

Garden A: Matt

A highlight of this property is its collection of columnar cacti. The striking openness of Matt's landscape draws the eye of the viewer to these handsome specimens.

Numerous Totem Pole Cactus, *Pachycereus schottii monstrose*, are clustered in key locations in Matt's front and backyard. These are a variety of Senita cactus. The smooth skin of this upright cactus lacks spines and is covered in lumps and bumps which resemble the wax of a melted candle. The folds and curves of the skin help the plant preserve moisture in its native region of Baja Mexico. Matt has another variety of bumpy Senita, *Pachycereus shottii var. mieckleyanus*, a thinner southern variety. Non-bumpy Senita are simply *Pachycereus schottii*.



Adjacent to the Totem Pole cacti are Mexican Fence Post Cactus, or *Pachycereus marginatus*. This species does not develop arms, but new pups emerge from the soil and form an underground clump. The new pups grow straight up beside the parent. Over time, the tall, vertical columns can make an effective barrier, privacy fence, or a striking architectural statement in the landscape.

Matt began working on his .4 of an acre landscape 16 years ago. He brought in a lot of fill dirt to even out the soil level of the sloped backyard and began planting. Besides the dramatic display of columnar cacti, he has customized his yard to reflect his interests. Artificial turf in places softens the desert display. Two date palms, a Black Sphinx and a Hayani, and a raised bed of canna lilies near the pool contribute to a tropical feel in places. A pitch and putt green and a swimming pool encourage

recreation, and a fire pit and grill entice hanging out in the backyard. A stone water feature provides a gentle trickling sound and hummingbirds actively visit the three feeders. Matt built a man cave/garden shed to house, among other things, his 140 large Styrofoam cups to protect the tips of his columnar cacti from frost.



Matt displays sculpture and found objects on the corrugated metal fence he built near the back property line. A variety of metal and ceramic sculptures provide whimsical touches throughout the property

PESTS: Kangaroo rats and other rodents like to chew the roots of his cacti. A product that has helped Matt is Weiser's Nature's Defense Animal Repellent. These granules are said to repel a large array of pest animals through its irritant scent and to be nontoxic to humans, pets, and plant and food crops if used as directed.



Garden B: Stephen

El Jardin de Casa Villaescusa

Our desert garden auspiciously began in the winter of 2007. On January 15th an Arctic blast dropped temperatures to the low teens. It didn't climb above freezing for over 30 hours. The frost broke pipes, closed schools and decimated citrus, succulents, annuals, trees and the huge creeping fig that separated our walled backyard from the overgrown, prickly, thorny, desert back lot. Although we lived in this home for 20 years – we seldom ventured out back. It was impenetrable.

After I cleared away the dense overgrowth and dead vegetation, I discovered treasures previously hidden in our sloping, 1.75-acre foothills lot. We had stunning views of three Catalina Mountain canyons, a sea of rocks, an abundance of birds, reptiles & mammals and scores of large cacti and trees.



WATERING SCHEDULE: When plants are established, I rely on rainfall, supplemented with harvested rainwater as needed – wildflowers love it.

GARDEN PESTS: Javelinas were a big problem the first few years. Protected plants with hardware cloth secured by long tent stakes. Spread dog-poop soup across their trails. Not for the faint-of-heart but worked well. Insects use soapy water – no insecticides.

TIPS: Solicit advice from fellow gardeners. Grateful for many ideas and motivations from TCSS tours. Truly inspired by *"Plant Driven Design – Creating Gardens That Honor Plants, Place and Spirit"*. Pay attention to the flow of the space. Fully experience its rhythm and the variations through all seasons. It takes time to create. Gardening is a delightful meditation to ground yourself in the present and enrich your soul!

SOIL MIX: Prefer Plants for the Southwest soil mix

It has been my pleasure to "Saws-All", shape and plant this amazing plot. The meditation garden and firepit came first, followed by the Virgin Shrine, then hiking trails for the children. We have created several distinctive areas, like the trichocereus shade gardens and the Zen Hill. Now I am opening the Bosque and lower areas that traverse Ventana Canyon Wash. Thankfully, it's always changing, and my puttering will never end!

Immense gratitude for friends, Debra and Rick Raeber who graciously offered ideas, assistance, practical wisdom, cuttings and agave pups. Also, to Dick Munghia who created the compelling stone features. Otherwise, I do the work. Always the flower geek, I sow seasonal wildflowers. Recently, I added LED lighting so we can enjoy the beauty, safely at night.





Garden C: Anne and Charlene

A Plant Collector's Paradise

"When we purchased our home seven years ago, the landscape had been neglected due to its aging owners. There were more than 30 saguaros, prickly pears, agaves, native barrels and two very nice ocotillos. In many places, especially south of the pool area, the vegetation was extremely overgrown. It has been a pleasure to add cacti, succulents and desert plantings to create what we feel is a desert oasis."

With a lot size of 3.5 acres, Anne and Charlene have created a plant collector's paradise, with enough space between plants to create a soothing minimalist feel. Artfully designed, the plants are alternately clustered for visual

interest and in other places spread out to provide adequate growing space. A mix of shade and sun allows experimentation with different varieties of plants.

A variety of barrel cactus, columnar cactus, prickly pear, cholla, agaves, euphorbia and other cacti and succulent species are creatively spread throughout the landscape. In addition, metal sculptures are judiciously distributed to complement their garden design.



In addition, Anne and Charlene have planted an unusual collection of 32 species trees including carob, Silver-leaved mountain gum (*Eucalyptus pulverulenta*), hairy mountain mahogany, Contorted jujube, four citrus varieties, three fig varieties and two ash varieties. A favorite is the blackbrush acacia or *Vachellia rigidula*, native to Texas.

SOIL MIX: "When we plant in ground, we do not amend the soil in any way. When we plant pots, we use Tanks Cactus and Succulent Mix."



WATERING: "Once we settle into June, we use a sprinkler to water all of the larger areas of cactus and hose to water cacti here and there. We water every two weeks when hot and dry."

GARDEN PESTS: "We use cultural practices to keep pack rats at bay by pruning the bottom growth of agaves and prickly pears and replacing certain shrubs with columnar cacti. Javelinas are only an issue on the north side of the house — and are interested in one very large agave in particular. We simply fill in their digging . . . and keep an eye out for them."

TIPS FOR OTHER DESERT GARDENERS:
"Explore the beauty of the cactus world! We have been in Arizona five years and it took me two of those years to really begin to appreciate the architectural beauty of cacti. Additionally, cacti are interesting year-round, low maintenance, and low water. They are meant to be here!"



Garden D: Daphna and Frank

While attending university in Jerusalem I enjoyed the delicious “sabras” (prickly pear fruits) sold by street vendors and in open markets. While visiting Arizona many years later, Frank introduced me to the Sonoran desert cacti. He had become enamored with the native vegetation while conducting some research in Tucson in the 1970s, long before we knew each other. When we moved to Tucson in 2003, our house came with a grass yard and a sprinkler system. We got rid of that and I learned how to plant cacti and succulents, many of which originated from TCSS. In fact, all of our ocotillos are rescues.



LOT SIZE: 0.75 acre

SOIL MIX: For potting, I combine about 75% cactus and succulent mix (such as Home Depot brand) with 25% perlite. If drainage is critical, I use a ratio of 65/35, or even 50/50. For landscape plants, I mix perlite or sand into the desert soil to improve drainage. Before planting, I sprinkle sulfur powder on the roots to prevent fungus. When I plant agaves, I sprinkle a systemic granular product on the bottom of the hole I’ve dug to help protect against agave beetles and grubs.



WATERING SCHEDULE: About once a week I water certain plants, especially new cacti, with a slow drip from a hose for a couple of hours. In growing season, potted cacti and succulents are watered by hose weekly until the water runs out the bottom of the pot. I gradually back off to about once a month or less in winter. When I think of it (rarely) I fertilize cacti during the growing season.

GARDEN PESTS: I remove lower prickly pear pads to keep them off the ground and, hopefully, discourage rodents. When holes or mounds pop up, I knock them down and hope they don’t return. It hasn’t been a huge problem.

(Don’t miss seeing the desert wash that runs under the house where javelina find shelter during the hottest time of the year.)



When we moved into our neighborhood the vegetation at the main entrance and on the medians needed some TLC. I volunteered to oversee the landscaping and was given a budget to purchase plants at my discretion. Eventually, I became Landscape Director on our HOA board and served for over a dozen years. I am very proud that many of the cacti in our neighborhood landscaping originated from TCSS cactus rescue sales.



Garden E: Debra and Rick

Debra and Rick bought their current house a little over 15 years ago. At the time Debra was working for Gene and Jane at Plants for the Southwest (PSW). Their two acres contained a large lawn, many citrus trees, roses, and quite a few non-drought tolerant trees and shrubs. There was an irrigation system with 12 stations.

Debra started bringing cactus and other succulent plants home from work and they started planting them on the property. One thing led to another, mainly some very large water bills due to irrigation leaks, and they ended up removing the lawn, the citrus and roses and all of the irrigation.

The influence of working at the nursery led them to have a shade structure built for growing seedlings. They grow native trees, shrubs, cacti, aloes, and ocotillos from seed and other succulent plants from cuttings. They like to landscape using rocks and top dressing brought home from outings around Southern Arizona. Over the years, a few rocks at a time, they

have created a desert landscape using mostly plants that they propagated themselves. Their biggest success has been with all the different astrophytums. Producing them by the hundreds, they love the varieties that are created when they cross with each other. With a need for lots of planters all around their property, Debra also got hooked on making pots after meeting Jan Bell and some other favorite potters at PSW.

SOIL & WATER: Their preferred soil mix is the mixture from Plants for the Southwest. For cuttings they add a little extra pumice. During the summer they water new seedlings in the shade house daily, everything else once a week. As native trees get established, they require less and less water. If it's especially hot, they pull hoses around and put a sprinkler on the trees at a low drip. Digging wells around the trees to hold water makes a huge difference.

Debra and Rick installed two ponds, one in the ground and the other raised above ground. A friend has supplied amazing water plants that he raises in his many ponds. They really enjoy having the ponds and the critters that have come because of them. There are many dragonflies, damselflies, native shrimp, snails, red spotted toads and at night the property is visited by ringtail cats and bobcats as revealed by a motion camera.

PESTS: No pesticides of any kind are used. When mealybugs show up, they are sprayed with alcohol. Having moved to Tucson because of the wildlife, they tolerate caterpillars that eat the leaves off their grapes, or ants that strip the leaves off acacias. Mostly everything recovers. Rick is a reptile guy and he has set up rock condos to encourage snakes and lizards to hang out. Mediterranean geckos scramble around high on the walls in the evening. Everybody is happily feasting on insects and hopefully pack rats!"

