

Yavapai Gardens

Master Gardener Newsletter

February—March 2017



Table of Contents

Crinums . . .	1
Host Plant - Southwest Senna . . .	3
Meet a MG - Marion Johnston . . .	4
Mentor Program . . .	5
It Begins Again 2017 . . .	6
MG Activities . . .	7

Crinums

by Nora Graf



Crinums are plants that don't come up in conversations often. They are not a rare plant and I'm not saying they are the next big thing, but we just don't grow them in Arizona much. They can grow well in the Phoenix area, but are a

bit touchy about the cold weather. This makes them difficult for some areas in the County but not impossible. I happen to have a massive cluster of them in my Camp Verde yard that have been growing for years.

The genus *Crinum* consists of about 130 species, mostly occurring in Africa and Asia. They grow in zones 7 to 10. Most prefer hot and humid climates. Alkalinity doesn't seem to bother them and they can survive on moderate amounts of water. Some are very drought tolerant. In their native habitat they are often found in areas of extremes where they can be flooded part of the year and dry another part. Crinums can also withstand the summer sun. In most articles, full sun is recommended, but these articles are written for the southeastern US and not the southwest desert. Mine grow on the east side of the house and get plenty of afternoon shade. Sun is essential to blooming but around here they don't need it all day.

If you are looking for a dramatic tropical plant, crinums might fit your needs. They have strap-shaped leaves and form dense clumps. They can grow up to 4 to 5 feet tall depending on species and cultivar. Tall umbels of lily-like fragrant flowers shoot up early in the summer. Deadheading will encourage repeat blooming. The variety in my yard, which I think is *Crinum powellii*, blooms for a long period of time, sending up stalk after stalk of blooms. This plant came from my sister-in-law's mother's home (Phoenix) and was a pass-along plant, so



not sure if the identification is correct. The species is a good grower in Arizona. Mine are white, but there are

pink-flowered crinums that might also do well: 'Ellen Bosanquet' have dark-rose flowers; 'JC Harvey' have pink-flushed blooms and 'C. digweedii' have flowers with red stripes on white petals. Cultivars may have different coloring.

While it can give a part of your garden a tropical look, there are some drawbacks. It is cold-sensitive, so it might be limited to the lower elevations of the County. It can be mulched in the winter to protect the bulb. There are some hardy crinums that you can consider. They are *Crinum bulbispermum* (hardy crinum), *C. moorei* (long-necked crinum) and selections of *C. powellii*. Once established they are difficult to move (more on that in a minute). These are untidy-looking plants and if you want a manicured look, they are not for you. While not invasive, they will gradually spread and take over a space. They grow from spring until it freezes in the fall. This is the time you will need to mulch. I have always just left the dead leaves in place. Most of you are probably horrified with this and it isn't attractive but it protects the bulbs from the cold. In the spring the emerging sprouts are pretty ugly because the outer sheath is always mushy, soft and slimy. I don't know whether it's the freezing weather or the fact that I don't clean out the old foliage in the fall that causes this. This may not happen to you, so don't be discouraged to try them. I am a pretty hands-off gardener and I'm sure if I spent more time pruning, cleaning and mulching there wouldn't be a problem. If you like my hands-off approach just leave it alone and the mushy part eventually dries but this will constrict the leaves and they have a hard time breaking free. Once it dries it is easy to remove them and release the leaves. Normally as the new sprouts grow, I put on gloves



and go out to pull the junk off. I just grab the top and give it a strong pull. It comes off easily. If you don't like slimy things, it's probably not the job for you.

You can divide Crinums, but the bulbs are huge (I read they can reach 20 pounds but most are 1-2 pounds) and digging them up can be a big project. They never need to be divided like iris and some other bulbs. You should make sure they have room to spread and stay in the same spot for years and years. They do not like to be moved. If you do need to move them, dig them up in fall or spring. Each bulb will have a neck sticking out of the ground and you can see how many bulbs there are and where they are. They have active roots year-round. Trench all around the clump with a sharp shovel and then lift

them. Wash the bulbs and roots off with water and divide. Replant as quickly as possible, preferably the same day. Plant by burying the bulb up to the neck. Look for the transition of white to green, white below ground, green above. It's best if they don't dry out. If you aren't planning to replant them in your yard, pot them up and give them away. They will take about a year to recover and grow robustly again.

***Crinum bulbispermum*:** Native to South Africa. Sometimes found naturalized in central Texas ditches. Fountain-like mounds of gray-green foliage, trumpet type flowers, ranging from white to pink and striped. These are the earliest blooming and most cold hardy.

***Crinum x digweedii* 'Royal White':** Has spidery white blooms with pale pink stripes. One of the last to bloom, late summer and fall. Sometimes called "Nassau lily".

Crinum x herbertii (milk and wine lilies): Many old-fashioned hybrids with fragrant, white, trumpet flowers striped with reds, pinks or purples. 'Carol Abbott' is a fine selection.



***Crinum x powellii 'Alba'*:** This cold-hardy selection with pure white flowers is often available (along with her pink sister). Good as cut flowers.

***Crinum x 'Bradley'*:** This cultivar from Australia has beautiful tall flower spikes topped with dark pink flowers above lush green foliage.

***Crinum' Ellen Bosanquet'*:** Although the flowers are actually dark pink, this is often referred to as a red – flowered *Crinum*. It is common in the South and may prefer shade during the summer.

***Crinum x 'Mrs. James Hendry'*:** This Florida introduction produces wonderfully- fragrant white flowers flushed with pastel pink in mid-summer.

Sources

Plants Delight Nursery

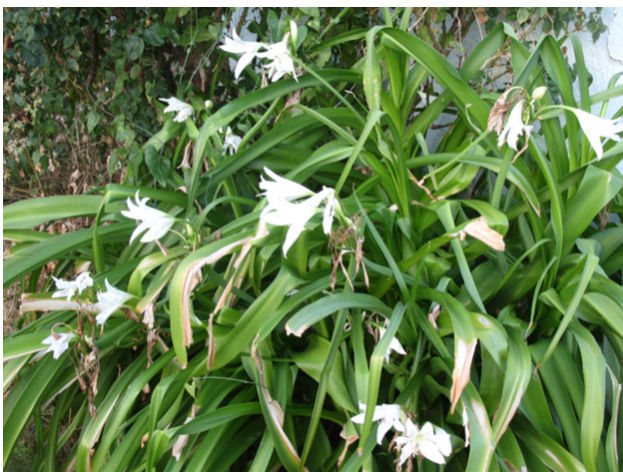
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Host Plant—Southwest Sennas

by Cheri Melton, from the Sept 2003 Cochise County
Master Gardener Newsletter



Gardening in the desert has a host of challenges—poor soils, drought, and searing heat. A plant that laughs at all these challenges in the garden are the sennas. Belonging to the legume family, they fix their own nitrogen, are buzz-pollinated by

bumblebees and carpenter bees, provide seed for birds and make great butterfly host plants.

Senna wislizeni (Shrubby Senna) grows up to eight feet high and it may lose its leaves during frost and cold weather. Small dark green leaflets and masses of butter yellow flowers are triggered by summer rains. The Cloudless Sulphur butterfly lays her eggs on the flower buds and the caterpillars eat only the flowers.

Senna linkheimerana (Velvet Senna) is a herbaceous plant that stands three feet high. The dark green oval leaves are velvety, inviting the gardener to “pet” its leaves, on which the Sleepy Orange Butterfly lays her eggs. Clusters of yellow flowers occur at the ends of the branches, and like the leaves the flower pods are soft to the touch.

Senna leptocrite (Long-pod Senna) can be found along the roadsides after the summer rains. The seed pods can measure up to four to six inches long and the bright yellow flowers are stunning. This is the favorite plant of the Cloudless Sulphur, Orange-barred Sulphur, Boisduval's Yellow and the Sleepy Orange butterflies.

Senna letadenia is a low-growing plant that can be found on our property after a few weeks of good summer rains and is the host plant for the Tailed Orange butterfly. This plant is not available in the nursery trade and illustrates the importance for desert gardeners to identify those ‘weeds’ that appear in the garden. Remember—that ‘weed’ can be an important food plant for an insect!

While shopping for sennas seek out the native ones—as fellow Southeast Arizona Butterfly Association member Karen Hillson pointed out in the Spring 2001 issue of Butterfly Gardener —“caterpillars will not eat the non-native sennas, also known as cassias, that are commonly found throughout many neighborhoods. It has been found that the Australian cassias have a chemical very similar to native sennas thus confusing butterflies into laying eggs onto them. The result is that caterpillars then die from eating the “poisonous’ non-native plants.”

Meet A Master Gardener - Marion Johnston

by Lori Dekker

One thing about Master Gardeners is that they come from a multitude of backgrounds and experiences, unified by a love of plants and gardens. Marion Johnston started out as a Family Life & Child Development

major at Michigan State, then picked up a Masters in Institutional Management, taught Restaurant Management at ASU, ran test kitchens and developed menus for companies all over the country, worked as a

financial advisor —when women didn't do that kind of work— eventually starting her own company and now has reached her pinnacle achievement as a Horticulture Superintendent for the Yavapai County Fair. Along the way she raised a son singlehandedly, bought a '57 T-Bird, is an accomplished photographer, plays in the Prescott Ukulele Group (she has a ukulele that glows in the dark) and planned and displayed her 2-year-old garden at last summer's Alta Vista garden tour. She often says she's easily bored.

Her mostly drought-resistant garden was built from scratch from raw, scraped, compacted soil. Her plan was to add amendments, boulders, walkways, native plants, a few roses and peonies, a water feature, raised beds for vegetables, a fire pit, and a place to sit with a glass of wine to watch the sun go down. She did all that and more. Spring through fall the garden is alive with blooms, bees, birds and now her faithful greyhound Cairo. Her adult son, David, visits frequently to help with weeding, digging and planting. It's a backyard filled with life and love.

One thing Marion's yard has, that no one else has, is a Cherokee Three Sisters garden. Marion is part Cherokee and respectful of her heritage. Because she is able to trace her mother's roots back

to the Trail of Tears she is a citizen of the Cherokee Nation. That entitles her access to the Tribe's Talagua, Oklahoma seed bank of heirloom seeds grown and collected by tribal members. The Cherokee were traditionally farmers, with women owning the land, so Marion reports that all the women in her



family garden for food to some degree. In her Three Sisters plot she grew Trail of Tears beans, shiny and black (really too beautiful to eat!), White Eagle blue corn, and Candy Roaster squash that she said was to die for, it was so good. In her raised vegetable garden she grew Cherokee Brown tomatoes, garlic, onions, lettuce and plenty of strawberries.

One of Marion's many loves is that of art and sculpture. Her home and yard are filled with the whimsical and the serious. She cruises Jerome in her free time looking for pieces to scatter among the wildflowers, the lavender, and the irises.

Marion's winter garden, while not beautiful in a Home and Garden kind of way, is a gift to creatures (large and small) that call her neighborhood home. Her yard is unsprayed, undisturbed, composted and replete with nutritious seed heads for the birds. Native bees are cozily pupating away, unmolested, in her soil. Coyotes wander through looking for tasty rodents. Marion, the Home Ec major, is still feeding her friends and neighbors.

Mentor Program is Key to Success

by Marti Griggs



Completion of the Master Gardener training class is just the first step to becoming a Master Gardener. The initial certification process where each associate volunteers fifty hours is often the most difficult part to complete. The Yavapai Master Gardener's Mentor Program was designed to help new Associate Master



Gardeners feel welcome and learn about the various volunteer opportunities and projects. Mentors provide support, guidance and encouragement as their mentees complete their certification hours and become part of the Master Gardener community.

The mentor program is an integral part of the Yavapai Master Gardener organization and contributes significantly to its overall success, which according to Jeff Schalau is one of the most active MG associations in the state. Prior to the program's implementation in 2007 the dropout rate for new associates was high – only about twenty-five percent of those graduating actually completed certification. Currently seventy-five to eighty percent of graduates become certified. The program is also instrumental in retaining overall association membership.

Over the years procedures have been developed that help both mentors and mentees

achieve their goals. Mentors attend a training session where they are provided with the tools needed to motivate their charges during the certification year. They then attend the Certification Planning Workshop with their mentees. The mentor's role is to familiarize new associates with the program and help them feel comfortable as they begin their volunteer service. A mentor's purpose is to answer questions about the MG program rather than to be a garden guru. They answer questions about how to

report hours, how to get involved in various projects, how to use the website and they make introductions to committee coordinators and members who have similar interests.

With every new class of Master Gardeners, there is need for a dedicated group of mentors to usher the group through the hands-on portion of their learning process. Mentors are matched with mentees that have similar gardening interests or reside in the same geographic area. According to Faun Vogel there are many benefits to being a mentor. She has learned about different aspects of gardening and acquired new horticulture knowledge by

helping her mentees find their niche within the organization.

"Their enthusiasm regenerates me and I have made holistic friendships." She stresses that anyone can do it, "It's not hard and the rewards are extensive."

For the last several years the mentor program has been co-coordinated by Tom Konzem (Prescott region) and Betty Loos (Verde Valley region). With the sudden passing of Tom this winter, Christi Armer has stepped up to be the Prescott coordinator for the 2017 class, which will be held in Prescott. If you are interested in becoming a mentor, contact either Betty (bettyloos1@gmail.com) or Christi (ch_armer@hotmail.com).



It Begins Again 2017

by Nora Graf



Optimism always runs high at the beginning of the new year. It's one of the great things about gardening, you can have a "do-over". Forget about last year's lousy tomato crop. Strike from memory the devastating pest assault. The seeds that never came up are ancient history and those bedding plants that just limped along are gone. It is time to forget all those things and embrace a new year of gardening. It's time to start planning for spring! You should be ordering seeds, even starting your seeds inside and there is winter debris to clean up. Time to get off the couch and get going. Yes, I know that the time between last year's garden and this year's garden isn't really much of a rest. I don't know about you but 2016 was the latest I had tomatoes, basil and peppers growing... until mid-November! The thing is, time keeps moving and if you want a garden, you have to keep up.

Some things you should be doing regardless of where you live are:

In February

Clean and repair drip irrigation systems.

Prune your deciduous trees but don't prune plants that have frost damage, you should wait on those.

There is still a possibility for frosts so continue to protect frost-tender plants.

Prepare soil for early spring plants; add compost.

Plant bare-root trees, shrubs and roses and container-grown landscape plants through March

In March

Make adjustments to your irrigation system as needed.

Continue planting bare root trees.

Prune roses; roses can be pruned through March along with any shrubs that bloom after June. If they bloom earlier than that you will be cutting off this year's flowers.

Clean up frost-damaged plants.

Start seeds inside. Vegetables like lettuce, kale, spinach, cabbages (those that are considered cool season vegetables) can be started inside. These plants need warmer temperatures to sprout but once they get real leaves, can withstand colder temperatures so you can plant them pretty early in the year.

Start weeding now as necessary.

Early spring annuals like pansies, poppies and snapdragons can be planted.

And something you can do anytime is visit your locally-owned garden centers. They have plants that are good for your area and even though you are a Master Gardener they can answer your questions and help you find something that will make your garden a special place.





Rose Pruning at Sharlot Hall Museum in Prescott on March 15th. Sign-up with Diane Thornbrugh, dianelt7@icloud.com , 602-708-1176.

Spring into Gardening - Master Gardener Education Day
 March 25th at the Yavapai College campus in Clarkdale. **Registration information will be e-mailed to all active Master Gardeners on February 1st; reservations required by March 1st.** This is a Yavapai/Coconino County Master Gardener continuing education day. Contact Mary Barnes with questions, mcbarn1@cablone.net, 928-583-0889.

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.

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Yavapai County**

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MG NEWSLETTER



Next Meetings

February 15 Prescott Office, ***Speaker Dave Irvine,***
Highlands Center, New Discovery Garden

March 15th, Camp Verde, Superior Court Bldg.
Speaker :Lori Dekker Mushrooms and Edible
Mushroom Production.

April 19th, Prescott Office, ***Panel Discussion: Yavapai***
County Fair

May 17th, Camp Verde, Superior Court Bldg. ***Speaker:***
Molly McCormick, "Monarch Butterflies."