



Briefly, One After Another

Last summer I sent out the cactus flower photo below, and a friend in Florida fashioned a nice set of note cards for Yoshi. My headline said “Once a Year, Briefly.” My caption explained: “The cactus plant hangs from a backyard plum tree just outside our kitchen windows. Mostly it just sits in a galvanized wire basket provided by Yoshi, doing nothing much. Then, in early summer, it puts out a pod-tipped stem. When the pod gets heavy



enough, the stem falls over the basket’s rim. The pod hangs there and ripens in expectation of glory. Yesterday the flower bloomed, today I photographed it in its pristine beauty, tomorrow it will fade and die, and we won’t see it again until next summer.” For three consecutive summers, only a single flower had shown up, giving brief but poignant enjoyment and leading me to believe that this was all there was, that there would never be more. Yoshi did not study the matter in a formal way, but somehow she came to the conclusion that she was giving the cactus too much water. Intuitively, she cut back drastically, then waited patiently, and the plant responded to her tough-love nurturing, as can be seen in the nighttime photo above. Two cactus flowers blaze forth, briefly as always, while a couple of pods redden in pregnant anticipation. Yoshi thinks we will admire at least ten such flowers this year.

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