

Around My (or Your) Desert Garden

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May 2005

Today is the third day of 110 F plus (after a cool wet winter and spring) and some newly planted five gallon trees are showing the stress. *Chorisa speciosa* and *Eucalyptus spathulate* will need to be kept moist. Remember, the nursery watered the pots at least once a day. They will be worth the extra effort. After all, it will soon be abundantly clear that most of your succulent plants would benefit from more shade. We are finally trying the hybrid palo verde “desert museum” in the hope that it is as fast as promised.

What is in flower? The larger trees include the mesquites, palo verdes and *Lysiloma watsonii*. *Tipuana tipu* looks cool with its yellow flowers and airy bright foliage. The Mexican palo verde (*Parkinsonia aculeate*) is fast and colorful, but plant something more substantial near by so that it will be up when the parkinsonia is exhausted (less than 20 years). Smaller trees include screw bean mesquite, cat claw acacia, *Palo blanco*, *Jatropha cuneata* and desert willow. Shrubs include the yellow bird of paradise and calliandra. For more shade *Cordia boissieri* is a nice small tree (Baker’s nursery has a couple at the entrance).

Cacti flowering in full sun include *Ferocactus cylindraceus* (acanthodes), Mexican organ pipe (several *Stenocereus* are sold under this name) and rathbunia (*Stenocereus alamosensis*). There are still a few opuntia in flower including tree forms *O. velutina* (sometimes sold in California as velvet fig) and *O. leucotrichia* (said to have a good fruit). *Myrtillocactus geometrizans* has berries in colors from green to purple (eat these garambullos). The berries are larger each year, and these blue myrtle cacti, which can take full sun, are a lot easier to grow here than blueberries. The Arizona organ pipe will be flowering soon, but for now, the new growth is colorful.

There are still some flowers on the ocotillos and *Fouquieria diguetii*. *Bougainvillea* always looks good and provides shade when you get it up on a pergola, etc. We’ve got about six different cereus that are usually all sold as *C. peruvianus*. There are large nocturnal flowers and some of them are much better with some shade, as is ropalea with its red flowers and a shrubby, spineless opuntia with large bright yellow flowers (?).

Smaller plants still in flower include some of the mammillaria and echinocereus (many of which appreciate some shade), notocacti and some cleistocacti which have been bright spots for months. Cassias and sennas will provide these with some shade. Even desert aster, which spreads itself, will help with the smaller plants.

Hummingbirds are working anything with color now and, of course, the greater the variety of plants you have the more likely it is that you will see them all summer. Most of the aloes are done, but a few will flower in the coming weeks and months.