



Candelilla



Zinnia



Cissus



Dyssodia

Gardening Insights

November - December 2013

Plants for REALLY tight spaces

Okay, you've got that one tough spot - the one that's too small for a tree, certainly, but even too squeezezy for a medium shrub. It's between a much-used sidewalk and a wall, hot as blazes in summer, cold in winter and in full view from your living room window. Prickly cacti and agaves are out because they'd maul passers-by, and any dainty plant would be trampled and broken if it dared grow sideways. What can you do?

One good choice for planting is Candelilla (*Euphorbia antisiphilitica*), a Baja native succulent that thrives in challenging conditions and spreads by underground rhizomes. *Dyssodia acerosa* (Dogweed), is another. It's small, tough, and is much of the year covered with sweet yellow flowers; butterflies love it. Here are more species you can look to for tight locations.

- Aloe "Blue elf"
- Bahia absinthifolia "Bahia"
- Cissus trifoliata "AZ grape ivy" (on trellis)
- Euphorbia resinifera "Moroccan mound"
- Pachycereus marginatus "Mexican fencepost cactus"
- Senna covesii (Desert senna)
- Trichocereus pachanoi "San Pedro cactus"
- Zinnia acerosa (Desert zinnia)

These are all great plants, but non-living things might be better. Options include wall-mounted artworks in ceramic, glass and steel, murals, decorative stone works, and ocotillo or reed screens.

Tucson Artists' Open Studios -- Saturday and Sunday November 9 & 10

250 Tucson artists will open their studios for the public on November 9 and 10. This event, sponsored by the Tucson Pima Arts Council, is an opportunity to glimpse the working world of painters, sculptors, ceramicists, jewelers and more. **Oxbow studios is open**, so please come by -- I'll have nine artist friends here too. A flyer for the event will accompany this newsletter.



Burro weed - a sweet fall bloomer for pollinators

There are few Sonoran Desert plants that bloom in autumn, but the ones that do are magnets for late season pollinators. Burro weed (*Isocoma tenuisecta*) is one of them. It's unassuming and easily overlooked in any other season but flowers abundantly even after a sparse monsoon. Insects love this "dessert course" plant and it's worth conserving or propagating in a desert garden. It isn't a high-demand species and most nurseries won't stock it, but Desert Survivors Nursery on Starr Pass Boulevard will have it and many other local plants.

By the way, another important local for fall pollinators is Desert broom (*Baccharis sarothroides*). Most gardeners and landscapers detest the plant, known for its snow-like drifts of white puffy seeds (that seemingly germinate only in spots that are inaccessible to pruners) and its steel cable roots that defy pulling. Both male and female plants attract nectar or pollen seeking insects and play a vital role in our desert environment. I understand removing this plant from cultivated gardens, but encourage leaving it alone in wilder spaces. Remember, if it's good for bugs, it's probably good for birds, lizards and other creatures too. I also think it's rather attractive, especially when maintained like any other landscape shrub, though I anticipate many emails with opposing perspectives.

Winter art events

In addition to the Open Studio mentioned above, there are a couple more events you might enjoy.

- Sharon Eaker's annual **Poet's Corner Art Sale** in midtown Tucson. December 7th from 10 am to 5 pm. Details here: www.poetscornerartsale.com
- **Practical Art solo show** (as yet untitled). I am the featured artist for the month of December at Practical Art in central Phoenix. This gallery sells only functional artwork, but has a guest artist every month to highlight purely artistic works. Practical Art is a delightful place to shop and it hosts many evening and weekend events. www.practical-art.com
- Tohono Chul Park's **Small Works Exhibition** runs through December 15. It's a collection of small artworks by 130 local artists. All works are for sale. www.tohonochulpark.org



PS: If you can't get to any of the shows, you can see my work at Tucson Audubon Society, Native Seeds - SEARCH, and Harlow's Nursery.

I LOVE REFERRALS! Please keep me in mind for attractive, functional and art-filled gardens.
GOT GARDEN QUESTIONS? Email me for answers (or at least opinions!)

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