



THE UNIVERSITY OF ARIZONA

**Cooperative Extension**

Master Gardener

## **Plant Help is Available**

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*SaddleBrooke and SaddleBrooke Ranch Master Gardeners*

Gardening in the Sonoran Desert is unlike gardening just about anywhere else, no matter how many years you've planted trees and shrubs or tended and harvested your own herbs and vegetables. I recall watching my landscaper using a power drill to dig a hole in the rock-hard caliche soil before planting an olive tree in my front yard. Visualize that introduction to working the soil in our community.

Since the beginning of the current year, SaddleBrooke/SaddleBrooke Ranch Master Gardeners have received more than one-hundred plant help requests responding to questions ranging from attracting hummingbirds to their gardens to zeroing in on best irrigation practices. It's an easy process and one that most often results in finding the answers to residents questions. Basically, you send an assessment explaining what the issue is and, if possible, a photograph of the plant to [planthelp@arizona.edu](mailto:planthelp@arizona.edu). Within days, a small team of Master Gardeners who have already begun to research your dilemma will come to your garden and attempt to make a diagnosis or rectify your situation.

Julie Peek became a Master Gardener in 2020 and participated in plant help for the past couple of years. "We draw on the substantial knowledge and experience of Master Gardeners in consultation with experts from the University of Arizona and others such as arborists," she explains. "We work together and watch for trends to track in certain areas such as powder mildew affecting plants or the infestation of agaves with snout nosed beetles."

Master Gardener, Ellen Sosin has been working plant help for the past seven years. She, along with others, have developed a process. "We do research in advance on the homeowners topic and also collect materials we can bring to the visit or send via email. The team corresponds with one another via email before the visit to problem solve together."

Andy and Gina Marino hosted a Master Gardeners team in July and found a number of issues to address including a dead golden barrel cactus due to over-watering; adjusting irrigation for a fruitless olive tree that was not getting enough water; installing drippers for a rose bush canopy; and treating a Texas Mountain Laurel with chelated iron. The Marino's responded, "We want to thank you for such a thorough response! And for spending several hours at our house in the blazing sun and heat. You've been a great help and are such a valuable asset to our community."

Since Master Gardeners in SaddleBrooke and SaddleBrooke Ranch are volunteers trained through the University of Arizona's Cooperative Extension, responding to plant help issues in our communities allows us to provide a beneficial service to residents while continuing to learn more about landscaping and gardening in the Sonoran Desert. It's a symbiotic experience for everyone involved and provides a more beautiful, healthy and sustainable community for all of us to enjoy.

SaddleBrooke/SaddleBrooke Ranch Master Gardeners are volunteers trained under the auspices of the University of Arizona, Cooperative Extension, Pinal County. We offer educational programs and classes to residents of our communities.