



University of Arizona Yavapai County Cooperative Extension

# *Yavapai Gardens*

Master Gardener Newsletter

February-March 2016

## **Events & Activities**

MG Association Meeting, Third Wednesday of the month, 6:30pm More information on back page.

Alta Vista Gardening Club, Prescott, fourth Tuesday of the month, 12:30pm. Call 928-458-9508 for information.

Prescott Area Gourd Society, third Wednesday of the month, 10:30am, at Miller Valley Indoor Art Market, 531 Madison Ave, Prescott

Prescott Orchid Society, 4rd Sunday of the month, 1pm at the Prescott Library, (928) 717-0623

Prescott Area Iris Society call 928-445-8132 for date and place information.

Mountain View Garden Club, Prescott Valley, Dewey area, 2nd Friday of month, 1:30pm, call 775-4993 for location as it changes.

Native Plant Society Meetings - Prescott. 2nd Thursday of the month, 6:30pm. Attending the talk qualifies as Continuing Education. Non-members are welcome. Highlands Center for Natural History, 1375 S. Walker Rd. (928-776-9550).

The Verde Thumbs Garden Club, Cottonwood 2nd Tuesday, 6:30 pm at The Seventh Day Adventist Church. (928) 634-7172

## **Table of Contents**

Tomatoes, Which to Grow? . . .	1
Spring Iris Care . . .	2
Cliff Fendlerbush . . .	3
2016 MG Officers . . .	3
VA Greenhouse . . .	4
Winter Bird Feeding . . .	5

## ***TOMATOES – Which to Grow?***

*By Debbie Allen*



In the darkest days of winter the first sign of spring appears. It is not the crocus peeking out through the snow or the first robin hoping for the early worm. It is the annual Arrival of the Seed Catalogs. They come bringing hopes, dreams, and expectations to impatient gardeners.

As you browse through the catalogs, the pages featuring tomatoes can be overwhelming. Which to buy? How to choose? And what do all those strange letters mean? Here are some hints that may help.

**SIZE:** Tomatoes can be small (grape, cherry), medium, or large (beefsteak). Smaller fruit tends to ripen significantly earlier than the larger ones. Generally, the small-size tomato plants are prolific, something to consider when deciding on the number of plants.

**SEASON:** Tomatoes are described as early, mid, or late season. Early season tomatoes ripen in 60-69 days after transplanting; mid-season is 70-80 days; and late season is greater than 80 growing days. The dry climate in Yavapai County leads to cooler nights, which shorten the time between frosts. Cool nights also lead to slower fruit development toward the end of the season. In 2015, Prescott had only 136 days between frosts and Cottonwood a more luxurious 189 days. By comparison, Chicago had a 159-day season and Boston 193 days.

**DETERMINATE (D) VERSUS INDETERMINATE (I):** Determinate tomato varieties grow to a pre-determined size, and once they determine they have reached that height they set their fruit over a very short period of time. Indeterminate tomatoes set fruit and then put out suckers from leaf nodes. These will continue to grow and produce more tomatoes and more suckers as the plants get larger and larger. Commercial growers tend to grow determinate plants that can be harvested at one time. Home gardeners generally prefer the indeterminate varieties with their extended season. Tip-offs for determinate types: “will not need staking” and “bush.”

**GMO:** Like the sign on the dairy counter saying “gluten-free,” hyp-

ing tomatoes or tomato seeds as “non-GMO” is unnecessary. There are currently no GMO tomatoes, tomato plants, or tomato seeds available to the public. Oddly, the first GMO food approved by the FDA was the Flavr Savr tomato, which was available in markets from 1994-1997. It did not succeed partly because of a lack of marketing savvy by the developers and partly because it did not live up to its goals of a longer shelf life.



**HEIRLOOM VERSUS HYBRID:** There is no single definition of “heirloom tomato,” but generally heirlooms have been around for years – something your grandmother may have grown – and they are “open pollinated,” meaning the seeds will breed true to the variety. (If you are collecting seeds from hybrids, it is worth remembering that while tomatoes self-pollinate around 95% of the time, they can hybridize with neighboring tomatoes if bees abound.) Hybrid tomatoes are a cross between two different tomato varieties designed to get the best traits of each. Hybridization can increase disease resistance, heighten plant vigor and reliability, and increase crop size. Hybrid tomato seeds will not breed true to the parent, and usually the second generation, called “F2,” is an inferior plant. With so many heirloom varieties now available, many people become “heirloom snobs,” (yes, I tend to be one), but tests at the



University of Florida show that while some heirlooms have amazing flavor, others simply taste bad. As one Master Gardener asked, “If heirlooms are so good, why did they develop hybrids?”

**GRAFTING:** For the best of both worlds, there is the option of grafted tomatoes. These are available online, in catalogs, and quite possibly at local nurseries.

Grafted tomatoes combine a hardy reliable rootstock with a flavorful heirloom. Grafted tomatoes are understandably much more expensive and have to be treated gently so the graft does not break. The graft and the upper part of the plant have to stay safely above ground. Tomatoes, unlike most plants, are normally planted as deep as possible, since the buried stem will put out additional roots. This cannot be done with grafted plants. Grafted plants are reported to have excellent results.

For information on tomato varieties that have grown well – or poorly – in Yavapai County over the last three years, refer to the Master Gardener tomato survey: [https://extension.arizona.edu/sites/extension.arizona.edu/files/resources/2015tomatosurveyresults\\_0.pdf](https://extension.arizona.edu/sites/extension.arizona.edu/files/resources/2015tomatosurveyresults_0.pdf)

## Spring Iris Care

Iris grow exceptionally well in Yavapai County and are easy to maintain. You don’t plant new iris until August or so but some extra spring care will improve this years bloom.

1. Remove dead leaves.
2. Pull weeds while they are small. Take care not to break off the new, young fans.
3. Uncover soil from tops of rhizomes.
4. Replace fallen and faded plant markers and make sure your iris map is up to date.
5. Fertilize now and water in the fertilizer. Use a low nitrogen fertilizer, such as 5-10-10 or 10-10-10. Avoid putting fertilizer granules in direct contact with the rhizomes.
6. Water iris regularly, every 7-10 days if it has been dry, to insure good bloom. Iris need to dry out completely between each watering.

Iris Aphid control: It seems I have never licked this problem with systemic, so maybe they were not applied early enough in the spring. An article I found on the internet titled “Ecofriendly Aphid Control Methods” <http://pestcontroloptions.com/aphids/9-ecofriendly-aphid-control-methods> has some homemade sprays which may be worth a try. I have not used any of these methods so I cannot vouch for their effectiveness.

Editors note: Aphids can often be controlled by a vigorous water spray or soap type insecticides.



# CLIFF FENDLERBUSH

By Judy Kennedy, UA Master Gardener, CSU  
Master Gardener and Native Plant Master



It's easy for me to write this article about the Cliff Fendlerbush (*Fendlera rupicola*) since it is, in my opinion, one of the most beautiful flowering shrubs in this area. It is a na-

tive, perennial, multi-branched shrub whose range is from Nevada to Colorado and from Texas to Arizona. Fendlerbush is a part of the Hydrangeaceae family and a relative of our "tame" Hydrangeas. *Rupicola* is Latin for rock dweller. It also goes by the common name Mock Orange.

George Englemann and Asa Gray named this species in 1852 after Augustus Fendler (1813-1883) who was a respected 19th century collector of plants and who collected for a few seasons in the southwest.

The shrub can grow to 6 ½ feet. Showy, fragrant, single or small clusters of white or pink-tinged flowers grow at the end of short branches. The spoon shaped blooms cover the entire plant during its flowering time from March to July. New bark is a reddish-tan which becomes gray and shredded with age. The leaves are narrow, dark green and thick with rolled margins. The leaves have three prominent sunken veins and their attachment to the stem is alternate. The fruit is a four-celled capsule which looks "acorn like" and remains on the plant all year. Fendlerbush generally reproduces from the seeds that the capsule holds although it can be "cloned" via branch cuttings.

Fendlerbush thrives on dry rocky slopes of igneous or limestone soils where it can endure intense heat and considerable drought. Its deep roots grasp the soils and hold it in place. It often grows in association with one-seed juniper, alligator juniper, and mountain mahogany.

Navajo used a decoction of the bark to kill head lice, as a cathartic, and for Plumeway, Nightway, and Windway ceremonies. The Hopi also used it in various religious ceremonies. Fendlerbush provides excellent browse for goats, sheep, and deer. So, it has been and still is a valuable resource and a truly beautiful addition to the red rocks and canyons of the Sedona area.

Oh, good for you. If you got through all of this, it probably indicates that you are a plant lover. So before I close, I want to put in a "plug" for the wildflower display that will be in the Red Rock Ranger Station for two weeks in either March or April (dependent on spring weather). That display is for the education and entertainment of the many visitors to RRRS and is a joint effort by the Forest Service and the Yavapai County Master Gardeners. Please stop in and have a look. I think you will enjoy it.

## 2016 MG Officers



**President:**  
*Bill Marmaduke*

**President-elect:**  
*Karen Austermiller*



**Secretary:**  
*Jo Cabill*



**Treasurer:**  
*Tricia Michelson*



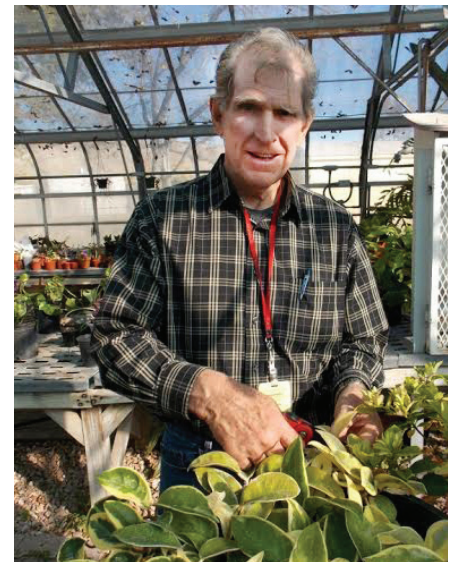
# Meet the Master Gardeners of the VA Greenhouse

By: Lori Dekker and Bev Majerus



**Nancy Verburg & Paula Hilton**

Bob Busch summed up the VA Greenhouse program in a nut shell; "I believe that as part of their treatment program, the VA is providing vets with an opportunity to rebuild their lives through working with plants in the greenhouse and by providing space outdoors to plant and raise vegetables." Master Gardener volunteers have survived a rigorous background check to do just that, providing op-



**Bob Busch**

hand about the rigors and sacrifices of "the life." She's grateful to give back doing something she loves. Paula Hilton is giving back too, she believes the greenhouse is "a place of hope." She says she has come to appreciate "how much the little things matter." Each of the volunteers commented on just how much the vets enjoyed their plants.

The plants were propagated and transplanted by the Master Gardeners to be adopted and placed in a vet's care. Susan Tolley enlisted the help of the local Orchid Society to help with the program. The Adopt-a-Plant program is always looking for decorative pots for transplants as plants in decorative containers seem to get adopted first. "The VA does not supply us with decorative plant containers.

It's a treat for each of us to know that the joy the Master Gardener program has given each of us can be spread around the community. Bob feels each of the "dozens" of vets he's met believes that he will have a better life because of the programs at the V.A. Paula sees the greenhouse as a "place of growth and renewal for the vets as well as for the volunteers." Susan encourages new Master Gardeners: "tenacity is something I would advise. Hang in there and keep trying to get what you want" through trying various volunteer opportunities. As Nancy says "It's very rewarding to volunteer doing something you like a lot".



**Nancy Verburg, Paula Hilton, Susan Tolley, Christi Armer**

portunities for recovering veterans to grow and heal. All of us know the value of working in the dirt on a beautiful day and these volunteers are spreading the good word. Currently involved with the Greenhouse are: Andy Switanek, Bob Busch, Christi Armer, Nancy Verburg, Paula Hilton, Susan Tolley and Virginia Mullins.

As with all (or at least most!) volunteer activities the benefits flow both ways. Nancy Verburg, who loves to grow vegetables and flowers is also happily learning about plant propagation. She also feels like she's giving back to the veterans. An Air Force (retired) wife she knows first-



# Winter Bird Feeding

by Nora Graf



When it comes to feeding wildlife, just stick to the birds, please! Feeding other types of wildlife only creates problems and dangerous situations where the wildlife pays the price, often a death sentence. On that dreary note you can feel the joy of wildlife viewing by encouraging birds into your yard.

Dena Greenwoods gave a good talk on birds and insects at the October MG meeting. She talked about the importance of insects in bird diets and feeding birds. While creating a natural environment for birds is best, feeding them can attract birds you might not otherwise see. It supplements

their winter diet when natural sources may be slim. Suet is one of the best winter food sources. There are different types of suet in stores that will attract a variety of bird species including some that you rarely see at a seed feeder. Woodpeckers will come to suet along with chickadees, nuthatches, wrens, cardinals, robins, orioles, bluebirds and many others.

You can purchase suet with nuts and berries, nuts, peanut butter and jelly, with meal worms, with seeds, high energy, no melt, orange, banana bread and even hot peppers (to keep squirrels away). Birds aren't bothered by hot peppers.

There are different types of suet feeders. The most common are cages. It's a vinyl coated wire cage that a block of suet slides into. There are specialty type cages but the simple type is the one you find most often in stores. You can also make your own feeders. Logs can be used by cutting holes and filling with suet plugs. The birds cling to the wood to feed. One of the advantages of this type of feeder is that the suet is somewhat protected from the weather. Mesh bags also work. These are similar to thistle bags but with a larger mesh. You can buy one but you can also use recycled onion bags. Use chunks or small cakes of suet to fill the bag. Mesh bags are not the best for larger birds but work fine for smaller ones. Lay suet on platform feeders. Spread suet on the bark of a tree for the woodpeckers, nuthatches and creepers. If the suet is hard, heat enough to soften.

After the warning above, keep in mind other types of wildlife also love suet. Raccoons, squirrels, bears, javelinas and mice will raid suet. Position and site the feeder carefully if you have problem wildlife. Sometimes just moving the feeder inside at night will solve the problem but figure out what works best for your situation.

The big problem with suet is that it is a fat and will melt and spoil. No-melt suet is available and would be a good option with our warm winter days. Otherwise only

put out enough suet to last a day or two. Suet should be stored in the refrigerator or frozen.

You can make your own suet. Raw suet is beef fat. Specifically it is considered the fat around the heart, loins and kidneys but different fats can be used. You can order suet from a butcher; you can cut fat off of any beef that you buy. Put the fat in the freezer while you collect enough to use. Beef fat needs to be rendered first (see next paragraph). You can substitute other fats including lard (in the grocery store next to butter or vegetable shortening or in the Mexican food aisle), vegetable shortening (like Crisco - Crisco offers a 0 trans fat product), or bacon drippings. Aside from the fats there are a number of ingredients you can add: crunchy peanut butter (note that cheaper peanut butter has more oil in it), cornmeal\*\*, unsalted chopped nuts (peanuts, pecans or other nut meats), chopped (and sometimes stewed) raisins, dried currants, chopped dried cherries, or apple bits, sunflower seed chips (shelled), Rolled oats, flour (whole wheat for more protein), white/brown sugar, honey or Karo syrup. For more protein, you could add ground dry cat food, dog biscuits, or monkey biscuits.

\*\* Do NOT use cornmeal mix which has baking powder in it. Try to use stone or water ground cornmeal, available in health food stores, instead of degerminated cornmeal (e.g., Quaker). Degerminated cornmeal has improved shelf life but lacks germ oils, taste and fiber.

Mockingbirds like dried apples, prunes and raisins



while shelled sunflower seed chips are preferred by cardinals, chickadees and titmice. Bluebirds may eat them on occasion, or may enjoy them if ground in a food processor.

To discourage squirrels and other mammals add hot peppers. Powdered Thai chili is inexpensive and better than cayenne pepper or dry mustard. Add VERY carefully - dust is hot enough to be very painful.

## How to Render Suet:

Trim excess fat off beef cuts and store in the freezer until you save enough fat or purchase beef fat from the grocery store or butcher. Grind the fat in a meat grinder or finely chop it. Heat the fat over a low to medium heat until it's liquefied. Strain by pouring melted suet through a fine cheesecloth. Let cool to harden.

Repeat above. If the fat is not rendered twice, the suet will not cake properly. Let fat cool to harden and store in a covered container in the refrigerator or freezer. You can pour it into any sort of container that will not melt. (This applies to all the suet recipes) Use something like Baker's

Tin Foil Bake Cups, containers store-bought suet came in, pans made out of aluminum foil, margarine containers or any sort of baking pan. For easy removal, line container with wax paper or aluminum foil first.

All of these recipes should be stored in the refrigerator or frozen.

### **Pseudo Suet Recipe**

This recipe is easy because you don't have to fiddle with hot fat.

- 2 cups shelled, unsalted peanuts
- ½ cup raisins
- 2 to 3 tablespoons cornmeal

Process peanuts in a food processor until they're the consistency of peanut butter. Add raisins and process for one minute. Add cornmeal and process again. Press mixture into a mold/pan.

Read more at:

<http://www.birdsandblooms.com/birding/attracting-birds/feeding-birds/make-homemade-suet/#ixzz3ptvEMmAm>

### **For spreading suet on tree limbs**

- 1 cup cornmeal
- 1 cup sugar
- ½ cup flour
- ¾ cup water
- 1 cup peanut butter
- 1 cup lard
- 1 cup raisins

In a medium bowl, mix dry ingredients. Add the water, and mix. Put peanut butter and lard in small bowl, microwave 2 minutes. Add to the cornmeal mixture along with the raisins. Refrigerate for about two hours.



### **No-melt suet**

Yield 5 cups

- 2 cups quick-cooking oats
- 2 cups cornmeal
- 1 cup flour
- ½ cup sugar
- 1 cup lard or bacon grease
- 1 cup crunchy peanut butter



Melt the lard and peanut butter together, either on the stove or in the microwave. Combine the dry ingredients. Add dry ingredients to melted fats. Pour into a square pan about 2 inches deep or spread onto tree limbs. You can also put suet into Ziplock containers and scoop it out as needed to fill a screen type of feeder. You can use a cookie scoop or cut into cubes but then mash and break it up, because otherwise the squirrels can come and take a whole scoop at once, way too easily!

### **Berry Suet**

- 4 ½ c. ground beef suet
- ¾ c finely ground cracker or bread crumbs
- ¼ c white proso millet
- ½ cup hulled sunflower seeds
- ¼ cup dried and chopped raisins or currants

Melt suet over medium heat. Mix together remaining ingredients in large bowl. Allow suet to cool until lightly thickened. Add to other ingredients and mix well. Pour into molds. Refrigerate or freeze.

### **Apple Suet**

- 3 cups rendered suet
- 1 cup whole wheat bread (dried & crumbled)
- ½ cup shelled sunflower seeds



¼ cup millet

½ cup chopped dried apples

Melt suet over medium heat. Mix together remaining ingredients in large bowl. Allow suet to cool until lightly thickened. Add to other ingredients and mix well. Pour into molds. Refrigerate. For more suet recipes: <http://www.sialis.org/suet.htm>



### **Bluebird Treats**

Mix together

- 1 cup peanut butter
- 4 cups yellow cornmeal
- 1 cup unbleached or whole-wheat flour

Add

- 1 cup fine sunflower seed chips
- 1 cup peanut hearts (or finely ground nuts)
- 1/2-1 cup Zante currants (or raisins cut in half, or chopped dried cherries)

Drizzle and stir in

- 1 cup rendered, melted suet

Cool. Resulting mix will be crumbly and should have bean/pea sized lumps from the drizzling of the melted suet. If too sticky after cooling, mix in a bit more flour. If too dry, drizzle in more melted suet. Refrigerate

### **Bluebird Meal**

- 5 parts old-fashioned oatmeal
- 1 part corn syrup
- 1 part peanut butter
- 1 part bacon grease, melted suet or lard

Mix well and put into 1" holes drilled into a suspended log suet feeder.

### **Bluebird Tempter**

- 2 cups crunchy peanut butter
- 4 cups quick cook oats
- 4 cups cornmeal
- 2 cups lard
- 2 cups white or whole-wheat flour
- 2/3 cup sugar

Optional: chopped nuts, raisins, dried fruit, up to 2 cups.

Melt lard and peanut butter in microwave. Add remaining ingredients. Form into softball-sized balls. Store in freezer until ready to use, then microwave for 15-30 seconds and crumble into dish or on platform feeder.



### **Mealworm Cakes**

- Mealworms
- 1 cup lard
- 2½ cup crunchy peanut butter
- ½ cup crushed egg shells
- ½ cup sunflower seeds
- ½ cup peanuts
- 6 cups corn meal
- 5 cups flour

Melt lard and peanut butter in microwave for 1-1½ minutes on high. Stir in egg shells, sunflower seeds and peanuts. Some people use dried mealworms in suet mixes. Others submerge live mealworms in melted lard. Mix together cornmeal and flour and add to lard mixture by cupfuls. Mixture will be stiff. Put in container. Store in refrigerator or freezer. Make a few balls of it and hang it in an onion bag.





## ***Congratulations!*** ***on 50 hours***

*Sue Arnold, mentor Debbie Allen*  
*Jo Cabill, mentor Betty Loos*  
*Steve Dow, mentor Tom Konzem*  
*Garrett Mead, mentor Bob Gessner*

*Lori Dekker, mentor Susan Peterson*  
*Trudy Eccleston, mentor Sherry Howard*  
*Ted Ferring, mentor Bill Marmaduke*  
*Leigh Ann Frankel, mentor Chris Holt*  
*Joe Rubio, mentor John Baggenstos*  
*Mary Jane Shandley, mentor Sandy Lundgren*  
*Diane Thornbrugh, mentor Sherry Howard*  
*Nancy Verberg, mentor Tricia Michelson*  
*Diane Young, mentor Lois Janowski*  
*Debbie Cavarretta, mentor Lois Janowski*  
*Jeri Cerulli, mentor Karen Moss-Brown*  
*Beth Snider mentor: Karen Moss-Brown*

## ***By-laws Change Proposed***

In compliance with the minimum 30-day notification of a by-laws change, a change to Article XI (change the name of the Public Relations Committee to the Communications Committee) will be voted on at the March MGA meeting.

### 2016 Newsletter Schedule

The newsletter comes out every two months. Deadlines have changed. The list below shows the issues, when they will be published, basically the day they will be available (or close to it) for you to read and the deadlines for each issue. Longer articles need to be sent in earlier than in the past, so please note that. If the article is time-sensitive, please let me know ahead of time but please get it to me by the deadline. There is a lot more latitude to the short announcements (a few lines) and if you let me know in advance something is coming I can be a bit flexible about things.

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

FROM THE EDITOR: Please send or email articles and announcements to the address below. All articles must be in my hands by the 10th of the month. Short announcements (no more than 2 or 3 lines) will be accepted until the 25th.

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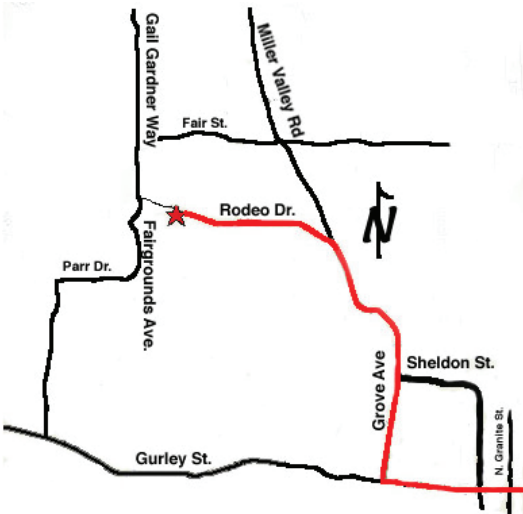
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840 Rodeo Dr. Building C  
Prescott, AZ 86305



## MG NEWSLETTER



## *Next Meeting*

**February 17, Camp Verde 6:30pm**

**Camp Verde Meeting is held at the Superior Court Building off of Hwy 260 in Camp Verde.**

**2840 N. Commonwealth Dr.**

Speaker: Janie Agyagos, "Landscaping with Natives and Wildlife Nuisances"

**March 16, Prescott 6:30pm**

**The Prescott meeting is held at the Extension office on Rodeo Dr.**

Speaker: Kimberly Gaskill, Permaculture