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**INSIDE THIS ISSUE:** Pg.

Oral Health & Oral Disease	2
Lifestyle Change Program	3
Let Your Money Bloom	4
Beautiful Spring in AZ	5
Parenting Techniques	6-7
Temper Tantrums	8
Summer Day Camps	9
What's Growing On?	10-14
Connect With Us	15



Cooperative Extension, the outreach arm of the University of Arizona, brings the University to the people.

The faculty and staff in the Pinal County Extension office are part of a non-formal education network bringing research-based information into communities to help people improve their lives.

Cooperative Extension is committed to delivering high-quality, relevant educational programs and information to Pinal County citizens and communities.

On Thursday, March 13, 2025 approximately 140 people gathered in the 4-H building at the Pinal County Fair for the 21<sup>st</sup> Annual Faul Breakfast. The breakfast event was originally planned by Mary Faul to be a thoughtful and supportive gesture to support 4-H families during a busy week, this event honors her legacy. Mary and Jim Faul farmed in the Coolidge area going back to the 1920s, they were supporters of agriculture in Arizona and Cooperative Extension. Jim served on the Extension Advisory Board, they both contributed to the Maricopa Agricultural Center, and supported 4-H youth and The University of Arizona CALES students through scholarships. Mary Faul passed away recently, and this breakfast continues as a tribute to her. A **Celebration of Life for Mary** will be held at the Maricopa Agricultural Center on **Monday, April 21, 2025, at 10:00 a.m.**

Seated among the colorful sewing, canning, cake decorating, photography, and other projects, 4-H members led the group in the Pledge of Allegiance and the 4-H pledge. Colt Nehrmeyer, a senior 4-H member, read the 4-H Manifesto; *120 Years Ago, We Were Ready*. During the breakfast, the Excellency Awards for 4-H projects were announced as well as the winner of the new Shooting Sports poster contest on the Essentials and Safety of Firearms. The retirements of longtime 4-H Extension Agent at the MAC Farm, Victor Jimenez, and Cathy Martinez, Pinal County Cooperative Extension Director (CED) were announced. Along with Victor Jimenez and Cathy Martinez's attendance, several notable dignitaries were present, including Oliver Anderson, longtime Pinal County farmer and supporter of Extension currently serving as Pinal County Extension Advisory Board President; Cassy England, Pinal County farmer and Extension Advisory Board member; Ed Martin, Associate Vice-President and Director of Cooperative Extension; Sandra Germann, Executive Director of the 4-H Foundation; Brett Benedict Trustee of the 4-H Foundation; and Todd Kesner, State 4-H Director.

With the event being held in the 4-H building, it was an excellent opportunity to showcase the various projects the 4-H youth had been working on, for youth to be recognized for their efforts and achievements, to thank the supporters of the 4-H mission, and to enjoy a hearty breakfast before a long day of showing and presenting and working at the Pinal County Fair. It's clear that Mary Faul would have been both pleased and proud.

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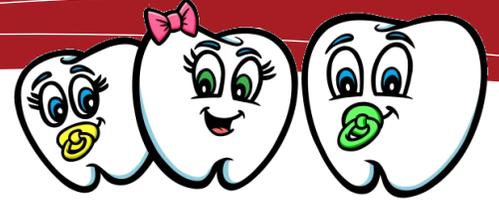
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# FIRST SMILES ORAL HEALTH



## ORAL HEALTH AND HEART DISEASE

*Submitted by Greeta Mills, RDH MEd, Oral Health Professional*



Our primary work at Pinal First Smiles focuses on children's oral health, and good oral health makes a positive difference in our overall health as we grow. There was a study published in 2019 that concluded that childhood oral infections may be a modifiable risk factor for cardiovascular disease in adults. Cardiovascular disease is still the leading cause of death in the United States. The good news is, that means we can do something about it!

When we have poor oral health, bacteria living in our mouth that cause tooth decay and infection can get into our bloodstream and travel to other parts of our body. One area of our body that is susceptible to this invader is our heart. When our gum tissue is inflamed and unhealthy, it increases

our risk of a disease called infective endocarditis. This is an infection of the inside lining of the heart. If someone already has a heart condition, this can be very serious and may be fatal.

Studies have found that the odds of someone having a first heart attack were 28% higher if that individual also had gum disease as compared to someone who did not have gum disease. When inflammation and infection of the gums occur, it leads to a higher C-reactive protein (CRP) in the blood as compared to someone with no inflammation of the gums. CRP is something your doctor may look for when doing routine bloodwork.

Tooth decay and other oral infections in children can contribute directly to clogged arteries as an adult. It can also increase the risk of stroke by 2-3 times.

Here's a few things that we can do to improve our oral health and our heart health. Brush at least twice a day and floss between the teeth at least once a day to remove the bacteria that cause us problems. Avoid smoking and tobacco use which affects the gums and increases the risk of heart disease. Eat a diet that is lower in highly refined carbs and higher in fruits and vegetables that give us essential nutrients for our health. Have routine dental care visits so that inflammation and infection are prevented or treated quickly if they occur. Start these good habits early in life for your children, and start now if you didn't get that experience yourself!

# DIABETES PREVENTION



## A LIFESTYLE CHANGE PROGRAM

*Submitted by Mary Gonzales, Instructional Specialist*

The University of Arizona Cooperative Extension is part of the National Diabetes Prevention Program (DPP), established by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. This lifestyle change program is proven to help people with prediabetes prevent or delay development of type 2 diabetes. Participants will learn to eat healthy, be physically active, manage stress and stay motivated.

Our program uses the *Prevent T2* curriculum, developed by the CDC. There are 26 lessons over the course of a year, meeting weekly at first, then every other week, then once a month.

The U of A Cooperative Extension Diabetes Prevention Program has achieved FULL-PLUS recognition status from the CDC, the highest level of recognition for the DPP. This means that we have shown we can effectively deliver a high-quality program.

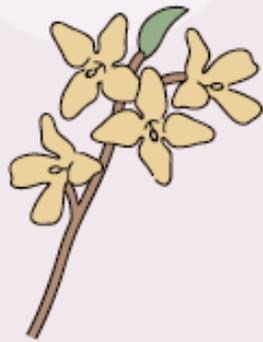
Due to funding from the Arizona Department of Health Services, from the Centers for Disease Prevention and Control, and from the University of Arizona Cooperative Extension, we are able to waive the program fee for participants who meet the CDC eligibility criteria.

As part of a DPP group, you will work with other participants and a trained lifestyle coach, to learn the skills you need to make lasting changes. These changes include losing a modest amount of weight, being more physically active, and managing stress. Being part of a group provides support from other people who are facing similar challenges and trying to make the same changes as you are. Together, you can celebrate successes and find ways to overcome obstacles.

The DPP lifestyle change program can help people with prediabetes cut their risk of developing type 2 diabetes in half. The Diabetes Prevention Program research study showed that making modest behavior changes helped participants lose 5 to 7 percent of their body weight — that is 10 to 14 pounds, for a person weighing 200 pounds. These lifestyle changes reduced the risk of developing type 2 diabetes by 58 percent in people with prediabetes. In adults over 60, the risk reduction was **71%**!

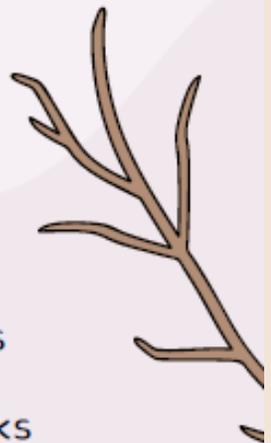


Mary Gonzales has been a DPP Lifestyle Coach since 2017 and has seen the positive impact this program has had on participants' lives. She is very passionate about helping our participants to reduce their risk of developing diabetes. This commitment comes from seeing many family members and friends succumb to diabetes complications. Diabetes is a chronic condition which must be managed daily. To learn more about the UA Cooperative Extension Diabetes Prevention Program including eligibility visit our website at [preventdiabetesaz.org](http://preventdiabetesaz.org).



# Let Your Money Bloom

Carissa Diaz: Financial Literacy, Pinal County



As the flowers bloom and the days get longer, it's the perfect time to spring clean your finances. Don't worry, we're here to help with tips and tricks to make room for financial growth!



## Spending-Savings Plan: Your Springtime Sprout!

Just like you wouldn't plant seeds without a plan, don't start spending without a budget! This season, track your expenses and plant the seeds for financial growth. Soon, you'll be reaping the rewards.

## Savings: Time to Grow Your Money Tree!

Invest in your future like you're planting a garden. Even small amounts add up over time. The more you water your savings, the more it'll flourish

P.S. Don't forget to water your savings (and your plants)!



## Emergency Fund = Your Financial Umbrella

Don't let unexpected expenses rain on your parade! Build up your emergency fund so you can weather the storm—without getting soaked.



## Spring Clean Your Subscriptions

Is your wallet weighed down by old subscriptions? Unsubscribe from things you don't need and free up cash for what matters.



Sources:

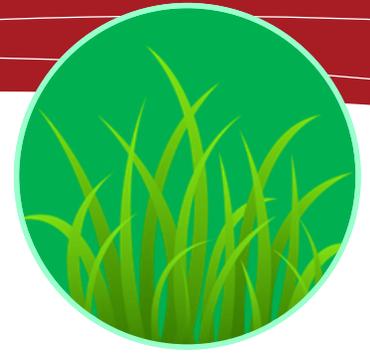
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Pinal County



# HORTICULTURE



## WELCOME TO ANOTHER BEAUTIFUL SPRING IN THE AZ DESERT

*Submitted by Anne LeSenne, Assistant Agent, Horticulture*

The desert is awakening, and it's time to get our gardens ready for the warm season! Happy Gardening!

### PLANTING:

- April: Spring into action! Plant those warm-season favorites: tomatoes, peppers, eggplant, cucumbers, summer squash, and okra. Remember, our Pinal County libraries' Seed Libraries are a fantastic resource for climate-adapted seeds.
- May: Keep planting warm-season vegetables, and don't forget herbs like basil and oregano, which love the May warmth. As temperatures rise, consider moving cool-season crops like lettuce and spinach to shadier spots or providing 30-50% shade.
- June: Focus on heat-tolerant stars! Okra, peppers, and select squash varieties will thrive. Consider trying a new variety this year!

### CARE:

- Watering: With the heat ramping up, deep and infrequent watering is key. Water in the early morning or evening to minimize evaporation. Pay special attention to trees and shrubs, ensuring you water the entire root zone (top 18" for trees, 12" for shrubs). A soil probe is an invaluable tool for checking moisture depth.
- Mulching: Refresh and replenish your mulch! A 4-inch layer of organic mulch helps retain moisture, regulate soil temperature, and control weeds. This added layer will be very helpful as we enter the extreme heat.
- Pests and Diseases: Stay vigilant! Regularly inspect plants for pests and diseases. Opt for natural solutions like neem oil or insecticidal soap. Hand-pull weeds before they seed, and keep a watchful eye for young Stinknet seedlings. Early removal is crucial!

### BEATING THE HEAT:

- Shade: Afternoon shade is essential, especially for heat-sensitive plants and new seedlings. 30-50% shade cloth can make a significant difference. Shaded plants often reward you with a second fruiting in the fall.
- Container Gardening: Container plants dry out quickly! As temperatures climb, move them to shadier locations and

be prepared for frequent (possibly daily) watering. Raised beds with added compost each season remain a top choice for desert vegetable gardening.

### BLOOMS AND BEYOND:

- Enjoy the stunning displays of desert wildflowers, including cacti, desert marigolds, and evening primrose.
- Attract pollinators by planting flowering herbs and native wildflowers.
- Harvest and share your garden's bounty with friends and family.

### BONUS TIPS:

- Celebrate National Garden Week in June (June 1st-7th) by exploring a new gardening technique, visiting a local nursery, or simply enjoying the tranquility of your garden.
- Celebrate National Pollinator Week in June (16th – 22nd) by adding new pollinator friendly plants to your garden. Check out your local farmers market to support your local farmers. Consider supporting local beekeepers, as many have experienced significant hive losses over the winter.
- This year, consider adding a native plant to your landscape to help our native wildlife.

Remember, successful desert gardening is about adaptation and resourcefulness. With careful planning and consistent care, you can enjoy a flourishing garden throughout the hot season.



# POSITIVE DISCIPLINE



## ENCOURAGING VS PRAISE—USING PD PARENTING TECHNIQUES

*Submitted by Muriel Gutierrez, Instructional Specialist*

Rudolf Dreikurs, an Austrian psychiatrist and educator, once said, "A child needs encouragement like a plant needs water." Encouragement is a fundamental need, without it, children will wither. It's important to understand what encouragement truly means and how it differs from praise.

Praise, though seemingly effective in the short term, does not offer true encouragement. While it might motivate temporarily, it doesn't yield long-term positive outcomes. When children receive praise, they can become "approval seekers," learning to rely on others to define their self-worth. This dependency can impact them throughout their lives, influencing their careers, relationships, and even their ability to make crucial decisions.

Encouragement, on the other hand, fosters the development of courage. Courage to feel capable, resilient, and to take joy in their own success. It helps children become happy, contributing members of society. Unlike praise, encouragement does not aim to rescue, fix, or excessively protect. When parents intervene in this way, they deny children the opportunity to strengthen important life skills such as dealing with disappointment, building resilience, practicing delayed gratification, and accepting mistakes. Through encouragement, children learn that they can navigate life's challenges, grow from their experiences, and feel content with who they are.

Here are some ideas on how to encourage children:

- Ask curiosity-driven questions: Encourage children to think critically by asking open-ended questions that invite them to explore ideas and make decisions. Rather than telling them what to think, ask questions that help them develop their thinking skills. This empowers them to use their personal power for making responsible choices.
- Let go: Give children the freedom to make their own choices and learn from their mistakes. Mistakes are powerful learning opportunities, and by allowing children to face challenges, you help them develop resilience and a growth mindset.
- Show faith in them: Believe in a child's abilities and demonstrate confidence in their potential. When children feel trusted and supported, they are more likely to develop self-belief, which fosters independence and the courage to take on new challenges.



# POSITIVE DISCIPLINE



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Here are some examples:

- If a child says they got 100% on a test, you could encourage them with something like:
  - ◆ "Wow, that's amazing! It shows how hard you've worked and how much you've learned. What do you think helped you succeed? Keep up the great work, and remember, each step you take like this builds your confidence and skills for even bigger challenges ahead!"
    - ⇒ This response celebrates their achievement while encouraging them to reflect on their success and continue growing.
- For a toddler getting dressed all by themselves say:
  - ◆ "You figured out how to put on your clothes all by yourself! That's so cool. You must feel proud of how you did that. I bet next time you'll feel even more confident to try something new!"
    - ⇒ This focuses on the effort, the process, and the child's growing abilities, encouraging them to keep learning and trying without focusing solely on the outcome.

Encouragement is a powerful tool in helping children develop the essential skills they need to navigate life with confidence and resilience. Unlike praise, which can foster dependency on external validation, encouragement focuses on the process, effort, and growth, empowering children to trust in their own abilities and make responsible choices. By asking curiosity-driven questions, giving children the space to learn from their mistakes, and showing faith in their potential, we help them build the courage to face challenges, grow from setbacks, and become strong, independent individuals. Encouragement nurtures their sense of self-worth, not by telling them what to think, but by guiding them to discover their own path and feel proud of who they are.

## PRAISE VS ENCOURAGEMENT RESOURCES

### Videos:

- <https://youtu.be/bZlc5ctB2eE?si=imkTfRKJ4kbRW6BB>
- [https://youtu.be/juftE9a\\_Q0o?si=Kao25yMv\\_X31YL74](https://youtu.be/juftE9a_Q0o?si=Kao25yMv_X31YL74)
- [https://youtu.be/kA22nwaxq\\_Q?si=Np66gYE5z6JxqAuP](https://youtu.be/kA22nwaxq_Q?si=Np66gYE5z6JxqAuP)
- [https://youtu.be/kA22nwaxq\\_Q?si=gqs48TStrF7i2rxC](https://youtu.be/kA22nwaxq_Q?si=gqs48TStrF7i2rxC)

### Articles:

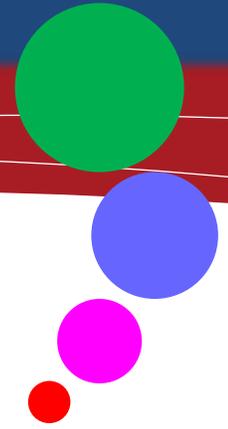
- <https://www.nature.com/articles/s41598-022-08226-9#citeas>
- <https://www.alfiekohn.org/article/five-reasons-stop-saying-good-job/>

### Books:

- <https://www.taylorfrancis.com/books/edit/10.4324/9780429327667/psychological-perspectives-praise-eddie-brummelman>
- <https://www.positivediscipline.com/products/positive-discipline-book>

### Sources:

- Brummelman, E., Grapsas, S., & van der Kooij, K. (2022, March 23). Parental praise and children's exploration: A virtual reality experiment. *Nature News*. <https://www.nature.com/articles/s41598-022-08226-9#citeas>
- Hazie. (2022, December 18). *STOP SAYING "GOOD JOB": How Montessori Parents Praise their Kids | Growth Mindset vs Fixed Mindset*. YouTube. [https://youtu.be/kA22nwaxq\\_Q?si=gqs48TStrF7i2rxC](https://youtu.be/kA22nwaxq_Q?si=gqs48TStrF7i2rxC)
- Nelson, J. (2024, June 30). *Encouragement: What does it mean and how is it done?*. Positive Discipline. <https://www.positivediscipline.com/articles/encouragement-what-does-it-mean-and-how-it-done>
- Nelson, J. (1996). 7. In *Positive Discipline* (pp. 140–171). essay, Balantine Books.



## TEMPER TANTRUMS

*Submitted by Tammy McCarville, Instructional Specialist*



Dealing with our children's tantrums can be frustrating, exhausting, and oftentimes embarrassing. According to Cleveland Clinic children, especially toddlers, have tantrums as a part of their normal development, often outgrowing them by the time they enter preschool at around 4-years-old.

Some causes of these tantrums can include frustration, wanting attention, wanting something, avoiding doing something, hunger, or tiredness. A big cause of toddler temper tantrums is the conflict they feel. They seek independence but still crave their parents' attention. And they haven't developed coping skills to deal with strong emotions or disappointments. They often lack the verbal skills to explain how they feel, so they lash out instead.

"Tantrums are how children communicate; it's a natural part of development, but you can take steps to reduce their frequency and severity."

- Give choices
- Prepare for transitions
- Check food intake and good night sleeps

### Strategies to deal with a tantrum

- Find a distraction; point out something interesting or engage them in an activity.
- Stay calm; once your child is mid-tantrum, don't threaten, lecture or argue with them. Doing so only makes the tantrum worse. Later, when your child is quiet and calm, talk to them about their earlier behavior.
- Ignore the tantrum; this shows your child that a tantrum is unacceptable and won't get them what they want.
- Keep them in sight; if you're in the middle of the store or other public place, make sure you can see your child (and they can always see you).
- Keep them safe; remove any dangerous objects near them. Consider holding your child, so they don't hurt themselves. If your child is completely out of control, bring them to a safe space until they calm down.

When temper tantrums erupt, try to stay calm. Acknowledge your child's emotions. When your child calms down, help them label those emotions and find a better way to react to disappointment. If your child has temper tantrums that last longer than 15 minutes or are very violent, talk to a healthcare provider. And if your child is older than 4 and still having frequent tantrums, it's also a good idea to speak to your provider.

If you have concerns about the social/emotional development of your child, the Developmental Sensory Screening (DSS) program at the Cooperative Extension provides families with children 5 years and under the opportunity to complete the developmental screening tool Ages & Stages Questionnaire: Social Emotional

(ASQ:SE-2). It can be completed online at <https://asqonline.com/family/477598>. Once completed, someone from the screening team will email the results and activity packets. Call the DSS team at (520) 374-6221 or email Program Coordinator Jennie Treadway at [Jennietreadway@arizona.edu](mailto:Jennietreadway@arizona.edu), if you have any questions.

# 4-H YOUTH DEVELOPMENT



## SUMMER DAY CAMPS

*Submitted by Esther Turner, Associate Agent, 4-H*

We are excited to announce that registration is now open for our Summer Day Camps! These camps are open to all 4-H members and non-4-H members.

### Camp Details:

- **Lunch:** Provided
- **Location:** Maricopa Agricultural Center  
37860 W Smith-Enke Road  
Maricopa, AZ 85139
- **Cost:** \$30 per camper, per day  
National Guard members can attend at no charge.

Get ready for a fun-filled experience, with hands-on learning and exciting discoveries at each camp session!

If you have any questions or concerns, please don't hesitate to reach out to Esther Turner, Associate Agent—4-H, at [eturner@cals.arizona.edu](mailto:eturner@cals.arizona.edu) or call (520) 340-4815.

We look forward to seeing you at camp!

For registration information, please use the following link: <https://extension.arizona.edu/programs/4-h-pinal-county/member-resources>



**MAY**  
**31**  
10:00am - 3:00pm

**MAGNET & ELECTRIC DAY CAMP**  
Electricity Work | Magnetism Work  
| Much More!

8-14 years old

**JUNE**  
**7**  
10:00am - 3:00pm

**ARTS & CRAFTS DAY CAMP**  
Fabric Arts | Painting | Resin Art  
| Yarn Arts | Much More!

8-14 years old

**JUNE**  
**14**  
10:00am - 3:00pm

**CLOVERBUDS DAY CAMP**  
Come explore hands-on crafts,  
gardening, painting, and Legos!

5-7 years old

**JUNE**  
**21**  
10:00am - 3:00pm

**COOKING DAY CAMP**  
Prep/Serve a Meal | Knives Skills  
| Making Pasta | Much More!

8-14 years old

**JUNE**  
**28**  
9:00am - 2:00pm

**STEM DAY CAMP**  
Wind Energy | Designing | Testing  
| Building | Much More!

8-14 years old

**JULY**  
**12**  
9:00am - 2:00pm

**SEWING DAY CAMP**  
Learn Basic Skills | Pin Cushions  
| Sewing Patterns | Much More!

8-14 years old



## WHAT'S GROWING ON?

*Submitted by James Jepsen, Community Outreach Professional II*

This article focuses on three Pinal County Community Gardens. All three are prospering and successful within their communities, with varying operational methods and volunteer participation.

Our first is the Florence Community Garden, located in Old Town Florence. The second is the Hope Women's Center Community Garden, located in the City of Coolidge. And the third is the Seeds of Hope Community Garden, located in the City of Casa Grande.

### Florence Community Garden:

The Florence Community Garden was established a few years prior to the University of Arizona Cooperative Extension and Arizona Health Zone becoming involved. Word on the street, from former gardeners, was that the garden was initially started by members of the Boy Scouts of America.



Located in the shadows of the old Pinal County Courthouse, this garden lies smack dab in the middle of Old Town Florence. Town history buffs have informed us that the rock structures located on the garden premises were water troughs used to hydrate horses, because the location was supposedly an old west stagecoach stop. We don't know for sure, but the story is fun.

One of the great group cooperatives of this garden is that the property owner has given her full permission to use the property for the garden, provided it is used for educational purposes. Education and demonstration are what we have been providing, going into our eleventh year here. The Town of Florence helps sustain the garden by supplying water for the garden, as long as we provide educational opportunities for the community members.

Instructional classes are held every Tuesday beginning at 7am. The classes require hand-on participation and usually last two to four hours, depending on what time of the year it is. Participation in the garden varies. There is a small core group that comes weekly, with a menagerie of others that periodically participate. The others are town workers, passersby, winter visitors, and even the next-door neighbor from time to time. Regardless of who shows at what time, each participant has something to add and receives something to take away. Whether it be knowledge gained or seasonal produce for their home food plans, they all benefit. We are always seeking more garden participants and welcome them with open arms!



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Now a little bit about the garden itself. The physical garden is made up of two sections of nine in-ground seed beds for a total of 18 rows. Each row is approximately 15 feet long and is watered by an above ground in-line plastic irrigation tube with emitters spaced every foot, with a distribution capacity of .9 gallons per hour. The emitters can be various spacings, but we have chosen the one foot spacing because it aids during planting times. As we figure out the footprint of a plant and the mature size, we can figure out where to place our seeds or transplants by using the emitter spacings. This is helpful regardless of whether we are growing crops for either cool or warm seasons.

Speaking of growing seasons, we consistently grow a variety of crops in this garden. Warm season usually consists of different varieties of corn, okra, squash, melons, cucumbers, tomatoes, and peppers. Cool season plantings are made up of root vegetables such as beets, carrots, radishes, and turnips. We also plant cole crops made up of broccoli, cauliflower, Brussels Sprouts, kale, collards, kohlrabi, and cabbage. Finally, leafy greens which consist of different varieties of lettuce, Swiss Chard and spinach are also included in the crop mix.

### **Hope Women's Center Community Garden:**

We saw the winding down of the Hope Women's Center Community Garden in its old location, where it flourished for the past nine years. It was bittersweet calling it quits, but we had the opportunity for a whole new garden at the Center's new location, which opened across town in the fall of 2023. The new Center is an old family farmhouse, which sits on a small amount of acreage and had been abandoned for a few years. During that time frame, the soil around the home became dry and parched since it had had no irrigation and very little moisture from the rain. Because there is a large amount of extra land that came along with the building, the garden program was given a substantial piece of ground in which the ladies could begin planning for their new garden. Prior to their final garden departure from the old Center, the ladies teamed up and disassembled the above ground irrigation system, including the in-ground main water lines, and timers and then moved them to the new location where the lines were reconfigured and reused were possible.



The garden class is held every Wednesday from 9am to 11am and maybe even longer, depending on the amount of work that needs to be done. Because of this two plus hour time restraint, it was slow and go to put the garden infrastructure into place. Before anything was constructed, the ladies walked around their new space to brainstorm and draw in the dry dirt, not soil yet, as to how they wanted their garden to look. There is an old non-used irrigation ditch to the west of the garden plot, and along its edge, in the northwest corner, is where they mapped out their

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three-bin compost area. From there, just south, they situated the three raised bed planters, made from salvaged mobile home shower bottoms that were moved over from the previous garden and have been used primarily for garlic and herbs. South of that, they then set to work leveling more ground along the ditch where they placed their next three 4' x 8' raised bed planters that have access from all sides. There were two raised planters donated to the Center, measuring 4' x 8' each which were installed end to end just east of the other raised bed planters. These along with the two additional small, raised bed planters delineate the south boundary of the garden. Once those pieces were installed, the process of bringing a main water line to the garden was put into play. The only water source was coming from a spigot next to the house that was tapped into and then an underground pvc main line that ran to the top end of the garden. Once there, the ladies helped

to install four separate water taps that supply water to various parts of the garden. The first to the compost bins, the second to the raised bed planters, and the third and fourth supply water to the seven in-ground seed beds that at the time had still not been installed.



Everything to that point ran smoothly. Once we started working on the in-ground beds, it became very difficult to do. Unbeknownst to us, there had been a homemade concrete patio that was installed and buried under the ground over time. As we began creating the seed beds, we discovered the concrete and had to slowly break up part of the patio by hand as it reached out far enough into the garden space that it affected four of the nine beds. After the concrete had been removed, we began to moisten the ground with a sprinkler to loosen it with the tiller. As the ladies tilled, they discovered that extra rock and concrete had been dumped into other areas of the property, and as we found it, we had to slowly remove it from the emerging garden space. Once we got past these barriers, it was then time to designate exactly where the seed beds were to be situated, and construction began. As mentioned, the water was applied to the ground so we could loosen it up with the tiller and shovels. We dug each row down into the ground approximately one and a half feet and began adding gypsum,

manure, organic matter and various types of amendments that were then worked into. As we slowly incorporated everything, the seedbeds began to take shape and resemble actual soil. That was a long hard process, but the real test was to plant our first crop.

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The raised bed planters were all filled with bulk soil that we procured from a local nursery. These beds were planted with peppers, tomatoes, eggplants, and garlic. Everything but the garlic struggled to survive. It could have been the soil mixture, or perhaps it was the brutal summer heat. The garlic was small, but it did produce. As far as the in-ground seed beds are concerned, we planted all the rows in sweet corn, and with was a total bomb. I think we did not have quite enough amendments incorporated into our virgin soil that it just couldn't sustain our first crop. The cool season was totally different, with the second crop looking amazing. The ladies planted lettuce, cauliflower, Brussels Sprouts, both red and green cabbage, and collards. They also planted root vegetables such as radishes, carrots, and beets. We even utilized some of the carrots and cabbage and conducted a food demonstration on how to make a USDA approved creamy coleslaw that was used as a side dish for one of the lunches provided at the Center.

The garden is transitioning from the cool season to the warm season, so the ladies have once again been busy. They have planted tomatoes and squash so far, and plan to fill the garden space in the coming weeks.

### Seeds of Hope Community Garden:

This garden, located on the grounds of the Casa Grande Presbyterian Church, has been flourishing. It is nestled on the west side of the church, next to the labyrinth and prayer garden for the pastor who passed unexpectedly last year. The space was once the children's enclosed playground that was completely covered in Bermuda grass. Trying to eradicate the grass is an ongoing battle. Just when the gardeners think they have a jump on it, more springs up somewhere else.



As mentioned, the garden is located on church property, but is a non-denominational garden. There are a few regular towns people and the Elders from the LDS church who are there on a weekly basis. Often there are four or more affiliations and volunteers there at the same time to attend class and participate in garden work detail. We meet Thursday mornings at 8am for one hour or until the work has been completed. This garden is truly a calming and relaxing place where everyone can come and enjoy one another's company.



Seeds of Hope is a local faith-based nonprofit organization that is housed at the church and has been providing social services to members of the community since 1993. They, along with the University of Arizona, Cooperative Extension and Arizona Health Zone, work together to support the community garden.

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The gardeners are engaged in transitioning the fall garden to the spring, as temperatures begin to rise. They have already planted beans and squash plants that were germinated in January by gardeners from the Florence Community Garden who wanted to share. The plants were slow to get going but are finally making a good stand with high survival numbers. By the end of the month, the 14 in-ground seedbeds and two raised bed planters will be filled. They have already transplanted tomatoes and peppers from the UA Master Gardeners that were grown at the University's experimental farm in Maricopa. Eggplants will also be transplanted and then they will sow seeds for okra, cucumbers, squash, melons, and mammoth sunflowers. The sunflowers are used for their beauty, but their bright yellow petals are great for attracting pollinators to the garden.



The goal for this garden is first and foremost to create a sense of community and belonging. When this is achieved, the garden flourishes and produces in abundance. One of the benefits of the community garden is that everyone who participates gets to partake in the bounty. As we harvest, the gardeners take the produce home and have made creative side dishes for their families and have shared their recipes and photos with the other gardeners. Often there is excess produce which is then placed on shelves outside the garden gate where anyone in need is welcome to partake. They also share food with the Mondo Anaya Community Center in Casa Grande which provides necessary support like food access to many in the community such as youth in their after-school programs and adults in their senior activities. This garden is truly special. It brings together people from all walks of life and faith. It is not only a garden where people come to learn, work, and share, but it is a blissful haven where people can participate and plant Seeds of Hope!

- [Maricopa Master Gardeners](#)
- [Pinal County 4-H](#)
- [Sensory & Developmental Screening](#)



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**4-H** provides educational opportunities for youth to become capable and contributing members of a global community. Children, ages 5-19, learn about healthy lifestyles, animals, plant sciences, and leadership.

Contact: Esther Turner at (520) 340-4815 or [eturner@cals.arizona.edu](mailto:eturner@cals.arizona.edu)

**AZ Health Zone** is a program designed to influence healthy eating and active living in a positive way that promotes health and reduces disease among all people living in Arizona.

Contact: Sybil Peters at (520) 340-4564 or [sybilpeters@arizona.edu](mailto:sybilpeters@arizona.edu)

**Child Care Health Consultations (CCHC)** develops relationships with childcare facilities to provide training to staff that will improve their knowledge and practice in the childcare setting.

Contact: Ashley Dixon at (928) 978-2911 or [adixon@arizona.edu](mailto:adixon@arizona.edu)

**Choose Health Action Teen (CHAT)** is designed to recruit teens to teach younger children the benefits of healthy eating and active living. Teens also participate in community service events.

Contact: Esmeralda Castillo at (520) 788-6217 or [ecastill@cals.arizona.edu](mailto:ecastill@cals.arizona.edu)

**Developmental Screening Program** reaches out to families with children, ages 0-5, to screen for early developmental milestones such as gross and fine motor skills, communication, personal-social skills, and problem-solving capacities.

Contact: Jennie Treadway at (520) 340-4979 or [treadway@cals.arizona.edu](mailto:treadway@cals.arizona.edu)

**Expanded Food and Nutrition Education Program (EFNEP)** is a nutrition education class designed to assist limited resource families in eating smart and being active and in acquiring the knowledge, skills, and behavioral changes necessary to contribute to their personal development and the improvement of the total family diet, nutritional and physical well-being.

Contact: Esmeralda Castillo at (520) 788-6217 or [ecastill@cals.arizona.edu](mailto:ecastill@cals.arizona.edu)

**Field Crops Systems** uses research and education efforts to work to improve field crop productivity and global food and fiber supply, farm economic viability, and protecting the environment.

Contact: Avik Mukherjee at (520) 340-4385 or [avikm@arizona.edu](mailto:avikm@arizona.edu)

**Financial Literacy & Positive Discipline Parenting** will help individuals gain the knowledge, self-esteem, self-efficacy and self-awareness to become in control of their finances, and thus improve their lives controlling their financial health. This program will help with daily stressors such as: worrying about electric bills, putting food on the table and wondering if they have somewhere to sleep tomorrow night, which all influences the way individuals interact with their child(ren), their families and their communities.

Contact: Muriel Gutierrez at (520) 374-6254 or [mquierrez5@arizona.edu](mailto:mquierrez5@arizona.edu)

**First Smiles** is an oral health program that provides preventative oral health education, oral screening, referral to dentists for children birth to age five; and fluoride varnishing for children with emergent teeth up to age five.

Contact: Greta Mills at (520) 340-4973 or [gmills@arizona.edu](mailto:gmills@arizona.edu)

**Horticulture Program** develops and delivers educational information, structured programming, and technical support to the consumer and commercial horticulture sectors, as well as urban agriculture and food systems in Pinal County.

Contact: Anne LeSenne at (520) 340-4450 or [annelesenne@arizona.edu](mailto:annelesenne@arizona.edu)

**MAC (Maricopa Agricultural Center) Farm Ag-Ventures** educational programs include a combination of videos, educational presenters, hands-on learning experiences and tractor-trailer rides around their 2,200 acre farm for a close-up view of what makes a working farm operate.

Contact: Esther Turner at (520) 340-4815 or [eturner@cals.arizona.edu](mailto:eturner@cals.arizona.edu)

**Sensory Screening Program** provides free screenings of children, ages 0-5, for vision and hearing impairments that could affect developmental growth.

Contact: Jennie Treadway at (520) 340-4979 or [treadway@cals.arizona.edu](mailto:treadway@cals.arizona.edu)