to start filling the area.



As our passion grew, we started to look for additional resources to help further our education. A neighbor recommended we check out the Tucson Cactus & Succulent Society. A short time after we went on your first rescue for primarily Ocotillos (Makita Power Shovel style!).



Another great resource was the Arizona Landscape Contractors' Assoc. that puts on some informative classes about landscape maintenance, my favorite was the class on tree

trimming. We also ask lots of questions to the great people working at our local nurseries, getting advice from people growing in our same climate is incredibly helpful.

By September 2020, we were up and running with Version 1 of our yard. As we all know, our gardens are always evolving and that's part of the beauty. We did suffer the occasional setback, an Agave Snout Weevil infestation was one of the most devastating losing some massive Agave Americana's. But for every setback, there are many more successes. Even the setbacks can often be good learning experience. I'm not sure what version we are on now, but the process has been a lot of fun.

