

## PETE & JOAN'S GARDEN - THREE LITTLE HOUSES on BIG DESERT LOTS

March 19<sup>th</sup> - Near Fort Lowell & Country Club



We have two small houses in a densely populated Tucson neighborhood. Joan's sister and her husband live next door on another big lot. Between us, we have an acre and a half parcel. We bought our house in 1989 and the house next door (the bunkhouse) in 2000. When we moved into our house, the plants in the yard consisted of a Canary Island palm tree, a couple of Texas rangers and some blooming globe mallow. Fortunately we have next to no caliche in our soil. We started our garden with a 5 gallon native mesquite, and a couple of one gallon jojobas purchased at a Desert Museum plant sale. We also moved in a couple of saguaros early on, a 6 footer and an 8 footer. Unfortunately, one got infected and had to be removed.

Special plants are mostly in the front yard of our house. They include a large senita, one large and several smaller saguaros, a small boojum, several zamia fufuracea, a couple of dioons (edule and spinulosum), and a Nichol's Turks head cactus. We also have a 'Mad Cow' agave. It's a beautiful Greg

Starr hybrid between *Agave bovicornuta* (the cow's horn *agave*) and *Agave colorata*. I'll be really sad when that one blooms! Elsewhere we have a blooming *A. angustifolia* in the front yard at the bunkhouse and a large *Lophocereus schotti* 'Monstrosus' (totem pole).in the backyard.

Joan is an artist. She will have some of her sculptures in the gardens as well as many of her thrift store garden art finds, especially in the clothesline garden and outside the kitchen window.

Over the years we have done large and small rainfall catchment projects. Every summer I am out in the yard after big rains to make sure that the rainfall is guided to the parts of our yard where I need it and into the tanks we had installed by Technicians for Sustainability back when they were in that business. They did a great job. The most unusual tank is a concrete tank that they installed in a tight



space between the carports for our house and the bunkhouse. It's usually used as a septic tank! I have also dug trenches behind an ocotillo fence at our front gate, in the carport at the bunkhouse, and from the down spout at the southwest corner of our house. Many of the trenches that I have dug are shallow and are barely noticeable until it rains.



At our house and at the bunkhouse we have small areas where we grow agaves with an unusual ground cover. At a glance, the ground cover looks like lava or turned over soil but it's really bark from Douglas fir trees that have been taken down near a cabin we own on Mt. Lemmon.



Not handicap accessible