

Book Review

Yard Full of Sun –

The Story of a Gardener's Obsession That Got a Little Out of Hand

By Scott Calhoun

As many of us know from firsthand experience, gardening in the Southwest has its challenges, not the least of which is the powerful sun that bakes the land for much of the year. In his new book, *A Yard Full of Sun*, Scott Calhoun takes us on a gardening adventure as he imparts loads of practical information on how to creatively and successfully garden in arid locations like here in Arizona.

Three major tenets are at the heart of the book: 1) using plants that are appropriate for our climate and celebrating those that are native to the region; 2) making the most of our drought and deluge conditions by harvesting and saving rainwater; and 3) planning for living out of doors.

The author discusses the paucity of rainfall in the desert and includes statistics on average monthly rainfall amounts. He also points out water prices in various population centers, stressing some of the practical reasons for using desert-adapted plants. He then gives descriptions of his favorite plants and gardening tips as well as dashes of natural history. He goes on to describe various other principles of xeriscaping such as planting in zones, and using permeable materials for patios and walkways in order to keep water on the property.

According to the author, creating outdoor living space is key in a yard full of sun. Where else can you barbeque over 300 days of the year? Seating and shade are basic to an outdoor space, but cooking, eating, reading, and even sleeping are all activities that can be done in the great out-of-doors. The author suggests making outdoor rooms in both the front and back yards, and decorating them just as you would an indoor room, using art and ornamentation, and, of course, plants.

There is also a section on dealing with unwanted wildlife such as javelinas, rock squirrels, rabbits, and rattlesnakes, as well as attracting more garden-friendly creatures such as butterflies and hummingbirds.

The appendices are terrific and include: 13 steps to creating outdoor space to live in; a chart of indispensable desert plants with cold hardiness, common and botanical names as well as flower colors (plant species for higher desert elevations are included as well); a list of dryland gardening tools and supplies; and where to see and learn about desert plants in southwestern states.

This is a fun and informational read, and if you always wondered what to do with your yard full of sun, this is the book for you.

Come meet the author at a booksigning at the Gardens on February 26, 2005, from 1:00–3:00 pm.

