

Yavapai Gardens

Master Gardener Newsletter

August/September 2016



Table of Contents

Drying Grapes . . .	1
Corn Facts . . .	3
Meet a MG, Jennifer Young . . .	4
2016 Associate Master Gardeners . . .	5
Monsoon Madness . . .	6
MG 50 hours . . .	7
Recipe: Tomatoes stuffed with herbed grains . . .	7

Drying Grapes

by *Nora Graf*



Many home gardeners in the county grow grapes. A few may be trying to experiment with making their own wine, but most just want to eat the fresh grapes. How many have considered making their own raisins? My mom made raisins. It wasn't unusual for my family to go to some U-pick place and come home with more grapes than even my large family could eat. For a short time the back porch was a raisin factory.

The whole idea of drying fruit probably came about as an accident when people long ago (really long ago) found fruit on the ground that had dried. There is evidence that the Egyptians did it deliberately as early as 2000 BC. Since then raisins have become a big part of the grape industry. The Spanish brought grapes to what is now California in the late 1700's, mostly for wine making, but eventually found that raisins were more profitable. This was the beginning of the California raisin industry that is still going strong today and led to the award-winning singing California raisin commercials of the 1980's.

Today the commercial trade uses three varieties to make raisins;

1. The Thompson seedless also known as the Sultana, Sultania and Oval Kishmish.
2. The Muscat of Alexandria, also known as Gordo Blanco, White Hanepoot and Zibibbo.
3. The Black Corinth also known as the Zante Currant,, Sante, Staphis and Panariti.

While some grapes are dried without treatment, several processes have been developed to improve the removal of water from the fruit. Sun-drying is the traditional method but today mechanical drying methods are often used. It produces a more consistent product and lessens contamination. When you buy



raisins made from Thompson seedless at the store, you might see these words;

Natural: these are grapes that are generally dried in their natural condition. They are dark with the natural bloom. The fruit is meaty

without stickiness or oiliness and dry to the touch. This technique is used in desert regions.

Sultana: the term refers to light-colored, tender raisins that have been processed by means other than sun-drying. Fruit is dipped in a solution of potassium carbonate and emulsified olive oil. It is then dried in direct sunlight or on covered racks. The color can vary from greenish-yellow to medium brown. They have a tender skin and are often used in baking. The surface is slightly oily.



Sulfur bleached: Clusters are dipped in a lye solution which cracks the skins. They are then washed in cold water followed by exposure to the fumes of burning sulfur. After this they are dried in direct sunlight. The raisins end up being a cream color to slightly reddish-yellow and waxy looking.

Golden-bleached: The process starts out the same as the sulfur bleached up to the drying. In this case, the grapes are dried at temperatures of 140 to 160 degrees F. They come out a lemon-colored to golden yellow. They tend to be moderately sticky and are generally used in desserts.

Muscats are naturally sun-dried. Muscats might contain seeds. They are large, dark raisins with a tough skin and a strong muscat flavor.

Black Corinth are all dried without any pre-treatment, generally in direct sun, partial shade or even dried on the vine. They produce small raisins with a mild but tart

flavor. Used in baking. You probably know them better as currants.

To Dry Your Own

Any variety of grape will work, but seedless types are best. Who wants to crunch down on a hard seed in their oatmeal raisin cookies? Different varieties of grapes will dry at different rates so whichever method you plan on using, keep the varieties separate otherwise you could have a mix of dried grapes and those not yet dried. It would be no fun to sort through them.

Sun drying:

Fortunately we have good weather to sun-dry grapes. It is the easiest method.

Remove stems from the fruit. Place the fruit in a bowl and add some lemon juice or vinegar, mix it around a bit and then

wash the fruit in flowing water. This removes any dust and chemicals. Place the grapes on paper or towels and dry thoroughly. Once they are dried (the external moisture from the washing) place the grapes on large trays, cookie sheets or whatever you have handy. Cover with cheesecloth or a clean pillow cover or sheet material. This will keep the grapes clean and insect free. Place in direct sun and check on them in three to four days. Once they taste like raisins take them inside and let them sit for several more days. After that store them in airtight jars or plastic containers and place in a cool area.

Dehydrator:

Want to hasten the process along and increase their storage life? Use a dehydrator. Make sure the grapes are completely ripe, as unripe grapes will end up



tasting sour. Wash the grapes as detailed above. The grapes then need to be blanched. Blanching is the process of placing fruit in boiling water for a very short time. Boil a large kettle of water and add the grapes to it for just a couple of minutes. Dip them



immediately in cold water to stop them from cooking. Place the grapes on towels and pat dry. Arrange on a dehydrator tray so there is space between the grapes. Set the temperature to about 130 degrees F and start the dehydrator. Leave them at that temp for 2 to 3 hours and then check. When the grapes have started to shrink reduce the temperature to about 100 degrees and set the timer for 15 hours. When dry, store the raisins in an air-tight container.

There is an easy test to find out if your grapes have dried enough. Just squeeze a few of the drying grapes. If you feel the interior slip inside the skin, the grapes need more drying.

Some references say to cut the grapes in half for the dehydrator. They will dry faster that way. You can do that if you want but after spending a lot of time cutting raisins in half to make the families' favorite fruit salad, I've decided it is a tedious process. It's up to you.

Storing the raisins: Raisins can be stored for about two years if dried hard and then placed in an air tight jar like a canning jar. If you don't plan on keeping them that long, any jar or plastic container will work.

Don't be afraid of buying a crate of grapes. Making your own raisins is easy and delicious.



Corn Facts:

Don't add salt to corn before cooking, it toughens the corn.

Kernels cut from 6 plump ears equals approximately 2-½ cups of whole kernels.

Kernels scraped from the ears are equal to approximately 2 cups of flesh and liquid.

To Freeze: Remove husks and silk. Bring water to boil, add corn. Timing from the point when the water returns to a boil, blanch 4 minutes for small ears, 6 minutes for medium and 8 minutes for large. Immediately cool in ice water for the same length of time, as it took to blanch. Drain and pack whole cobs in bags. They should last for up to a year. Thaw before cooking.

Canning: Corn is a low-acid vegetable so proper processing is essential. Find a good canning book (best to get a reliable book vs. my giving instructions!). Follow the instructions precisely. Improperly canned foods are a source of botulism. It's easy—just make sure the jars with the corn are heated correctly. The National Center for Home Food Preservation is a good source of information for canning, drying and freezing. (<http://nchfp.uga.edu/>). A copy of the "USDA Complete Guide to Home Canning" is available under the publications tab. Download for free.

Microwave: Use either husked or unhusked corn. Place in a covered dish with 2 to 3 tablespoons of water and cook 5 to 7 minutes. For kernels off the cob, place 2 cups of corn kernels with 2 T. butter in a covered dish and cook for 3 minutes.

Grill: If the corn has a thick husk, peel off just a couple of layers. Don't peel it all, you want a few layers still on. Cover ears completely with water. Soak in cold water about 15 minutes. Remove and shake off excess water. Pull back the husks, do not remove them. Discard the silk, brush the kernels with butter and herbs, rewrap the husks around the kernels. Grill over medium heat (around 350°F). Rotate the corn to keep it from getting too charred on one side. Once all sides have charred lightly, move to indirect heat and cook approximately 15 minutes. Don't overcook.

Leftovers: Use leftover kernels in muffins, pancakes, cornbread, salads, stews, casseroles or quiches.

Pennsylvania Dutch Dried Sweet Corn: Using a variety of corn you like, blanch for 2 minutes. Cut corn from the cobs and spread out in a single layer on a baking sheet. Dry in a slow oven (175°F) for 12 to 15 hours, stirring occasionally, or place in a dehydrator and dry until it registers 5° moisture. Kernels should be hard and crunchy, not chewy.

Cooking information came from: The Victory Garden Cookbook by Marian Morash

Meet A Master Gardener - Jennifer Young

by Susan McClary

Jennifer Young unites her Master Gardener background with her love for wild places. She grew up in a rural area of upstate New York with lots of farms around her, but never had the opportunity to “put her hands in the dirt until decades later.” Now Jennifer lives in Pine Valley in the Village of Oak Creek, AZ, closely surrounded by the National Forest. Concerning her home garden Jennifer says, “Nature soon overcame my fantasies.” After more than ten years Jennifer continues to be challenged by her love for plants that are not appropriate for our climate – even with MG training.

When Jennifer first graduated from the MG program in 2008 she participated in the traditional volunteer programs. However her association with Friends of the Forest, and her appreciation for native gardens in wilderness habitats, soon moved her to take a “side trip” into alternative volunteer programs. The first was caring for the historic apple orchard at West Fork in Oak Creek Canyon that has been weakened by fire blight infection. Jeff Schalau worked with the team to find ways to extend the expiration date of the trees. How? By doing very little intervention. Pruning tends to spread the disease. So only limited pruning is done to preserve the health of the trees and the safety of the visitors.

Jennifer also founded and continues to run the Interpretive Program for the Red Rock Ranger District as part of Friends of the



Forest. The program includes monthly speakers at the Visitor's Center, as well as guided wildflower, geology and nature hikes. Master Gardeners may receive continuing education credit for participating in some of these programs.

Jennifer's latest project with the Forest Service is in the planning stages. The intent is to develop a native plant garden at Crescent Moon Ranch near the Red Rock Crossing Recreation Area. The site will be a propagation garden, growing plants for seed and for replanting in the forest.

When Jennifer took the MG class it was not at all what she expected. “It was so diverse and I enjoyed every class. It made me wish I had

gone into sciences in college because it opened a whole world of, not just information but exposure to different fields of study and that was fascinating. Master Gardeners give people the support and tools to go out and do many different things.”

The volunteer work Jennifer engages in is educational and community oriented. It involves public lands, with emphasis on the forest resources, water and other natural resources in this exquisite part of the country. In addition to her MG activities, Jennifer is currently the President of Friends of the

Forest Sedona.

The Coconino National Forest Red Rock Ranger Visitor's Center is located on Highway 179, 1 mile south of the Village of Oak Creek. To find out more information about the speakers and hikes, please visit <http://www.friendsoftheforest.sedona.org>



A Glimpse at the 2016 Associate Master Gardeners

By Amanda Gagnon, Associate Master Gardener and Marti Griggs, Master Gardener



"Close-knit", "unique interests" and "energetic" are a few words that come to mind when describing the 2016 Associate Master Gardener classmates. In years past, 30-40 students attended a typical class, depending on the location. This year, the class was held in the Verde Valley in Clarkdale at Yavapai Community College. There were 24 Associate Master Gardeners who plan to work toward getting certified. The smaller class size provided a pleasant environment for lively learning and developing friendships.

It's no surprise that several classmates expressed interest in growing grapes, given the Verde Valley is known as one of Arizona's wine regions. Associate Master Gardener and 2016 classmate, Linda Rachel and her husband John manage the 6.5-acre Da Vines Vineyard located on the historical DA Ranch in Page Springs. Grapes require diligent care and commitment. "Like any agricultural endeavor, you are at the whim of Mother Nature," says Linda. Though grape growing proves to be challenging at times, Linda offers, "There is something satisfying and peaceful about spending time in the vineyard through the season." This year will be the third harvest for their vineyard. Linda

always appreciates harvest help and extends the invite to anyone interested.

Several classmates plan to adopt the concepts and principles of permaculture in their garden efforts. Permaculture incorporates planning agricultural and cultural activities to work with nature rather than against it. It involves managing with a perspective for sustainability within an entire system instead of managing for a single product within the system. Permaculture enthusiast, Sue Graves owns a 9-acre, terraced property in Cornville. She describes steps to incorporating permaculture: "Stop. Take a look at the resources you have. Make an intentional long-term plan with a purpose for sustainability. And be willing to learn from others." A few of the activities Sue has been working on include

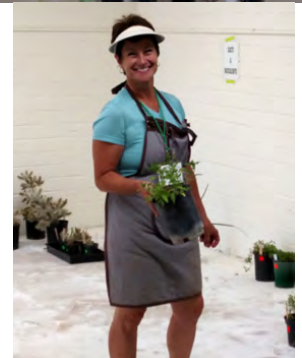
roofline water harvesting, lasagna composting, cover crops, companion planting, and saving seeds. She has a long-term plan to develop an orchard on the north-facing side of her property to take advantage of the microclimate there.

This year, the Associate Master Gardeners were given an opportunity to meet with their mentors and sign up for volunteer hours during the training class session. Betty Loos, Master Gardener Mentor coordinator says, "One of the things that I

am impressed with is that quite a number of Associates have jumped in so enthusiastically with volunteer projects." The 2016 Associate Master Gardeners are energetic and are off to a good start towards certification!



Monsoon Madness 2016





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

***Catherine Korte, mentor
is Pam Raess.***

***Karen O'Donnell,
mentor is Toni Coon***

Tomatoes Stuffed with Herbed Grains

(From Vegetarian Cooking for Everyone by Deborah Madison)

- 4 medium to large ripe but firm tomatoes
- 1 cup cooked rice, couscous, quinoa, or other grain
- ½ cup toasted pine nuts or chopped toasted almonds
- 2 garlic cloves, minced
- 3 Tablespoons finely chopped parsley
- 2 Tablespoons finely chopped dill or basil
- 3 Tablespoons grated Parmesan
- Salt and freshly ground pepper
- Extra virgin olive oil

Preheat oven to 375°F. Trim the tomatoes, chop, and mix it with the rice, nuts, garlic, herbs and cheese. Season well with salt and pepper and fill the tomatoes. Replace the tops, brush them with oil, and set closely together in a small, oiled baking dish. Bake until the filling is hot, about 25 minutes. Carefully remove the tomatoes with a spatula to a serving plate.

2016 Newsletter Deadline Schedule

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

Publish	Date	Deadline
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.

Nora Graf
mesquite2@hotmail.com
PO Box 3652
Camp Verde, AZ 86322
928-567-6703

Jeff Schalau
County Director, Yavapai County
Extension Agent, Agriculture & Natural
Resources
email: jschalau@cals.arizona.edu

Prescott Office
840 Rodeo Dr. Building C
Prescott, AZ 86305
928-445-6590
MG Help Desk 928-45-6590 ext 222

Camp Verde Office
2830 Commonwealth Dr #103.
Camp Verde, AZ 86322
928-554-8999
MG Help Desk 928-554-8992

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Arizona Cooperative Extension
Yavapai County
840 Rodeo Dr. Building C
Prescott, AZ 86305

MG NEWSLETTER



Next Meetings

August 17, Prescott, 6:30pm

September 21, Camp Verde, 6:30 pm

October 8, MG Recognition Picnic