

The Anniston Star

Home / Garden

Spring 2025



Doctors Igor and Tatiana Bidikov
at their Diana Hills home.



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The home of Doctors Tatiana and Igor Bidikov

A mountain top house of light and beauty

By **SHERRY KUGHN** | Star Staff Writer

ANNISTON — By the 2010s, physicians Tatiana and Igor Bidikov lived in a pretty house in Golden Springs's Greenbrier Chase. Then, around 2015-16, Tatiana drove by a house on Diana Hills Road that intrigued her.

The house had once belonged to a well-known Annistonian, the late Farley Galbraith, a philanthropist who was known and loved throughout the community. The house had sat empty for a few years after her death in 2013.

Vines and weeds behind the house, situated near the top of Tenth Street Mountain, had overtaken a boulder-strewn backyard known as Eagle Point. The area provided an eastern view of the valley below to reveal distant mountains. Tatiana was intrigued.

The house itself needed updating and numerous potential buyers who had considered buying it did not see what Tatiana saw — potential.

The Bidikoffs bought the house in 2016, remodeled it with the help of a well-known Anniston decorator and designer Scott Skinner. The couple moved in during 2017.

Today, the mid-century home features light streaming through plentiful windows in the living area, kitchen and dining room.

Four ample-sized bedrooms line the hallway of the one-level house that boasts many features of interest.

The Bidikoffs knew updating the house on the mountain would take time, especially the gutting and renovating of the kitchen and master bathroom. Tatiana knew the backyard would become a work of love.

For starters while giving a tour of their home, one in which they often entertain and welcome guests, Tatiana described the artwork in the foyer. One large colorful piece of modern art by Anniston artist Betty Mills Groover pops on the entrance wall as guests enter, and smaller pieces of framed photographs hang there, gifts from friends and family members. In the foyer, there is an oval frame that holds a photo of Tatiana's paternal grandmother, Vaska Bekteshoska.

Next comes the light-filled living room with white rugs set off by dark navy couches and white chairs, both of which mirror the colors of the ceiling. A bust of George Washington sits near additional and colorful wall art by other Anniston artists Tim Moorhead and Tara Johnson. One large, textured ceramic ball rests

on a table and another piece of art has ceramic shapes worked into a painting.

The dining room sits between the living room and kitchen. A light fixture above a round dining table looks almost like water droplets suspended. The kitchen — done in all white and chrome — features one glassware-filled cabinet that extends to the ceiling. Tatiana paid lots of attention to the room because she likes to cook and wanted a modern, convenient place to prepare meals.

In the large den that sits at the back of the house, Igor, an internist, works, at times, on a computer in the room that he claims as his "man cave," according to Tatiana.

The room is furnished with two leather couches, one brown leather couch and a beige chaise lounge, with softer touches of plush purple chairs and a throw. The room features a library and a centerpiece fireplace.

A colorful, handwoven native costume once worn by Igor's grandmother adorns a sewing mannequin. She had lived in North Macedonia, which is the couple's native home.

Tatiana, a pediatrician, said the couple had been settling in back at home after a week's vacation and were expecting guests soon. Fortunately, the house has several closets and even a special room just for her, a dressing room. It is one of Tatiana's favorite features.

"I never had a dressing room for myself until now," she said as she pointed out the shelves neatly arranged with shoes, clothes and other accessories. A blush-pink swag curtain and lighted cubbies for clutches and attractive accessories.

The master bedroom is spacious with a king-sized bed donning a blush-pink spread. Again, visitors' eyes will at once see a light fixture that has hand-blown glass shapes in warm colors that seem to twist as they hang from the central structure.

Again, that backyard, such a tranquil place, is landscaped with flowers dotted around the front of a boulder wall.

Recently, in addition to the pool that sits in between the two sets of boulders, the couple added a hot tub and a sauna amidst more landscaping.

Finally, Tatiana added a loving touch to a small space on the side of the front yard. She recreated a rose garden with a sign that reads, "Farley's Rose Garden" in honor of a woman who, like the Bidikoffs, also loved Anniston and its surrounding communities.



Eagle Point offers beautiful views of the valley and distant mountains in the Bidikovs' backyard.



Family den with centerpiece fireplace.



A modern kitchen highlighted in white and chrome.



Tatiana's elegant dressing room.



Dining room with a teardrop chandelier.



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How to properly care for this popular houseplant

By **SHERRY BLANTON**
Special to the Star's Home & Garden

The lowly snake plant, often relegated to dark corners of homes and offices, has gotten its well-deserved fifteen minutes of fame. Margaret Roach, garden writer for the New York Times, wrote an article about this amazing plant revealing there is not just one snake plant, but an amazing array of sizes and colors. The story features striking photos of this dramatic plant.

The snake plant is sometimes referred to as mother-in-law's tongue, perhaps, because it has sharp points. It has become popular for being tough as nails.

It earned its name from its long, thin leaves with distinct stripes and sharp margins that resemble some types of snakes.

Sansevieria (its botanical name) is often ignored, starved of water and light, as its reputation indicates it can tolerate neglect; however, it may be slowly dying. Although it may seem indestructible; it does much better if given care. It is drought resistant, but performs much better if it receives water. Water the plant, however, only when it is completely dry. If it gets too much water, the roots will rot and it will develop an off smell. A water meter can help determine when the plant is totally dry.

This popular plant does much better and grows faster if it is exposed to bright indirect light rather than dim or no lighting. Full sun will burn its colorful leaves. Although some indirect light may hasten growth, snake plants may grow only a few inches a year. My snake plants live near a window, but I also have a grow light to make sure they receive the light they need to be happy rather than just survive.

If this plant stretches upward, it may be because it is searching for more light.

It is widely thought that snake plants purify the air. The truth is we would need a complete room full of plants to clean the air.

A danger sign your snake plant is unhappy is if the leaves droop over. Not enough light, too much water, or poor soil can cause the upright leaves to flop. Thrips may attack a snake plant causing the leaves to curl. Remove damaged leaves and give the other leaves the recommended dose of neem.

If the soil stinks, it probably has root rot. Take the snake plant out of the pot to decide if it can be saved. Remove the sick part and re-pot the healthy part, if there is any.

If the plant is having problems with root rot or over watering, the green leaves may turn yellow and the edges may turn white. Too much water is the number one enemy of this unique plant.

If the plant's roots have filled up the pot, it is a good idea to re-pot in the spring. Snake plants prefer shallow wide pots made of terra cotta (which dries out quicker than other materials).

If a leaf gets damaged, remove it at the soil line.

Pruning is only necessary if the vertical leaves get too tall.

A snake plant is a good plant for beginners as it is not picky, tolerating much more neglect than a lot of other houseplants.

The snake plant can only survive outside all year in one place in the United States, South Florida. It must have a zone 10 home.

The road to the snake plant's fame began in 2019 when the chief explorer for Fairchild Tropical Botanic Gardens in Coral Gables, Florida, Dr. Chad Husby, attended a meeting of the International Palm Society in the San Diego area. He visited a member who was growing a silvery Sansevieria. He was captivated and took home a cutting. It was love at first sight and he began looking for others in catalogs and on,



the same place I get mine, Etsy. This online marketplace has an amazing collection of snake plants, especially rare ones. I am waiting for my 'Twisted Sister' to arrive.

Dr. Husby began seriously collecting this intriguing plant in 2021. He visited the Botanical Gardens at the Huntington near Pasadena and drove a rental truck full of snake plants back to Fairchild. A star was born.

The title of the article in the Times was "You've Seen One Snake Plant, You Haven't Seen Them All" hints at the great variety of Genus Sansevieria.

Snake plants come in a variety of shapes and sizes from dwarf to vertical. The foliage is sword-like on many, but not all.

Some snake plants (the one most often seen for sale) are vertical, others have low, nest-like mounds of foliage. "Leaves may be flat or wavy or even cylindrical and shaped like tusks, arranged in a configuration like a fan, or maybe a pineapple top or the most emphatic of cockatoo's crest. Some are near-alabaster or silvery, others the darkest of greens, and there are variegated choices, striped or mottled in gold or white or silver. A few like S. Halli Pink Bat, are even tinged with pink."

The majority of snake plants hail from East Africa (from Somalia

through Mozambique). There may be a few in western Africa including the Sansevieria trifasciata, the one most commonly seen.

These tough plants grow from rhizomes and can be propagated from them. This method is preferred for variegated species. It is also possible to propagate them from a cutting from a leaf.

From Dr. Husby

- need as much light as you can provide, especially filtered light
- must have well-draining soil
- provide a slow release fertilizer
- "moderate watering may suffice in cooler, lower-light conditions as they dislike the combination of cold and wet"
- need frequent watering if the plants spend the summers outside in warm, bright conditions

The 2022 reference The Genus Sansevieria: A Pictorial Guide to the Species (authored by Robert Webb, owner of Arid Lands, and Leonard Newton) cited 89 species. In the Times article Dr. Husby states by now there are 100 species.

I hope you will be smitten as Dr. Husby was and begin collecting this fascinating plant. After all, most of us know only one of this fabulous group of plants and there are so many more.

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Lessons from a snake charmer

By FAITH DORN | Star Correspondent

With spring just around the corner, Chris Proper, of Snake Removal of Calhoun County, is a local snake aficionado and snake relocation expert. He spoke with The Star about what to expect from our no-legged friends as the weather warms up.

"I've had snakes and lizards and turtles since I was a kid," said Proper. "I've always liked them. I think it's because snakes are like an underdog and nobody seems to like them."

Whether or not people like snakes, with warmer weather around the corner, we can expect to see them more often.

"Usually, when it is starting to warm up, they will come out of brumation, or hibernation, and find the warm spots of sun and hunt for small mice and lizards," Proper said.

Proper's advice for people who unexpectedly encounter a snake is not to "freak out," but to take a few steps back and just go around them.

"The number one mistake people make when they encounter a snake is that they freak out or try to kill it. A lot of people get bitten when trying to kill a snake," he said. "All you really, seriously have to do is take a couple steps back and give it a wide berth. I've never had one chase me or had proof of one chasing anybody else."

The most common snakes that will be found in the Calhoun County area include rat snakes, DeKay's brown snake and copperheads.

"People that have gardens will run into the DeKay's brown snake, and just because it comes up a lot, DeKay's brown snakes are not baby copperheads," Proper said.

"All snakes are really helpful

"Snakes! Why did it have to be snakes?"

— Indiana Jones

because they eat pests, and that is what they're doing when they sneak into your house," said Proper. "The only ones that are dangerous around here are

copperheads, rattlesnakes and cottonmouths. If you can learn to identify those three, then you will be good."

The tricky part is learning how to identify different snakes.

"The rattlesnakes are usually pretty easy to identify," Proper said,

laughing. "But really, there is no real easy way to identify snakes. Some people say that if you're looking from the top and can't see their eyeballs, don't mess with them, but head shape and pupils are not good identifiers."

"All snakes can flatten their bodies to appear bigger which makes their heads look triangular and some people think that means that the snake is venomous. Snakes' pupils can dilate depending on the lighting, so a venomous snake can actually have round pupils at times," said Proper. "Also, snakes will shake their tails when they feel threatened, and if they're in leaves or something that makes noise people mistake them as being a rattlesnake."

Proper said snakes are helpful. "People kill snakes, but we actually need snakes. If we get rid of them, we'll have a bunch of rats running around carrying diseases," Proper said.

If you don't want snakes to find your property inviting, Proper shares a couple of tips.

- Keep your grass cut short.
- Keep your shrubs trimmed neatly.
- Don't have clutter or trash in your



CHRIS PROPER



Chris Proper relocates a Timber rattlesnake

yard.

"Snakes need food, water and shelter, just like us. If they can't find that in your yard, they won't be there," said Proper.

"Snake Away" and mothballs really don't work. I've got pictures where snakes are curled up on the bag of "Snake Away" or around the mothballs," Proper said, laughing. "Just keep your yard cleaner than your neighbors' yards, and you'll be fine."

Proper has been working with several snake identification and removal groups on Facebook for almost a decade.

"I've been removing snakes for people for probably about eight years," said Proper.

"I didn't ever really know there was a need or market for that until Facebook came out," Proper said.

If you discover an unwanted serpentine house guest, Proper is willing to come remove it. My number is 256-405-6755, and all you have to do is call," said Proper. "I don't charge for snake removal, but I do accept tips. If I have to go under a house or into an attic, I might ask for a little gas money. I'll do what I can to get the snake out



Chris holding gray rat snakes

alive."

Some people have called him to remove a snake they've killed. "That's not what I do," Proper said.

For the most part, Proper's advice is simple. "Leave snakes alone, and they'll leave you alone," he said. "Or call me, and I'll come get them."

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