



The Story of Richards Jalapeño



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article

The mighty Jalapeño Tree

In 2003 my family and I moved from Chicago, IL. to Tempe, AZ. The climate change was dramatic, and we arrived in March, so we experienced the summertime here almost immediately. Heavy, pounding heat for 4 months straight! One of the first people we met was Richard, an Arizona native, the man who lived with his family behind us in the complex. He had this planter in his front

window where he would plant food, vegetables, tomatoes, herbs, berries and things. Nothing would last long in there because he has a south facing window and wall, which receives brutal direct sun, all year really, and heats up something fierce in the summer. But one thing always survived and that was his Jalapeño trees. He didn't eat the peppers because he said they were too hot for him. His next door neighbor, and another one of my close friends out here called Cookie, myself, and students in the area didn't mind at all, we were happy to come grab these little hand grenades for all kinds of cooking. They were always way hotter than the store bought ones.

A HOUSE WITH A YARD

After a year and a half we moved to a house with a yard and I started growing Chiles and got hooked. I would always go visit my friends in the alley there where we used to live. Every time we showed up this tree was loaded up. Fat, ripe red ones, green ones all corked up, dried red ones still on the tree, take your pick! And Richard would always tell us how "them peppers are too damn hot" and "go ahead, take all you want..." so, we did. For 8 Years.





From a tree to bonsai...

"You see, here in Arizona, we are used to growing out Chile plants for years and years."

On January 5th, 2014 I went to visit Richard with one thing on my mind, to recover this plant and pot it down into a 16"X8"X7" terra cotta pot I got from a buddy. A friend of mine moved to California, and he invited me to clear his back yard, and pool area of all of his pots and container plants! So I did, with a huge smile, and I found a lot of small bonsai style pots. I immediately thought of this cat Fatalii, and a website I recently visited, and remembered how blown away I was with this mans "bonchi" creations. You see, here in Arizona, we are used to growing out Chile plants for years and years. It just happens, without any effort. We are used

to big mean trunks, choice Bonchi material... Really, if anything, we have to "over summer" our plants. If you have a



nice tree to provide filtered sunlight through the deep summer months, then you're in business all year. I just happen to be so lucky...

On a way to a new home

"I thanked my friend and explained how this plant is special in so many ways and I rushed it home.

On the way I decided to call the plant Richard."



I offered Richard cash and a box of his favorite brew for this majestic specimen. He accepted only the beer and cursed me for bringing it. He told me I could have just taken the plant. Good people, Richard and his whole family.

We shook on it, and I went to my vehicle to get my tools for a sensitive extraction. When I got back, Richard had grabbed it by its thick, leaning trunk, and yanked it from its home where it

lived for years! My heart skipped a beat and I rushed to bag up the root ball before he shook all the dirt off! I thanked my friend and explained how this plant is special in so many ways and I rushed it home. On the way I decided to call the plant Richard. After all, he is the person responsible for the crazy growth structure.



This plant has had no wire, no training, just nature taking her blows for almost a decade. Monsoons and searing desert heat, and Richard never staked it.

The thing filled up his whole window, and grew toward the ground for two years! I used Pro

Mix HP and planned to grow him for a year without any pruning. He has always stood completely on his own, until a month or so ago, during the monsoons, when the onset of heavy fruit, and the rain and

wind proved to be too much, and not wanting to lose a single berry, I decided to anchor him down. This month, after harvest, I plan to give him a haircut, Come back next spring, then repot end of next year. When I do, I will expose the root system which is amazing. Years of watering, and sun exposure have really done a beautiful thing for the roots.

Center of the attention



This plant is a real attention getter. It draws people into my garden who may have otherwise walked on past.

It gives me the opportunity to talk to people in my community about productive and efficient ways to grow healthy food for their families.

Height from surface to tallest point on the plant, 3'7" (about 110cm).



Richard is famous 'round these parts!

Check information about bonchi plants at: fatalii.net/bonchi