

Yavapai Gardens

Master Gardener Newsletter

April-May 2018



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Plotter or Pantser?

By Laurie Cameron



Authors use this expression to describe their writing style. Plotters have the whole novel laid out before setting about writing. Pantsers sit down at the computer each day, waiting to be surprised, writing their book literally by the seat of their pants.

You could say the same kind of mindset applies to gardeners. A plotter sits down with paper and pencil and sketches out the garden or yard, then determines what plants to grow where. A pantsler goes to the nursery, sees a perennial that they like, buys it, takes it home and plants it. Some gardeners probably do a bit of both.

When we bought our home on a half-acre plot that had never been landscaped, I had both the pleasure and the challenge of creating my dream yard. Never having done any gardening in the high country of Arizona, I faced a lot of challenges. I had no clue what would grow here, I was only just getting acquainted with critters that wandered freely across the property and was concerned about the water situation. And while I am a pantsler by nature, there were some issues that really required a bit of forethought.

Plotting

Drip irrigation: In order to be water conscious, I decided on a drip irrigation system. It had to have automatic control because a) I am terrible about remembering to turn on the water--and worse at remembering to turn it off!--and b) my husband and I like to travel.

I sat down with an old hand at landscaping with my yard sketched out and the plans I had envisioned. I ended up installing four zones. In retrospect, this was an excellent decision.

Critter-free zone: I like javelinas, deer, coyotes, bobcats, and rabbits. They wander freely across our property from the vacant land behind us and provide us with much entertainment. Still, I needed some space where I could grow whatever I wanted, like vegetables, without worrying about feeding the animals instead of myself.

A fence, therefore, was a must. I took a lesson from permaculture and left a section of the lot natural, laid down gravel and decomposed granite in a low maintenance area, and fenced off the back.

Rain garden: I just had to try my hand at creating a patch of yard that captured and retained water. An article about planning, constructing and planting this part of the yard is included in a prior newsletter.

Seedling Mover

Back in 1997 I included an idea from a Master Gardener who was helping someone in their vegetable garden. He used a grocery cart with a tray tied to it with a bungee cord. He would place his growing seedlings on the tray and then it was easy to roll them out each day to harden them off.

The cart was found in a ditch near their house. I do not advocate stealing a shopping cart. Use a wagon or wheel barrow and make your own seedling cart.



Selecting plants: While it's lovely to go to the nursery and pick out a plant, that too requires some forethought. Do critters eat it or do they tend to leave it alone? How much water does it need, how much sun, what kind of soil? I have learned the hard way that you really need to think these things out before you spontaneously shop. But the more familiar you become with plants of the area, the more savvy a shopper you become.

Pantsing

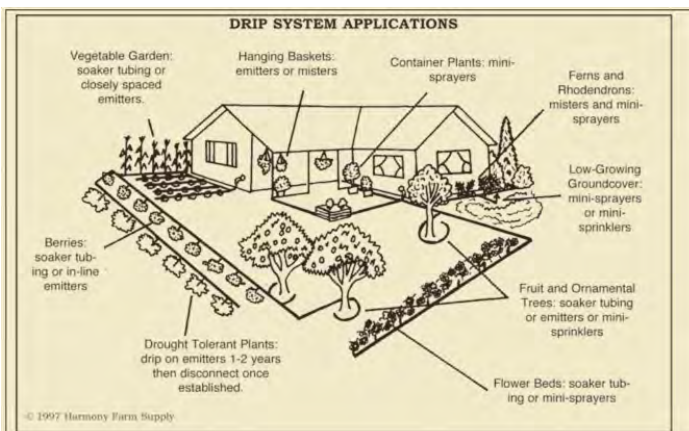
Taking into account all of the above, gardening by the seat of your pants is a lot of fun. And there are some advantages.

No matter how much advanced planning you do, sometimes the plant you want just isn't available when you want it. You might decide to wait (as much as several seasons) to get it, or maybe something else will do.

Your local nursery sometimes has plants that need rescuing. They will sell them at a deep discount. There is something very satisfying about taking a spindly, sad-looking plant and bringing it back to life.

Your scheme didn't quite come out looking like you had planned. You have shorter perennials in back of longer perennials. You planted something, and it just isn't thriving. A pantser doesn't hesitate to dig stuff up and rearrange.

So...what kind of gardener are you? Plotter? Pantser? or Hybrid?



Repotting Seedlings

by Nora Graf



Some of you have started seeds for this year's garden. By this time some may be ready to plant in the garden. Others might need to be

repotted so they can be planted outside at a later date. Repotting is simple and the tips below will make sure you are successful in your endeavors.

When is it time to transplant?

Most sources suggest repotting when the plant has its first true leaves. How do you know if it has true leaves? When a seed sprouts and the new plant breaks the surface, you are seeing cotyledons or monocotyledons. (Moncotyledons have a single cotyledon. Found in plants in the lily and agave family, palm trees and grasses.) Cotyledons provide nutrition to the plant until the first leaves appear. Cotyledons do not photosynthesize. Once the true leaves form, photosynthesis begins while the cotyledons yellow and drop off.

If you have started seeds in large communal flats or containers, transplanting will be a must. Clumps of seedlings should be repotted to individual containers. Once the first leaves appear, seedlings will be too crowded and fighting for light and nutrients. If you have planted your seeds in individual pots, you might be able to transplant them directly into their permanent location.

Tools

You will need pots, potting soil, a table knife or some sort of narrow but not sharp blade (if they are really tiny you can even use a dull needle), waterproof tags and marking pens. Fill the new pots with your DAMP soil mix. Make a hole in the mix to receive the seedlings. This will give the seedlings a soft landing as you repot.

Preparation

Water the seedlings. Moist soil will stick together better than dry soil and will keep the tiny roots from drying out during the process.

Transplant

Now you are ready. With knife in hand, gently pop the soil block out of the container. **DO NOT PULL OR TUG ON THE SEEDLING!!!** Tugging on the seedling will likely break the

stem off or break the roots. Once that happens you have lost the plant.

If you have multiple seedlings in a pot, tease the seedlings apart. Be gentle with your fingers or use something with a pointed (but not sharp) end.

Place the seedling in the prepared pot, gently tamping new soil around the roots. You want a good connection between the roots and the soil.

Label each pot as you go. Mix-ups can be entertaining but can also complicate your garden spacing. If you plant a tall plant next to a short plant, the short plant may not get enough sunlight to thrive or a tall plant may overrun a smaller plant.

Care

Water the seedling using a very diluted liquid fertilizer. This will firm up the connection between the new plant roots and the soil, and make sure the growing plant has the nutrients it needs.

While we want to protect our tiny seedlings from every danger, consider adding a small fan to your indoor growing area. A gentle wind will encourage the new plants to grow strong stems. Make sure the transplants have plenty of light. Wimpy, weak, leggy and tall seedlings are a sign

that they are searching for more light or that they are overcrowded. If the problems go on too long, the plant won't recover.

Hardening off

Plants ready to go outside need to be gradually introduced to the outside world. For the first few days put them in a shady place outside for just a few hours. Gradually increase the time they are outside and the amount of sun they are getting. Make sure you watch the moisture level of the soil. Small pots can dry out quickly. If the leaves start fading in color or wilting, check the plants to make sure they are getting enough water. Soon you will have sturdy plants ready to place in the garden.

Outdoor Protection

Seedlings are loved by a variety of creatures. More than once I have had rows of lettuce disappear to some hungry birds and lizards. Use a row cover to protect them until they get bigger and aren't as attractive to critters.



Meet a Master Gardener, Nirmala McAfee

by Amanda Gagnon

If you researched the words adventurous, tender-hearted and clever, it wouldn't surprise me if you came across a photograph of Nirmala McAfee. Nirmala has worked as a teacher in various capacities for over 40 year and her early background is in theater. Nirmala founded a successful theatrical company called Foxworx which provided an outlet for her to write and direct theatrical plays in large cities such as New York and Chicago. "It was a mixed-age group. We always had a lot of kids in our group and we always had an audience. We



were fortunate to be successful," said Nirmala. However, Nirmala's adventurous spirit led her away from her theatrical company and onto a sailboat where she lived as she sailed the Caribbean Sea for 7 years. While sailing from island to island, Nirmala found work as a student tutor. "It was an adventure, but the hurricanes just became too much to bear," said Nirmala, and she moved back to the mainland. While living in Las Cruces New Mexico, Nirmala took a trip to Sedona and decided that Northern Arizona was the place for her. In 2001, she moved to Sedona, and ultimately ended up in Cornville where she has lived for 8 years. Nirmala is now working as a teacher at Desert Star School in Cornville, and her heart is to teach children in her community.

Nirmala is also tender-hearted toward animals. She currently has 11 chickens, 4 birds and 3 dogs, some of which are rescues. Nirmala cheerfully described Larry, her love-bird, as a quirky character that has made a few good friends while hanging out in the chicken coop. Nirmala also trains dogs. Her miniature poodle, Shiloh, has been trained as a therapy dog for children and is specifically trained to listen to children read. Shiloh goes along with Nirmala to an after-school program wearing a doggie coat labeled "Math Mutt."

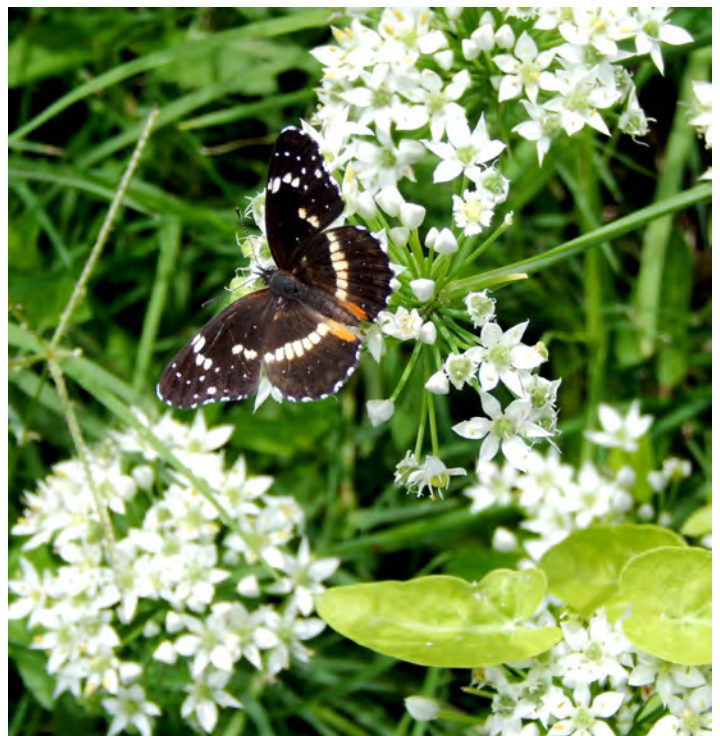
Unlike many Master Gardeners who discover a love of gardening at an early age, Nirmala became a gardener later in life. As a teen in New York City, her first experience gardening was provided by her grandfather who a dug a small hole for her to grow a few flowers. Nirmala laughed as she exclaimed that she mistakenly pulled the flower sprouts and successfully cultivated the weeds. It wasn't until years later while living in Cornville that she was compelled to grow organic food. "There I was, originally

from New York City, in Cornville with a hoe," said Nirmala. In 2012, she decided to take the Master Gardener course to increase her growing success in the area.

After taking the Master Gardener course, Nirmala has successfully expanded her gardening efforts to include an indoor hydroponics system, red worm composting and incorporation of small livestock. Her primary gardening interest is permaculture, a system of agriculture that works with existing natural patterns observed in the environment. Nirmala now grows much of her own organic food, as well as feed for many of

her animals, and she has developed a clever system of nearly zero food waste.

In addition to her work as a teacher, animal trainer and permaculture gardener, Nirmala has also volunteered with the Master Gardener Association (MGA) as a mentor to Associate Master Gardeners. She actively serves on the MGA's communications committee as the manager for the Yavapai County Cooperative Extension Master Gardener Facebook page. Nirmala invites all garden enthusiasts to stay connected with the MGA via Facebook at: <https://www.facebook.com/yavapaicountymastergardeners/>.



Annual Vines

Reprinted from the April 1997 HortNews, precursor to Yavapai Gardens, April 1997

Need to hide something? How about providing more interest on a wall? What about an annual vine? You don't usually see vines in the vast array of colorful annuals that fill the tables in early spring. Still you should consider them for special places in your garden. There are a variety of annual vines that might work well in your landscape. They can be used to hide an ugly spot in the garden, like a wire fence or they can create a shady spot. They can also work to attract hummingbirds and butterflies.



Nasturtiums—*Tropaeolum* sp.—These are an old-fashioned garden favorite. They can be found in both bush and vine forms. They thrive in poorer soils and reward you with a spectacular display of red, maroon, orange or yellow flowers. The flowers, leaves and seeds are even

edible, with a peppery taste that can brighten any salad. Nasturtiums grow to about 6-feet long and make a nice cover for a fence. They need a well-drained soil. They do not do well in the summer heat, so plant in the fall or start early inside and plant outside as soon as the soil starts to warm up. They do well in containers.

A variety of nasturtium that is really different is the Canary Creeper, *Tropaeolum peregrinum*. This annual vine has deeply lobed leaves with canary yellow flowers that are frilled and fringed with a green curved spur. Vines can grow to 15-foot long and they prefer light shade.

Scarlet Runner Bean—*Phaseolus coccineus*—This is another heirloom vine. Scarlet Runner Beans obviously come in red but there is a white variety also. Native to tropical America, the red variety was introduced to the United States before 1750, the white sometime before 1825.



These beans will grow to 8 feet in length, twining around everything within their reach. The brilliant red flowers will attract hummingbirds and a variety of insects. The long pods that form are filled with a black and red mottled bean, white in the case of the white flowered variety and can be eaten. They are great for a quick-growing screen. Like all beans they like heat and moisture. Plant after the soil has warmed up. Sow about two inches deep, two to three inches apart. They like good drainage. They can be sown successively for continuous bloom.



Cathedral Bells or Cup and Saucer—*Cobaea scandens*—The name describes the flower. The lovely bell-like blooms, with a green calyx forming the "cup," come in a variety of colors from light green to rose violet. This is a fast-growing annual that can reach up to 20-feet. Two-inch blooms are abundant. Cathedral Bells are native to Mexico and prefer to be

sown in warmer weather. The seeds will rot in cool temperatures. The seeds have a very hard coat and should be abraded or notched with a knife to insure germination. Start indoors in 4-inch pots and barely cover the seed with soil. Keep moist but in a warm sunny spot. The plant climbs by tendrils and in warmer areas will survive from year to year, eventually reaching around 40 feet in length. Blooms heavily from May to October.



Exotic Love—*Mina lobate* or *Ipomoea lobate*—Another Mexican native, this is also known as Spanish flag. It has 3-lobed leaves and grows about 6-feet tall. The joy of this plant is that the

flowers change colors. The sprays of flowers change from scarlet orange to creamy yellow. Seeds should be soaked overnight to improve germination.

Hyacinth Bean—*Lablab purpureus* or *Dolichos lablab*

The vine can grow to 10-feet. Clusters of purple or white flowers like sweet peas stand out from the vine on long stems. The vine needs support and good drainage. Can be a perennial. The seeds



Balloon Vine or Love-in-a-puff—*Cardiospermum*



halicacabum—Tendrils help this vine climb to 10-feet. It grows fast and lush and will make a good cover for fences. This plant is best known for its seed capsules. They appear like

small green paper lanterns. The flowers are small and white. In warmer areas the seed can be sown directly, in cooler areas they can be started indoors.

Black-eyed Susan Vine or Clock

Vine—*Thunbergia alata*—Another tropical vine, this is a smaller plant that can be grown in a container. It is especially nice when used in a hanging basket. It has bright yellow to orange flowers or white flowers with purple-black throats. Start the seeds indoors and put outside after the weather warms up.



April May To-Do List

Everyone should be outside now (well, read this first) because the gardening season is in full swing. Below is a list of chores that you should be doing. Items like weeding and insect control should be addressed as soon as possible. They just multiple problems over time. Dealing with them quickly can make taking care of the garden easier in the future.

April To Do List

Prescott area

Divide plants, fertilize and water as needed
It can still be frosty, so continue to protect frost-sensitive plants.
Once the leaves start to emerge on roses, fertilize.
Fertilize cool season grasses.
Apply pre-emergent herbicides.
Mulch.
Insects are active, especially aphids and white flies. Its best to deal with them when the populations is small.
Weed, weed, weed, cool-season weeds are probably going crazy. Try to get rid of them before they go to seed.
Plant pasture grasses.

Verde Valley

Make sure your irrigation systems are working properly for the weather.
Prune winter damage.
Divide late-summer and early-fall blooming perennials, fertilize and water.
Frost is still possible; protect sensitive plants.
Once leaves emerge on roses, fertilize.
Fertilize cool-season grasses.
Mulch
Plant pasture grasses.

Watch for insects and deal with them as needed.

May To Do List

Prescott area

Check your irrigation system to make sure it is working and the settings are appropriate for the weather.
Prune winter damage.
Dethatch tall fescue and perennial rye, reseed if needed.
Mulch.
Watch for aphids and cutworms, spider mites on plants like juniper and pyracantha.
Watch for elm leaf beetle on the underside of leaves on elm trees.
Plant seeds of frost-tender, warm-season annuals like cosmos, marigolds zinnia, petunias now through June.

Verde Valley

Adjust irrigation as needed; it's getting hotter.
Prune shrubs that have bloomed, (wisteria, lilac, forsythia).
Feed roses that are blooming with complete fertilizer.
Fertilize Bermuda grass and cool-season turf grasses.
Mulch.
Watch for aphids and cutworms.
Watch for spider mites in shrubs and trees like junipers and pyracantha.
Watch for elm beetles on the undersides of the leaves on elm trees.
Plant frost-tender annuals and warm-season annuals like cosmos, marigolds, zinnias and petunias.



Kaleidoscope of Color 2018, Prescott's Festival of Iris

Saturday, April 28th, 10:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. Location: **Mortimer Nursery, 3166 Willow Creek Road, Prescott, Arizona.** Prescott Area Iris Society (PAIS), contacts: Dennis (623) 980-6627, website <http://prescottirissociety.org/> , Email: president@prescottirissociety.org .

PAIS presents its 19th annual Iris Exhibit and Potted Iris Sale. Free event open to public, features an amazing variety of iris colors and patterns. Vote for your favorite iris. Stunning displays of blooms and arrangements. Planting and care demonstrations. Hundreds of potted Irises for sale. Local gardeners who wish to participate in horticultural, or artistic design categories may pick up the rules form at Mortimer Nursery, or go to our website <http://prescottirissociety.org/> and print the form. Also, visit the Yavapai College Sculpture Garden, 1100 E. Sheldon Street, Prescott, to see newly expanded Iris gardens in bloom.





Congratulations

for completing your first 50 hours

Laurie Cameron, mentor—Betty Loos
Mary Thompson, mentor—Susan Tolley

Monsoon Madness

Sign-up to help with Monsoon Madness – watch for e-mail messages in May.



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2018 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

MG NEWSLETTER



Next Meetings

All regular MG Meetings start at 6:30pm

April 18—Prescott , Pam Catlin, HTR— Horticultural Therapy:
The Growing Difference

May 16—Camp Verde, New Class Welcome

June 20—Prescott Kanin Routson, Stoic Cider —Heritage
Apples

July 14—Monsoon Madness

September 19—Patricia Gulley, HCNH Volunteer—Batty About
Bats.

October 20—Recognition Picnic

November 14—Tricia Michelson, MG—Beauty and Bounty:
Indoor Growing Systems

Jan. 16, 2019, Prescott—Sue Smith, MG, NPS TBD-likely
masters research on Bears Ears grasses



Construction is still going on on Hwy 260 in Camp Verde. Use caution in driving to the meeting site. As of this newsletter there is still a detour to enter the justice center facility but the construction is moving along so things may change by the May meeting.