

January 1989 - Central Spine

THE SHADE SCREEN PROJECT

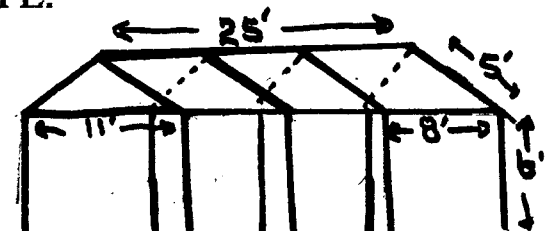
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by STEVE STEMPUSKI

LIVING IN ARIZONA CAN BE A DISADVANTAGE WHEN TRYING TO GROW CACTUS AND SUCCULENTS. IT SEEMS THAT THE MAJORITY OF MY PLANTS WOULD PREFER A COOLER AND LESS INTENSE DEGREE OF SUNLIGHT. ORIGINALLY I INTENDED TO LOAD MY COLLECTION INTO A U-HAUL AND HEAD FOR CALIFORNIA BUT FEARING THAT I WOULD GET STOPPED AT THE BORDER, I DECIDED TO BUILD A FRAMED SHADE SCREEN ON THE SIDE OF MY HOUSE, IN MESA WHERE THE POTTED OVERFLOW FROM MY GREEN HOUSE AND PATIO WOULD RESIDE.

THE WESTERN EXPOSURE MEASURED 11' X 25' AND WAS BETWEEN MY HOUSE AND SIDE WALLS. I THEORIZED THAT MOST OF MY SUCCULENTS AND SOME OF THE CACTUS WOULD DO WELL IN THIS AREA. TO GIVE THE SHADE HOUSE A DIMENSION, I WANTED A ROOF TYPE LOOK WITH A SLIGHT PEAK IN THE MIDDLE. STARTING TO GET QUOTES ON DIFFERENT TYPES OF MATERIAL AND WAYS OF JOINING THE STRUCTURE BECAME EXPENSIVE AND VERY TIME CONSUMING. I WANTED A STRUCTURE THAT WOULD GO UP IN DAY, SEMI PORTABLE, (MEANING THAT I COULD MOVE IT TO A DIFFERENT LOCATION) FAIRLY ATTRACTIVE AND NOT TOO EXPENSIVE. THROUGH THE PROCESS OF ELIMINATION I DECIDED ON A PIPE FRAME STRUCTURE JOINED TOGETHER WITH ANGLED PIPES SPECIALLY MADE FOR THIS PURPOSE. FOR MY SMALL STRUCTURE ELECTRICAL CONDUIT WAS PERFECT. THE ANGLED PIPES WERE READILY AVAILABE FROM TWO SUPPLIERS AT THE LOCAL PARK AND SWAP. BE CAREFULL TO GET THE CORRECT SIZE PIPE AND PROPER ANGLES FIGURED OUT BEFORE MAKING ANY PURCHASES. YOU CAN HAVE AS MANY AS FOUR PIPES GOING INTO ONE OF THESE JOINTS. I USED 1" CONDUIT AS I FELT THE 1/2" WOULD NOT HANDLE THE LOAD AND HIGH WIND WE SOMETIMES GET. THE CONDUIT WAS PUCHASED ON SALE IN 10' LENGTHS. THE SHADE SCREEN WAS PURCHASED IN A 50' FOOT ROLL AND CUT TO SIZE. BE SURE TO GET THREE OR FOUR PRICES ON SEWING AND GROMMETING THE SHADE SCREEN AS PRICES VARIED BY 100%. THE SHADE SCREEN WAS TIED DOWN WITH GROMMETS SPACED ONE FOOT ON THE ENDS AND TWO FEET ON THE SIDES. IN THE COOLER MONTHS I AM PLANNING ON RUNNING TWO 25' FOOTH LENGTHS OF FLAT FIBERGLASS GREEN HOUSE TO SEMI-ENCLOSE THIS AREA. THE COST OF THIS STRUCTURE WAS ABOUT THREE HUNDRED DOLLARS COMPLETE.



PH FACTORS

By STEVE STEMPLESKI

Most damage to plants occur when pH values get too high. A plant after spending several years in the same pot has an accumulation of salts on the sides and on the surface of the plant's soil. This crusty looking build up prevents oxygen from reaching the root area of the plant, inhibiting the plant's absorption of water and minerals. The concentration of the alkaline build up also prevents iron from being used by the plant. The iron necessary for chlorophyll formation is bound up or has reacted with this lime-like build up on the soil and never reaches the roots. As you know yellow cactus is not very pretty and this chlorosis will eventually kill the plant.

A slightly acid to neutral range is ideal for most cactus and succulents.

I have been experimenting with an all purpose tomato plant food to counter react our area problems with alkaline build up in my pots.



BEES MAKE COLONIES IN THE STRANGEST PLACES by Vera Gamet

A few years ago I discovered an active bee colony in a live, truncated, badly damaged and hollowed saguaro trunk. I wrote about it for CAREFREE ENTERPRISE and was promptly called on the carpet by one of the more truculent members of the community.

"This is impossible. There is nothing in the literature to confirm such colonies. You should have more common sense than to accept such a story!"

It was the second such saguaro I had found.

Each time a local beekeeper verified that the interior walls of the saguaro were covered with propolis, a resin-like material gathered by the bees from trees and plants and used for sticking things together, or giving them a smooth varnished surface, or for filling cracks in the natural setting of a tree hollow--- or a saguaro hollow, as opposed to the frames in a box-like commercial hive.

So I wrote to the Department of Zoology at Arizona State University and Mark Crozier answered that he had not seen such colonies but could see no reason why bees shouldn't hive in a saguaro.

John Alcock of the Botany Department of ASU had seen many hives in living saguaros and was not surprised at my observations.

Bob Schmateel of the University Experimental Station personally knew of a bee colony in a living Saguaro north of Esperero Canyon in the Santa Catalina Mountains.

So I wasn't such a fool after all.

Furthermore I have discovered bees over several summers coming and going from a small opening at ground level in the trunk of a mesquite tree. There is no way to discover where or how large the combs are, but the bees are active in season.



DON'T EXPECT THAT CHRISTMAS DISH GARDEN TO LAST FOREVER by LEWIS STEICHMAN

The terms "dish gardens" and "planters" are often used interchangeably. In general, these terms refer to a container in which two or more plants are grown. Sometimes a dish garden is described as an uncovered terrarium, a miniature landscape, or as a collection of small plants. Containers in which single plants are grown are usually referred to as just "houseplants."

A good dish garden contains a collection of compatible plants growing together in a small container. Many different types of containers may be used such as pottery, glass, plastic, wood, wicker baskets, etc. Containers at least 3" deep are best. All shapes are satisfactory.

Selection of Plants:

There are several different types of dish gardens. Most would fall into one of the following types: woodland, tropical plants, cactus and succulents. Probably the most common type of dish garden is the one using tropical plants, some of which are listed below;

Plants for Dish Gardens:

Aglaonema	Aluminum Plant	Artillery Plant
Asparagus Fern	Baby's Tears	Boxwood
Bromeliads	Cacti	Dieffenbachia
Dracaena	English Ivy	Hemigraphis
Euonymous	False Aralia	Episcia pellionia
Ferns	Grape Ivy	Fatshedera
Jade Plant	Kingaroo Vine	Nephtytis
Pandanus	Panamiga	Pelleonia
Peperomia	Pepper	Philondendron
Pick-a-back	Plectranthuel	Podocarpus
Pothos	Snake Plant	Strawberry Begonia
Wax Plant		

Making a Dish Garden:

Assembling:

Assemble the container, drainage material, soil mixture and plants on a convenient work table. If you wish to view the dish garden from all sides use a round or square container and place the tallest plant in the center. If the dish garden is to be viewed from only one side, place the tallest plant at one end of the container or perhaps in the center and place shorter plants adjacent to it.

Plants to be used should be grown in 2-1/4" or 3" pots so that they will fit in the dish garden without having to break off the bottom of the soil mass. After placing drainage material in the bottom of the container, determine the position of the plants by moving them about in the container until you are satisfied with their arrangement. Before doing this, remove them from the pots in which they were grown so that you can accurately tell how it will look in the dish garden.

(over)

When you have decided on the location of all the plants, fill in around the plants with soil and gently firm the soil around the root balls.

The use of figurines in most dish gardens is discouraged because figurines usually detract from the plants.

Likewise, the use of gaudy, highly decorated containers is discouraged because the plants should be the center of interest instead of the container.

Watering:

After planting, moisten the soil thoroughly. Soil particles can be washed off the leaves at this time. The use of rain or distilled water will probably extend the useful life of the dish gardens. If you overwater, tip the dish garden up and pour it off.

One method of watering suggests immersing the dish garden in a sink until air bubbles no longer appear. Then place the dish garden on its side for half an hour or so to let the excess water run off. This could be done once a week.

Most individuals will probably use the more conventional method of watering by adding a cup or so of water at one time whenever the plants need watering. You can often tell by the weight of the dish garden when it is getting low on water. Never allow plants to wilt because they often lose their bottom leaves after wilting. If plants wilt, you waited too long to water. If the environment in which the dish garden is located is relatively constant, you may find it possible to water according to a time schedule, but this method is not nearly as good as watering when the plants need watering.

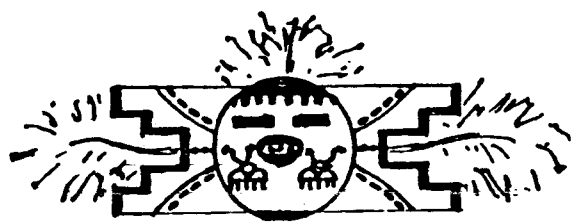
Some individuals prefer to use containers having a reservoir at the base with a wick extending up into the soil mass. This method of watering is sometimes referred to as automatic watering.

Care:

Pinch fast-growing plants often to keep them within bounds. Fertilize with a good houseplant fertilizer as directed on the label of the container. Giving the plants a shower once a month in a sink or tub will remove dust. The use of foliage spray is usually not desirable.

Insects can often be removed by washing them off. If this doesn't work, try using an insecticide bomb or pressurized spray can.

Don't expect a dish garden to last forever. If it lasts six months or more you should be satisfied. Often, many of the plants in a dish garden can be re-used if they are repotted. Many plants can also be propagated by cuttings which, when rooted, can be used when the dish garden is replanted.



THE HISPANIC LINK

By Jose Antonio Burciaga

(From an unknown, undated newspaper clipping.)

The Yuletide season is a magical time for children. Its joys are double for bicultural children. Mine were threefold.

You see, I was raised in a Jewish synagogue in El Paso, where my father was the janitor, electrician, plumber, carpenter, gardener and Shabbot Goy. A "Shabbot Goy" is Yiddish for a Gentile who performs certain tasks on the Sabbath that are forbidden by traditional Orthodox Jews, such as turning the lights or heat on and off.

Every year, a month before Christmas, my father would take the menorah out of storage and polish it. This, for us, would signal the coming of Christmas. The menorah is a nine-branched candelabra that is symbolic of the celebration of Hanukkah, or Chanukah. Hanukkah commemorates the first recorded war of liberation by any group of people. In 164 B. C. the Jewish people rebelled against Antiochus IV Epiphanes, who attempted to introduce pagan idols into the temple.

When the temple was reconquered by the Jews, there was only one day's oil for the eternal light. But by a miracle the oil lasted for eight days. My father was not only in charge of polishing the menorah, but for 40 years he made sure that the eternal light remained lit in the temple.

As a child, though I was more in tune with Mexican Christmas celebrations. At times they came into conflict with the Anglo-American Christmas traditions.

Take for example the Christmas songs we learned in school. We learned about the 12 days of Christmas, and though I never understood what a partridge was doing in a pear tree in the middle of December, I did like the melody. We also learned a German Christmas song about a Tom and a Bomb---"O Tannenbaum." We even learned a Christmas song in the dead language of Latin, called "Adeste Fideles."

Yet, although more than 75 percent of the students were Mexican-American, we never sang a cancion de Navidad in espanol. Looking back at those innocent times it seems sad, but it was common knowledge that Spanish was forbidden. None the less, in our underground home, Mama would teach us "Silent Night" in Spanish---"Noche de Paz, Noche de Amor"--Night of Peace, Night of Love.

It was more beautiful, more romantic and prayerful in Spanish. There is an old saying about English being for business, German for military, French for love, and Spanish for God.

Our high school football team, composed mostly of Chicanos, would get into the Christmas spirit while on bus trips and sing "Jingle Bells" but it would always come out "Chingo Bells." For some reason, Brother Ambrose did not appreciate our butchering that melody, so he would slam on the brakes to the old rickety school bus. Fortunately we would be wearing our helmets and shoulder pads.

All three cultures, the Jewish, the Mexican and the Anglo, came together during the Posadas.

The "Posadas" are celebrated nine days before Christmas. They re-enact

the experience of Joseph and Mary seeking shelter for the soon-to-be-born Baby Jesus.

This all began when my parents were paid a short and formal visit by their compadres, Cruz and Elena Sanchez. Mr. Sanchez and his wife had come to our home in the synagogue to ask my parents to be Godparents to the Baby Jesus.

So for nine days before Christmas we took leftover candles from the Hanukkah celebrations to the Posadas in a poor barrio, across the border in Juarez. We would pray and sing our Christmas carols in Spanish while playing with the melting wax on the Hanukkah-Posada candles.

After each Hanukkah service it is customary to give out small gifts of candy to the participants, especially to the children. This candy, chocolates covered in gold foil like coins, was given out in small netted bags. This was called "Gelt." My father was always given some for his children and it would wind up in Juarez for our traditional candy handouts after the Posadas.

The next day we would be back at St. Patrick's Grade School singing "I'm Dreaming of a White Christmas."



HAWORTH AND HIS STUDY OF THE GENUS "HAWORTHIA" by VERA GAMET

Did you know that Adrian Hardy Haworth never left England to study his exotic African succulents?

The fad for succulents reached something of a craze in England between 1800 and 1830, which were Haworth's most productive years, between his 32nd and 62nd birthdays.

A boy-gardner-botanist since he was 7 years old, Haworth promptly abandoned his training in law, which his father had insisted upon, as soon as he had complied with his father's requirements. His income from the family estates afforded him time to devote to his own interests: botany, ornithology and gardening, all of which he eagerly embraced at one time.

Haworth was a home-body who did not even accept invitations from friends to visit them on the Continent, so there was no sweating it out on the desert of South Africa for him to study his chosen succulents.

Instead there came into his hands several hundred specimens of South African succulents, many of which were unknown to science, from interested known and unknown friends and scientists, working as plant hunters.

In his small garden 30 yards square he had over 1000 pots of succulents, never more than two of any one species. He carefully tended the garden himself, closely observing the differences and resemblances among the plants day by day.

He made many mistakes but some of the classifications have been formally adopted and others have never been questioned.

Haworth was a man of his time. He lived through a span of time when the cultivation of succulents was at its height, and before his death was declining in favor of tropical and sub-tropical plants, particularly orchids from Central and South America.

In 1833 Haworth became one of the last of 22,000 British subjects to die of cholera, just as the epidemic was drawing to a close. One day in August he was enjoying his normal good health and watering his plants when suddenly he felt ill.

He died less than 24 hours later.

