

Garden A: JIM & MIDGE



The .21 acre lot and home that Midge and her husband relocated to from Houston in December 2010 had previously been a rental for snowbirds. Very little had been done to the yard, which included four saguaros in the back, three in the front and some lantana and barrel cacti. After arriving here, Midge visited the Tucson Botanical Gardens and the Desert Museum, but found what she was looking for when she visited Tohono Chul. She was so impressed with their desert plants that she took the docent class and is an active volunteer there.

Hardscape improvements to the property were designed to enhance the landscape as well as keep the javelina out. Midge created a small fenced area behind the garage for a cutting garden. Eventually the entire backyard was fenced, including the top of an existing wall. A new curved pathway provides the canvas for a variety of plants on either side, mixing up the various cactus and succulent shapes—spikey, columnar, rounded, etc. Midge's gardening theme is "volunteers and variety." Her volunteer efforts have resulted in a palo verde tree, a desert willow and several palm trees. Most of the cacti in her yard came from TCSS meetings, Tohono Chul, local nurseries, neighbors and friends. Midge has used the abundance of river rock left over from the original landscaping to enhance different areas. She has augmented the river rock with larger native rock. Colorful pots and found items provide additional interest.



Some of the technical details for Midge's landscaping strategy include:

Watering includes a good daily drink for potted plants when it is not raining. Other plants are hand-watered weekly in hot weather and once a month in colder weather, depending on rainfall.

Soil is composed of a mixture of native soil, packaged garden soil and perlite.

Pest Control includes using Bayer 24 Hour Grub Killer granules which she spreads around the agaves after losing two americano medio-picta alba to grubs.

What is Midge's personal gardening secret?

Don't be afraid to let volunteers grow—you never know what you are going to get.



Garden B: MARY

Full of cholla, prickly pear and a few barrels is how Mary Primeau describes the half-acre lot they purchased in 2003. The landscaping was established by the builder after saving a few cacti and adding a few plants that could survive through the summer with no attention from long-distance owners. When Mary became a full-time resident, she took the docent training



class at Tohono Chul and was introduced to native plants. Mary began to tackle her own property by removing all of the original landscaping, and adding more native plants, lots of pots, and pathways. Rusted metal rebar replaced the original fencing.

Mary's collection includes monstrose forms and colorfully leafed plants, aloes, agaves, euphorbias, echeveria, graptopetalum, aloe ramassima, sandpaper bush, and yucca endlichians. Two of her favorite things in the yard are an old wheelbarrow planted with cactus and succulents and a life-sized skeleton on a pogo stick.



Some of the technical details for creating and maintaining the landscaping include:

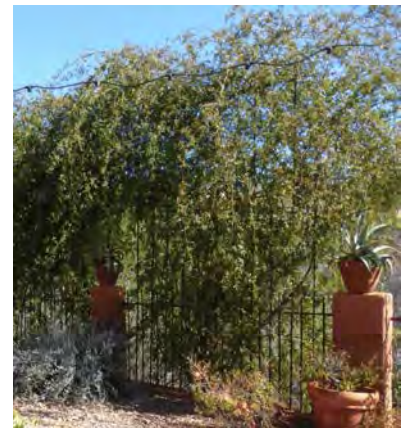
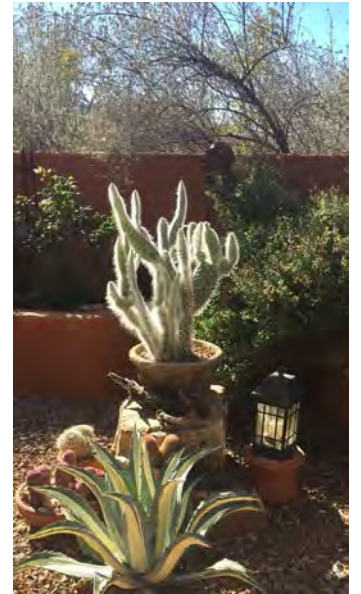
Watering is based on using as little as possible. The yard is divided into grow zones with the most water used near the house. Away from the patio and entrance is an intermediate zone that is watered less. The natural areas are given no additional water.



Fertilizer and soil mix includes using whatever is on hand and inexpensive.

Pest Control is accomplished by removing cactus beetles, spraying mealy bugs and aphids with alcohol, and spraying agaves with a systemic spray. Fences keep javelina and rabbits out of the yard. Outside the fence, she plants non-native plants which the javelina don't enjoy. But Mary does offer a fine javelina dining experience near the wash by planting savory native prickly pear.

What is Mary's personal gardening secret? She "googles" everything. There is so much gardening information on-line.



Garden C: TOM & SUE



Tom and Sue Saari's peaceful garden oasis was featured in the 2016 Master Gardener's Tour and incorporates a wide variety of plants to compliment the beautiful native vegetation on the 3.7 acres of Sonoran desert that surrounds their home. Critter-proof front and rear courtyard walls protect an array of lush plantings. A transitional zone that blends native plants with desert-adapted species is found immediately outside the walls flanking a network of gravel pathways that meander into the surrounding desert. Benches are strategically placed along the paths to take advantage of the magnificent views. The property includes a planting ramada with a composting area, water and art features, as well as vegetables, grapevines and lemon, orange and limequat citrus.



Tom and Sue's garden strives to create a full, mature look with a combination of flowers, shrubs and trees that attract birds, butterflies and local fauna that include bobcats, coyotes, javelina, and mule and whitetail deer. The overall design is a work in progress and as displaced Wisconsinites, they learn as they go. They grow plants by seed or cuttings and provide a touch of whimsy to the overall design with art objects, garage sale treasures, wind chimes and bird feeders.



Some of the technical details for creating and maintaining their oasis include:

Watering is achieved through an irrigation system with five zones for trees, citrus, low and high water plants and pot lines. Irrigation is adjusted seasonally. Small basins serve as water retention areas to provide rainwater to the courtyard gardens. Larger basins outside the walls collect run off. New plantings and others requiring special attention get hand-watered.

Fertilizer includes time-released granules for new plants, occasional all-purpose fertilizer (especially for pots), Miracle Gro is applied to vegetables as needed and the citrus and roses are fertilized on a regular schedule.

Pest Control is accomplished through hand picking insects, removing affected plants to avoid spread, water spray, insecticidal soap, BT and Neem oil. Round-Up is applied to quack grass and the pack rat population is dealt with through Havahart traps.

What's their personal gardening secret? Do your own thing! Visit lots of gardens and learn from others. Be open to making changes and trying something new. Know your invasive species and deal with them early before they take over. And most importantly, take time to step back, share and enjoy what you have created.



Garden D: Don & Julie



Most of the land surrounding Don and Julie's renovated home and garden is left as natural desert, with pocket gardens, hardscape, and metal work featured on about two of their seven acres. Don and Julie discovered the property while on a geocaching hike in the Tortolita Mountains five years ago. The grounds began as several rubble piles and homemade walls among the native plants and a few wonderful thriving non-native plants (including bottle tree, stapelia, some aloes, cereus, golden barrels and a pomegranate tree). In addition to adding plants, property renovations include 40 tons of gravel, removing buffelgrass, weeds and adding hardscape and metal work.



Don and Julie's property features a courtyard garden with irrigated plants for visiting birds and butterflies. Some non-native plants in pots thrive on the patio. Everything planted in the west side succulent garden has gone wild and serves as a propagation garden. The stapelia, aloes, firestix, octopus agave and others love the warm dappled light. The succulent garden is also where the Australian bottle tree lives. There is a collection of agave growing on the rocky west hill and they've started to create a small rocky nature path on the north hill. A

labyrinth is the newest addition to their opuntia garden. Other additions include several native bee habitat/nests to encourage pollinators and milkweed and other pollinator attracting plants. Giant Saguaros and native forest plants populate the natural desert areas of the property.

Some of the technical details for creating and maintaining their garden:

Watering is conservative due to a very slow well. They use drip irrigation primarily in the courtyard and for establishing younger plants. Gutters and two water harvesters provide a supplemental supply for hand-watering shade trees and maintaining a reserve for dry months.

Soil is generally a mix of approximately equal thirds of organic, sand and perlite for cacti and succulents.

Pest Control is accomplished through a homemade organic pesticide/fungicide when needed. Humane traps are used for catch and release of hungry squirrels. Tasty young plants are protected or replaced with plants that are not preferred by hungry animals (euphorbia, aloe, agave, etc.).

What's their personal gardening secret?

Be willing to learn by trial and error when choosing the right plants for each of the microclimates around the property. Agaves and opuntias have been great for the most challenging areas on the west side. Non-natives, aloes and/or specialty succulents live in dappled sunlight and more protected areas. They are actively growing and encouraging shade trees.

