Mohave County Master Gardener Program

101 E. Beale Street, Suite A, Kingman AZ 86401-5808 • 928-753-3788 • Fax: 928-753-1665

Email: mohavemg@gmail.com https://extension.arizona.edu/mohave-master-gardener

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Mesquite Minded

Beating the Heat

It's interesting, isn't it? The change of the seasons, that is. The gradual buildup of the heat and the departure of the cold (well, cold is relative to us Tri-staters). It felt almost like a game of cat and mouse this year. One week we were sweating, the next, we were shivering. Well, now it's just hot. Bake cookies in your car hot. Fry an egg on the sidewalk hot. Open the front door and confuse it with the oven kind of hot. So, I thought it appropriate to gather some heat related tips and present them to you all.

We'll start small and work our way up.

Sun Avoidance

- Get up with the sun and get work done before the heat of the day shows up.
- Avoid travel during the hottest part of the day (~1pm-5pm depending).
- Be in the shade as much as possibleconsider adding sunshades in convenient spots.

Personal Protection

- Loose fitting, long clothes made of light material. While shorts may feel cooler, sun damage quickly offsets any extra cooling. In the sunlight wear a wide brimmed hat, sunscreen, and sunglasses.
- Carry a sunshade in your car and use it whenever possible.
- Drinking electrolytes (think PediaLyte) is just as important as drinking water.
- Cooling jackets can help keep you comfortable, especially during extreme heat events. See this link for more information: https://www.mitoaction.org/ day-to-day-with-mito/heat-intolerance/ keeping-your-cool-cooling-vest-types/

Cooling measures

- A damp cloth applied to the neck or wrists can do wonders.
- Swamp coolers work well in our dry climate, and they are cheaper and more efficient than AC units.
- Fans keep air moving and provide cooling as long as the air temperature is lower than body temperature. Box fans, tower fans, personal fans are all options.
- Tile and cement are cooler than carpet and rugs.





Home Protection

- Keep windows and doors closed as much as possible, especially if they face south or west.
- Seal up any cracks or gaps around the home, especially around window AC units and doors.
- Consider adding reflective insulation in west and south facing windows, or awnings to shade the window entirely.
- Consider adding/ replacing insulation in the attic, walls, or roof. See the second linked video for more information.
- If possible, get a personal generator capable of running a window AC unit or swamp cooler.

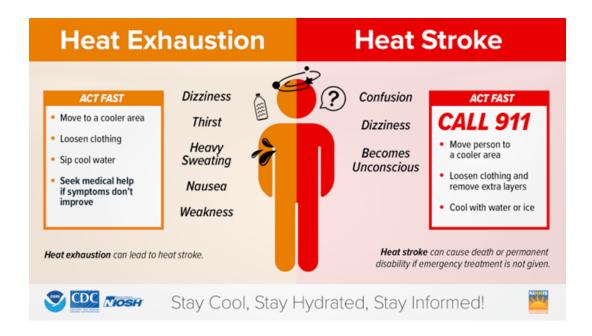
Summers are no joke out here. I mean, how many hundreds (even thousands) of people are snowbirds, and avoid our summers entirely? That alone is a testament to just how intense this season can become. Hopefully you learned something useful, and if you're looking for a more in-depth look about preparing for the heat, please see the linked videos.

Stay safe and cool out there!

Griffin

American Resiliency, Building Heat Resilience 1: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=P3uHSE-v3y4

American Resiliency, Building Heat Resilience 2: https://m.youtube.com/watch?v=-yNAfVjE1Kk&pp=QAFIAQ%3D%3D







Featured Article Joshua Trees by Debboe Miller, Master Gardener Emeritus



Image from the web "Eastern Joshua Tree ppt"



Image from the web "Westerm Brevifolia ppt"

There is a lot of frustration involved trying to identify the cactus plants in your landscape. Not only are several species commonly referred to as "cactus" (such as agaves, yuccas and other waterstoring succulent plants which are not cactus at all), but within the cactus species the common names vary widely. An "organ pipe" or a "San Pedro" or a "Peruvian Apple" cactus (all columnar cacti) will often be identified randomly by nursery personnel. Saguaros are easier to identify, as are Joshua trees.

Further, as new variations within species were discovered over the past 150 years, the person who discovered it tended to tack their own names onto the plant identification, thus adding a new varietal, or sometimes an entire new species. Whether it was really something new, or just an aberration due to climatic or other environmental conditions, was often not examined until much later—so about every 50 years it seems the horticultural community reassorts the entire nomenclature and moves things from one taxonomic group to another. Old documents and books often refer to things which have been renamed once or even twice since the documents were published. Species, as well as varieties, have been moved, renamed or eliminated. The "experts" (horticulturists, scientists and others

working in the broad field of the plant kingdom) understand this, perhaps, but the more casual gardener cannot help but be somewhat confused.

There are many ways to identify one plant as being different from another: its height, the branching pattern, the leaf/spine structure, the temperatures it can withstand, its geographic location, etc. With cactus, the appearance and colors of the flowers are often the easiest differentiating factor, but cactus flowers seldom last more than a day or two, so timing is everything when using that criterion. As DNA analysis, AI and new scientific technology and tools are being improved, the prospect for the future is promising. It may not tell the correct name of what's planted in our yards, but the photographs on the internet and the labels in the nurseries will be more accurate, and we'll have a better chance to compare what we have to the picture of the right species and variety.

Does the name matter? Not really. The plant either looks good in the yard and is healthy, or it is ugly and/or dying and needs to be replaced with something else. But with cactus and succulents there seem to be people who have a "collector mentality" and want to know what they have.





Saying "it's an optuntia", or "it's a column cactus" or "it's a barrel" is not quite enough—there are dozens of varieties within each of those species, so specificity is desired. It doesn't make it any less or more attractive or suitable if you know it's a Cow's Tongue paddle cactus type of opuntia, or a Victoria Regina agave, but it's more satisfying to the gardener. And knowing the Latin name, and which part to italicize, puts you among the truly elite!

Which bring us to Joshua trees. From their original discovery in 1871 through the entire 20th century, and up until 2013, even the most casual desert gardener could spout "Yucca brevifolia" when referring to their Joshua tree. The trees even had their own National Monument, established in California by President Roosevelt in 1936, which became Joshua Tree National Park in 1994. Within the Park there are over 870,000 examples of the species. Among the more than 50 genera of Yucca Joshua trees were readily identifiable fixtures in the native landscape in the northwestern part of Arizona, southeastern California, southwestern Utah and southern Nevada. They can be grown elsewhere if conditions are right but, like the relationship between the saguaro and the Sonoran Desert, the Joahua Tree is endemic, and is often called the "signature plant" of the Mojave Desert.

Joshuas are elevation-sensitive (some information says as low as 1500 feet, but 2500 feet is a safer low range), grow two to three inches a year, can reach 50 feet or more in height, are monocots (like grasses, orchids, agaves, cactus and palm trees) and can live 500 years. Since they do not form "tree rings" on their trunks, the 500 years is a guess since there's no way to reliably know that—yet. They are more closely related to agaves than cactus and belong to the clistocarpa Yucca group within the agavaceae family.

In 2013 things changed. An entomologist, Dr. Chris Smith, at Willamette University in Salem, Oregon, received an \$850,000 grant to study an insect,

specifically the Tegeticula moth. It turns out that this moth is the pollinator of the Joshua trees, and he (and perhaps others) discovered there are two different and distinct Tegeticula: the Tegeticula synthetica and the "new" one called the Tegiticula antithetica. Each pollinates a different variety of Joshua tree, so the Western (Yucca *brevifolia*) and Eastern (Yucca *jaegeriana*) Joshua trees were reclassified as separate varieties. There is one place where both grow—the Tikaboo Valley, off highway 375, near the infamous Area 51 in Nevada. Every summer Dr. Smith and his students and volunteers go there to conduct their research.

There are differences between the two species beyond that of their different pollinators. The *jaegeriana* tends to be shorter and have a more dense branch pattern. You can't trust the pictures on the internet however, since anything older than about 2017 wouldn't recognize the *jaegeriana* as its own species. I have yet to find a picture from the Tikaboo project which might compare them side by side, but I am continuing the search. It does appear, however, what we have in Mohave County growing naturally is the Eastern version, the *jaegeriana*.

The key difference however, is the moths and the flowers. One moth (*T.* synthetica) has a short snout to pollinate the shallower flower of the Western/brevifolia Joshua. The *T. antithetica* moth has a longer snout to gather the pollen in the deeper Eastern/jaegeriana bloom.

One study taking place by the Southwest Biological Center is the blooming cycle of the Joshua. (Joshua trees do not bloom every year). The University of Arizona Entomology and Insect Science address is listed on materials from the SBSC research, and those documents indicate partnership with the US Geological Survey. At the moment there seems to be little rhyme or reason to why some trees bloom and others nearby don't. If they bloom, it is usually in the Spring, except for 2018 when the trees in Joshua National Park bloomed in November! Since





climate change is such a hot topic and good source of funding in the entire scientific community. Cal State Northridge is also involved in the Willamette University activity in the Tikaboo Valley studying the moth's adaptability to climate change.

In the current studies which are focusing on the blooming patterns, some indicate that the tips of the branches need to freeze for there to be flowers the following Spring—but that's very much a work in progress.

When the plants bloom, the proper moth apparently finds the right variety of the yucca species, collects the pollen, and lays her eggs in the flowers. The pollen is unusually heavy, so does not spread by the wind. Seeds form and the caterpillars hatch and survive by eating some, but not all, of the seeds. Ground squirrels and other desert creatures can help spread the seeds which fall out of the flower. What happens to the moths in the periods between blooms? The researchers really don't know. And would the Joshuas, Eastern or Western, survive without the Tegeticula moths? They are fairly certain they would not, which is why there is so much research activity surrounding this. Both would die out-- a true symbiotic relationship.

The Southwest Biological Science Center/USGS currently has studies going in northwest Arizona, studying 36 Joshua trees, including 2 in Wikiup.

Again the focus is climate change which, along with wildfires, appears to be the biggest threat to the trees themselves. As with any desert plant, illegal harvesting of the smaller plants is also a threat, and there are severe punishments should a thief be caught.

I've always been fascinated by Joshua trees, and couldn't wait to try and grow one when I moved to Arizona, even though my elevation was too low and the heat too high, perhaps. And the Joshua tree I bought was the Western variety, which had too tall a trunk and too few branches to suit me—but no one knew in 2009 there were two kinds! Regardless, it succumbed last summer to the elements, and I wonder if the Eastern variety might have adapted better and survived.

While I was not excited about losing the Joshua tree, wrong kind or not, I am excited about the activity and Joshua tree and related research happening now. This is scientists asking questions and arguing and solving puzzles—and it's fun to be able to keep track of much of what is going on via the internet. Like most horticultural knowledge, things are subject to change as we get better tools for examining them, but it's great to be able to watch science at work in real time instead of just reading the historical records.





Growing Irisesby Izzy Brood, Kingman Master Gardener

My knowledge of growing irises has been accumulated from 30 years of growing irises, being affiliated with the San Diego Iris Society and American Iris Society, plus gathering a group of likeminded individuals on growing irises. After moving to Kingman, AZ. I have adapted my previously acquired knowledge to fit the desert environment.

Irises can tolerate our intense desert heat when prepared for it. Watering in the cool morning hours and only enough to keep plants growing and not over watered. Established irises should be watered when the top 3" of soil is dry. My soil is a combination of "native" soil, compost, and other natural organic amendments that have been mixing together for the past 10 years. I use soaker hoses throughout the bed. I use straw mulch on top to help prevent water evaporation, so the water soaks and stays in the soil. The straw also helps with weed control.

My irises are in full sun with some afternoon shade on the west side.

I try to remove all the spent blooms after they shrivel/wrinkle up at the socket. The socket is where the flower is attached to the bloom stock. Sometimes there are multiple buds in a socket that bloom at different times. (Most of my irises have multiple blooms on each stalk). Once all the flowers on the stalk have opened and faded, I cut the stalk at the top of the rhizome.





Weeds and grasses need to be removed from the bed when they are small. Always check for aphids and white fly, especially if you overhead water because it leads to standing water between the fan leaves - places insects like to hide.

I feed/fertilize in June with a 6-10-10 (1 TBSP/ Tablespoon per rhizome) or equivalent. This is generally 1 month after blooms have stopped. Same amount in the hole when planting/ replanting the rhizomes. Too much nitrogen can cause rot problems.

In July and August, I continue watering, pulling weeds, and checking for aphids and white fly. Late August through September and October, it's all about digging, dividing, and replanting the clumps of irises. The weather and temperatures determine when I start digging. (tool photo 1127)







Discard the rhizomes that have bloomed, you'll see where you cut the bloom stalk off at the rhizome. (Photo 1133)





Save the best 3 for replanting - give away the rest. Trim the roots to 2-3" long, cut the fan leaves 4-6", (photo 1143)

Dig a hole big enough to accommodate the size



of the rhizome being replanted, plant the rhizome in the hole with a mound of soil in the middle to spread the roots around, cover the rhizome with the soil leaving 1/4 of the rhizome above ground, water to settle the soil. Cover with mulch. Continue to water several times a week to establish the plant. Once established, water when the top 3" of soil is dry.











Creosote Bush by Dottie Holman, Lake Havasu Master Gardener



There are many local native plants that flourish here in Lake Havasu City. However, since we do not seem to understand these wild native plants, we tend to dig them up and discard them. Before plowing them out of the ground, take a look to see if these not so pretty plants can add character to your landscape. One of the plants that falls into this category is the creosote bush (Larrea tridentate), which is one of the most popular mowed down, pulled up native plant.

The creosote is a native to the southwest from Texas to California, Utah, Nevada and Baja Mexico and can be found from sea level to 5,000 feet. It is cold hardy to five degrees, and as we well know, it will take a lot of heat. The oldest living creosote clone plant is estimated to be 11,000 years old and resides near Victorville, California on BLM property.

The creosote in the wild looks unappealing and gangly. It is one of the plants that you see amongst the ocotillos along the side of Hwy 95 while you are driving to HWY 40. It looks unappealing since it only receives water via our rainfall (and we know that isn't much). It is however, one of the best examples of a plant that can tolerate arid conditions and win! How does it do this? The small waxy leaves on the creosote are comprised of a varnish like resin, which reduces the water loss by evaporation.

If water is applied to the creosote on a regular basis, this plant will fill out, grow and make a stunning backdrop for anything that you plant under or beside it. One of the misconceptions about the creosote is that the wood tar product, creosote, is made from this plant. This is false. However, the Native Americans did use lac, a resin found in tiny droplets on the branches, to repair arrow points and pottery. One of the beautiful things about this plant is that after it rains, the aroma is sharp, cleansing, and invigorating to the senses.

You could say that there are seasons to the creosote. In winter, the creosote is a bright dark green. In the spring, bright yellow flowers will appear – which will turn into nuts covered with a white down overlay. Summer brings on yellow leaves and fall (up to 75%). With the drop of the leaves the branches will show. This silhouette is beautiful in a southwestern landscape, and with water available to the plant through irrigation, leaf drop will not be as heavy. The creosote can be trimmed and trained into a beautiful bush or small tree. The leaf drop is such that it will not interfere with a swimming pool.

Wildlife depends on the creosote for food and shelter. Verdun's in particular feed on the fruit, while finches enjoy the flowers; thrashers, quail, towhees and wrens use the litter under the creosote





to stir up bugs, worms and seeds. Rabbits enjoy resting and hiding under the lower limbs.

Creosote can be transplanted. Even though this plant is well-known for its ability to withstand drought, transplanting requires ample water to establish its root system. When digging up a creosote, it is important that you capture the whole tap root. Dig a hole much deeper than the tap root. Water the plant daily for a week; then about twice a week for a month, then weekly. If the weather is hot, more water will be required. Once established it needs no established watering.

Think of it this way, creosote is not a plant that can be purchased at one of our garden centers, but it can be found throughout our city. Look around and see if this unique and unusual plant can fit into your landscape, you just might impress vourself.

I wrote this article back in 2014 for Havasu Living. One of the pictures that you are seeing is from that 2014 article and what my creosote tree (she is no longer a bush) looks like now. I truly love this plant.

Mary Irish's Publications and Plants for Dry Climates book

Evapotranspiration by David Glenn, Lake Havasu Master Gardener

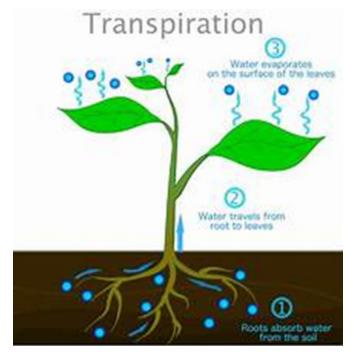
Evapotranspiration is the combined process of transpiration, water moving through the plant and evaporation water turning to vapor and exiting via the leaf stomata. As water evaporates from the leaves, cohesive forces draw more water upward from the roots.

Approximately 90–95% of root-absorbed water is lost through the leaves. Hot summer temperatures increase water demand and without a strong root system, plants risk dehydration and may die.

Healthy root development is essential. Amending the soil with organic material and using basins are effective methods for promoting larger root systems. Organic material improves aeration and soil structure allowing for better water percolation. Basins direct water outward and downward which encourages root expansion.

Jeff Schalau, County Director, Agent, Agriculture & Natural Resources, Arizona Cooperative Extension, Yavapai County. arizona.edu/yavapai/ anr/hort/byg/). AZ #129

Another reference, 2020 Master Gardener Training Presentation. Basic Botany, Amy Nickel, M.A. Instructional Specialist, Sr. University of Arizona, Mohave County Cooperative Extension, Slides 63-67 Transpiration.







Bullhead City Master Gardeners

Bea Munoz – Coordinator Dennis Lesowsky – Co-Coordinator Debbie Miler – Scribe Bill Stillman - Scribe

Summer is here and the Bullhead City Master Gardeners will be taking the months of July and August off. They return for Home Garden Day on Thursday, September 11. It has been a busy Spring!

This year's Master Gardener Training course was held in Bullhead City this year and we are delighted three of the class participants attended Orientation and will become Associates. We welcome Hayden Proctor, Jennifer Castillo and Tonya Ward!

In April we did not have our usual Home Garden Day because of some scheduling conflicts, but had two workshops instead. The first, "All About Citrus" was presented by Dr. Glenn Wright (See Photos #1, #2). His knowledge and expertise provided a very informative and well received workshop—standing room only! Professor M.L. Robinson was the special guest speaker for the second workshop. His topic was "Desert Reptiles" and he brought dozens of specimens of snakes, tortoises and local reptilian inhabitants none of us want to run into in our gardens! (See Photos #3, #4, #5)









Our Master Gardeners Bill Stillman and Leroy Jackson went to Kingman in April to do an Arbor Day presentation there. About 45 children were there to learn about planting trees. Leroy and Bill assisted the children with actually planting donated trees into a bed of soil. The event coordinated by Andrea Penn in partnership with Neighborhood Forest, Mckee Foods, local Kingman Master Gardeners, Dig It Kingman





and the Mohave County Library - Kingman Branch. Other activities were a book reading (in 5 different classrooms, seed planting, and crafts. At the event 100 trees were given to about 80 people in total. The trees were donated by the Neighborhood Forest. (See Photos #6, #7, #8, #9, #10)







The Bullhead City Community Garden is finally getting ready to open and many of our members are involved in volunteering there. Laurie Thompson, Andrea Mooney, Bea Munoz, Dennis Lesowsky, Bill Stillman, Leroy Jackson, and Bree Daughterty (from Kingman Extension office) are all helping out. They participated in setting up the garden beds with automation irrigation systems and planting herbs, vegetables and melons suitable for this time of year. (See Photos #11, #12)









On Saturday, May 10, a "Come Check Out the Bullhead Community Garden" event had an impressive number of participants, and many of the beds are already rented. There was also a sign-up for a 6-week "Seed to Supper" class which will be held at the Senior Enrichment Center at 2275 Trane Rd., right next to the Community Garden. These hour-long classes will be presented by Bree Daugherty, assisted by several of our Master Gardeners, and will take place each Thursday starting June 12 from 1:30-2:30 p.m.

Once the Community Garden is up and running in September, the Bullhead City Master Gardeners will be scheduling free weekend workshops open to the participants of the garden.

Many of us are also participating in the Squash Pollinator research project through Penn State University. We are utilizing one of the garden beds at the Community Garden and some of the seeds planted have already sprouted (see photos ##. Hopefully they will survive our summer temperatures. In this trial we will document and collect the pollinators once the plants begin to flower. (See Photos #13, #14)





Our Home Garden Day for the month of May was very well attended and, as always, generated lots of questions and answers. The May workshop, titled "Gardening in Raised Beds", was presented by Dennis Lesowsky. He is an experienced gardener here and in California and is highly knowledgeable with the climate, soil and water challenges we face gardening here in the Mojave Desert. (See Photos (#15, #16) In June the Mohave Community College, where we





conduct our programs, will be closed on our normal third Thursday presentation day (June 19). Once again we are switching things around and will do our June program "Preparing Your Fall Garden and "All About Cactus" in place of the Home Garden Day on June 12 from 10-12 a.m.

Mohave Electric Cooperative will once again have their Operation Cool Shade program taking orders for the four varieities of shade trees they sell beginning August 25-and continues through October 2, or sooner since they usually sell out quickly. We will once again volunteer the day they are distributed in early November.





Lake Havasu City Master Gardeners

Sharon Gomez, Coordinator

Well, it seems summer has come even earlier this year! From all reports, we will probably be in for another year like the Summers of 2023/2024. Hopefully, the saguaros will not be hit so hard along with many other plants. I foresee lots of calls to the hotline about dying plants. We have been handing out our new and improved Irrigation Chart for all of our desert plants in hopes of assisting our residents to further the life of their plants during our long, hot summers.

Home Garden Days have been busy this past quarter – full house every month! More and more residents are attempting to veggie garden and need LOTS of help. Lake Havasu Master Gardeners has a number of very successful veggie gardeners so we are able to give excellent advice to our residents and our fellow Master Gardeners learn right along with the residents. We are encouraging all to begin thinking about their gardens to be ready for October when the weather gives us a break. We also had lots of questions about irrigation, pruning of trees and shrubs, citrus, and palms.

Our phone and email hotline contacts have been really reduced. The few calls have been about a variety of subjects. We only attended two garden visits over the last three months – both for leaning saguaro. The first saguaro was about 6-1/2 feet tall with some sunburn and very close to a 6-foot wall. The other saguaro was a gorgeous 20 yearold specimen in excellent condition, except for the leaning. However, the environment around the cacti had been changed. Two huge Sisso trees had been removed (created a nice shade for the hours up to 2 p.m.) and the septic tank leach lines were about 10 feet away from the saguaro. The resident had septic stoppage and work was done on the tank/leach lines. Copper sulfate was placed around the leach lines (at the level and just above the saguaro) and then covered with 5-6 feet of soil. Over/under watering was not the problem. Our thinking was the plant was in some shock from the tree removal plus the copper sulfate could be another reaction. We suggested

proper bracing of the saguaro to prevent further leaning and to just wait and see how the saguaro continues to react to the environmental changes. Unfortunately, the resident had no choice but to rely on the suggestions of the contractor in order to save her septic system. Time will tell and we asked the resident to keep us informed of the saguaro's progress.

In April, we worked together with the city of Lake Havasu to provide an Easter event for the kids 3-12 years old. Around 110 kids along with their parents attended. The city had the Easter Bunny there to hand out goodies to the kids, egg coloring took place with plastic eggs (due to cost of eggs!) and then the Master Gardeners had the opportunity to guide each child through the process of planting flower/herb seeds in two pots to take home to cultivate! The kids and the parents were very excited and the Master Gardeners were able to encourage them to continue to grow their plants and watch what happens.



Robin Eiesland explains Master Gardeners to the group and how we can help them with their gardens.



Barb Allen and Sharon Gomez work with kids and parents to instruct how to plant flower/herb seeds in their pots.







Kathy Marks assists with dispersement of soil and seed.

Now, we all look forward to a few months of hibernation to stay out of the extreme heat that seems to have started earlier and HOTTER. Some of us have plans to get out of town for a short while to a cooler climate. Then, some of us will stay the course and make plans for our fall planting and maybe stay cool with a frosty drink, binging on movies, or reading some favorite gardening books. Stay cool All!







Issued in furtherance of Cooperative Extension work, acts of May 8 and June 30, 1914, in cooperation with the U.S. Department of Agriculture, Dr. Edward C. Martin, Associate Dean & Director, Extension & Economic Development, Division of Agriculture, Life and Veterinary Sciences, and Cooperative Extension, The University of Arizona.

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Mohave County Master Gardener Summer 2025 Calendar

JULY

July BHC Master Gardeners on break
July KNG Master Gardeners on break
LHC Home Garden Day Library, 11-1

AUGUST

Aug BHC Master Gardeners on break
5th LHC Home Garden Day, Library 11-1

22nd County Fair/Business Mtg, Extension Office

SEPTEMBER

22nd LHC Home Garden Day, Library 11-1

9th BHC Master Gardener Monthly Meeting Mohave College Room # 201

11-14th County Fair @ 2600 Fairgrounds Blvd, Kingman, AZ 86401

11th BHC Home Garden Day - Mohave College Room # 201

16th LHC Business Meeting, Library 4 pm

18th BHC Workshop – Starting Your Fall Garden Mohave College Room # 201

26th KNG Business Meeting @ Extension office

OCTOBER

- 9th BHC Home Garden Day Mohave College Room # 201
- 13th BHC Master Gardener Monthly Meeting Mohave College Room # 201
- 16th BHC Workshop Tree Planting Native & Non Native , in Conjunction with MEC's Cool Shade, Mohave College Room # 201
- 21st LHC Business Meeting, Library 4 pm
- 24th KNG Business Meeting @ Extension office
- 25th KNG Tomato Quest Festival @ Locomotive Park/ Extension Office

