

# *Yavapai Gardens*

7Master Gardener Newsletter

April/May 2017

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## *Columbine, *Aquilegia* sp.*

*by Nora Graf*



One of my favorite flowers has always been columbine. They are a dramatic but delicate-looking flower with light airy leaves—perfect for

gardens throughout the County. While you can grow them in Yavapai County, growing in lower elevations is different than higher elevations. Don't be afraid, you will just have to situate the plant properly. Check the paragraph on planting and growing information.

The name Aquilegia is Latin for eagle and refers to the eagle talon-like spurs. Columbine comes from the Latin “columbinus” which means dove in English. Named because of the flowers resemblance (from the rear or side) to a group of doves.

Native columbine are known for the long spurs on the blooms and the petals are called blades. Even if you don't know the species they are instantly recognizable as columbine. They are a member of the Ranunculaceae family (also known as the Buttercup family).

Columbine hybridize easily and color variations happen even in the wild. Plant growers have taken advantage of this characteristic and have created a wide range of colors and shapes, some that in my view don't even look much like columbine.



While they reseed readily, they are a perennial plant. They are usually pollinated by hummingbirds, hawkmoths (good reason not to kill every hornworm in your garden) and bumblebees.



According to the book "Flora of Arizona" there are seven species of columbine that are native to Arizona. Only a few of these are available for sale.

**A. micrantha** has lovely pale yellow to white-green flower with pinkish-purplish spurs, sometimes white or yellow. The color can vary, causing some confusion in names with a number of species and sub-species, depending on your sources. Today they are all considered one species. It is endemic to the Colorado plateau. (I found one possible source: <http://www.georgiavines.com>)

**A. elegantula** has the common name of western red columbine and is a dramatic mix of red and yellow. Found in the southwestern states and northern Mexico, it likes moist areas in the coniferous forests. The spurs are knob-tipped and bright red that lighten to yellow-green or orange at the tips. Sepals are yellow and the blooms tip so the mouth of the flower points to the ground. They are pollinated by the broad-tailed hummingbird. (JL Hudsons may have seeds available: <http://www.jlhudsonseeds.net/> )



**A. desertorum** has a very small range and is found in southwestern New Mexico, southeastern Arizona and a narrow range from its SE Arizona sites through much of Yavapai county to the

northwest corner of the state. It likes high elevations on rocky slopes where moisture is present. The spurs and sepals are red to yellowish green with the tips of the spurs sometimes yellowish green. The spurs are straight and the yellow stamens extend beyond the blades. This plant might grow in our gardens in the right location. This plant is available at High Country

Gardens: <http://www.highcountrygardens.com/perennial-plants/aquilegia/aquilegia-desertorum>



**A. triternata**, also known as barrel columbine or Chiricahua Mountain columbine, it is found in Arizona, New Mexico and maybe Utah, and looks very much like A. desertorum. There

seems to be some confusion between the two plants. A. triernata can be very yellow with pink-tinged spurs. It is found in moist open rocky places at mid-elevations and grows in partial shade to full sun and prefers sandy soils. (Couldn't find a source of seeds or plants.)

**A. caerulea** is the well-known blue columbine, the state flower of Colorado, that also has a yellow-pink version to confuse the issue. The Arizona columbine is sometimes referred to as A. caerulea var. pinetorum. It is found in the Rocky Mountains from Montana to New Mexico, including Idaho and Arizona. The flowers can be variable from the pale blue to white, pale yellow and pinkish and often with bicolor flowers and is found at elevations from 8000 to 11,000 feet. Blooms June and July. This is a common garden plant and is readily available from many sources including local nurseries.



**A. chrysantha** has a pure yellow flower and is found from Apache County to Mohave County and Cochise, Santa Cruz and Pima County. Found also in Southern Colorado, New Mexico and

Northern Mexico in rich moist soil. It grows at elevations from 1000 to 11,000 feet and is one of the most abundant wild columbines in Arizona. It is a beautiful yellow with long spurs. It might be available



at a local nursery or can be found at High Country Gardens. Starts easily from seeds.



**A. longissima**, also called the long-spur columbine, is found in the Huachuca Mountains, Cochise County and Pima County along with Western Texas and northeastern Mexico. It is considered rare and identified by the exceedingly long spurs and bright yellow flowers. Flowers bloom in the fall after monsoon rains. It is pollinated by large hawkmoths. (Couldn't find a source of seeds or plants.)

### Growing Columbine

Some of the native columbine can be a challenge to grow and aren't readily available. *A. chrysantha* is a good choice for our area. It can tolerate warmer and drier conditions than the other species. I figure if I can grow them in Camp Verde, anyone can grow them. While some sources say they will grow in full sun, they do better in areas of afternoon shade or the North side of a building. In Camp Verde mine spread easily in shady, moister areas but not anyplace where the sun is too hot. They are not a plant that can be grown in most xeriscape landscapes without extra care.

The native varieties don't need a lot of fertilizer. Mine have been growing for at least 15 years and I've never fertilized them. Once they get established they will come back year after year. They are prolific seeders and will spread if the location is suitable. In Camp Verde they are one of the first things to bloom in early spring. They bloom a long time but as soon as it starts to heat up they go to seed. In cooler locations they will bloom later and longer.

There are a massive number of hybrids available that expand not only the colors but the shape of the flower. Some of the double varieties barely look like columbine anymore but if you do a computer search for images of

columbine flowers you will be surprised at the array that is available. They come in purples, pinks, whites, blues, yellows and various combinations of those colors. Most of them will grow here if placed in the right location.

Starting columbine from seeds is usually easy. They don't need pretreatment as long as you sow them in the cooler times of the year like January or in the fall. They do need some cold stratification to start germination. Expect that the first year you will see few to no flowers but once they get established they should bloom profusely in early spring. Once it starts to warm up the plant quits blooming and starts to look ragged but come late summer new growth will start to appear. It doesn't grow fast in the colder months but at the slightest hint of spring, growth explodes.

### Swallowtail Garden Seeds

<https://www.swallowtailgardenseeds.com/>

Toll Free: 1-877-489-7333

*A. caerulea* along with lots of hybrids. Large selection of seeds.

### High Country Gardens (plants)

<http://www.highcountrygardens.com/perennial-plants/aquilegia>

Have *A. desertorum* along with a variety of hybrids.

### Hudson Valley Seed Company

<http://hudsonvalleyseed.com/>

### Georgia Vines

<http://www.georgiavines.com/>



# Meet a Master Gardener: Judy Cowan

by Susan McClary

There are a variety of life experiences that could peak a person's interest in becoming a master gardener and educating the public. These experiences might include an introduction to and a love for gardening at an early age, an education on self-reliance, a desire to teach others healthy eating and growing their own healthy foods, the pure enjoyment of tasting fresh-picked organic fruit and vegetables, a favorite garden, or an understanding of the bio-cycle of life. For Judy Cowan, it is all of these. It all began with her mother Paralee, Judy's, "pioneer- raised" childhood, and homesteading in her favorite garden when she was a toddler.

With fruits, vegetables (everything from peppers to pumpkins, potatoes, and nuts), Judy's mother made sure the family had food all year long. They "lived off the land." The experiences Judy had growing up, "had an influence in everything I do. What you have now, you might not have later. Tomorrow may be a different story. Mom got carried through the depression by her garden very well."

Judy became a 4-H member and joined the vegetable judging team which won in the state, "it's always a team effort. That was fun, and I loved that." Judy was taught that there is a cycle of life. "Mom never got upset if a rabbit or birds picked at her food occasionally. It was the balance of nature. One thing eats another."

The desire to be of service, the understanding of natural cycles, and her love of gardening have carried through Judy's entire life. She became a Navy nurse and as she went from Pennsylvania to Arizona she planted fruit trees. Her "middle name is Johnny Appleseed." Even though Judy was moving on she "planted for the next person."

The big difference between Judy's childhood gardens in Ohio and her Cottonwood, AZ garden is water. "There is always rain in the Ohio valley, 35-45" of rain a year. Here it is a different story." In Ohio, they only had to water a couple of times a year if they had, "what they called a drought". You didn't expect



things to die if you planted them at the right time and kept them weeded."

Now Judy's home garden produces enough food for herself. She grows what is, "reasonable cost-wise for her to grow." She says, "In the cost is your time." Judy grows Jerusalem Artichokes, tomatoes, peppers, and eggplant, and squash (both winter and summer). But she has had some difficulty with one of her favorites—okra. Judy also has apple trees, an almond tree, and concord grapes. All her produce beds are raised and fenced to keep out the critters. She has planted all her food gardens on the eastern side of her property, so they are shaded from the afternoon sun which cuts down on water consumption. Judy has several flower beds as well to attract beneficials.

Judy has a master's degrees in anesthesia, disease prevention and health promotion. Educating others about healthy diet and food is a passion. In addition, she is a guardian of greyhound rescue dogs who love to roll around in the fresh tilled earth as she is gardening.

Since becoming a MG in 2008, Judy has worked at the extension office in Camp Verde. She said, "I should be really great at it, but the more I know, the more I know I don't know." She always learns a lot working in the office. Judy expressed great appreciation for Faun Vogel, who recently retired as the office coordinator at the C.V. extension office. Faun worked there for many years, and "did a wonderful job. She set up the office for learning whether we're on staff, or if we are just there for information."

In addition, Judy was the chairman of the committee for the MG cookbook, has given a lecture on gardening to her woman's club, and does some one-on-one consulting to answer questions with neighbors who know she is a MG. Being of service as a MG allows Judy to continue to pursue her own interests through educating others about gardening, healthy eating and food self-reliance.



# Spring into Gardening Conference

by Nora Graf

Photographs by Steve McIntyre

It was a beautiful day to talk about gardening. The Spring into Gardening conference took place at Yavapai College in Clarkdale on March 25th. The campus itself is very nice. The grounds have been planted with a wide variety of native and drought tolerant plants while the classrooms were very comfortable. It was a terrific place for the conference. Special thanks to all the volunteers, Jeff Schalau, Hattie Braun from Coconino County

and Extension staff who put it together. There was an interesting mix of programs that included tours of the college vineyard, the winery, a greenhouse and orchard tour and a plant tour of the campus. Classroom programs included sessions on GMO's, birds, grafting, pesticides, greenhouses and my favorite, on baking bread the old fashioned way. A fun day and good learning experience!



Early Morning Registration  
Gillian Thomas, Lisa Gerber, Ron Zmyslinski



Jeff Schalau  
"Existing & Emerging Plant Diseases in Northern Arizona"



Hattie Braun, Sue Madden  
"There's and App for That"





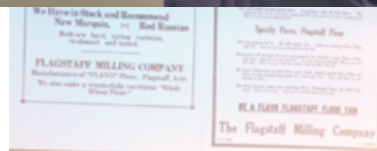
Lunch on a beautiful spring day.

Lunch under the Ramada



“From Seed to Loaf “ session

Debbie Cavarretta  
introducing Steve Alston  
“From Seed to Loaf”







***Congratulations on  
completing 50 hours of  
volunteer service!***

**Susan McClary**  
Mentor — Betty Loos

**Amanda Gagnon**  
Mentor — Faun Vogel

## ***Sedona Farmers Market***

The Master Gardeners will be having an information table at the Farmers Market in Sedona from May 19th through September 29th. The market is located at Tlaquepaque/Creekside  
[336 Highway 179](#)  
[Sedona, AZ 86336](#)  
Fridays 8-11:30am

Without your help we cannot have a continued presence at the market. We need at least two people to be at the table at any one time, this will allow us to talk to several people at one time and not leave the table unattended.

When there is a holiday we do not have the table at the Farmers Market due to the high number of visitors.

Please let me know when you can help out. My phone numbers are: Karen O'Donnell  
Home [928.282.5484](tel:928.282.5484), preferred  
Cell [928.274.3697](tel:928.274.3697)

### **2016 Newsletter Deadline Schedule**

The newsletter comes out every two months. Please note the deadlines.

Publish	Date	Deadline
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Feb-Mar	Feb 1	Articles Jan 5, announcements Jan 25
April-May	April 1	Articles March 5, announcements Mar 25
June-July	June 1	Articles May 5, announcements May 25
Aug-Sept	Aug 1	Articles July 5, announcements July 25
Oct-Nov	Oct 1	Articles Sept 5, announcements Sept 25
Dec-Jan	Dec 1	Articles Nov 5, announcements Nov 25

From the Editor: Send or email articles to the address below. Email is preferred. Please see schedule for deadlines.

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Arizona Cooperative Extension  
Yavapai County

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MG NEWSLETTER



## *Next Meetings*

April 19, Prescott, 6:30pm, Panel discussion on entering in the Yavapai Fair.

May 17, Camp Verde, 6:30 pm, To be announced.