



Events & Activities

MG Association Meeting, Wednesday, June 17, New Class Welcome, 6:30pm Prescott

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

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University of Arizona Yavapai County Cooperative Extension

Yavapai Gardens

Master Gardener Newsletter

June/July 2015

Garden Site Selection

Shawn Banks: Blog Contributor

Johnston County Extension Agent/Educator North Carolina State University

shawn_banks@ncsu.edu



As an extension agent one question I often get asked by new gardeners is, "Where do I put a vegetable garden in my yard?" That leads to a lot more questions, but let's answer the where question first. There are four basic considerations when selecting a garden site.

The first thing to consider is the need for direct or full sunlight. Most vegetables need a minimum of six to eight hours in order to produce a crop. However, the more sunlight they get the more bounteous the harvest will be. If there isn't a spot in the yard that receives full sun all day, then the question becomes, is it better to have shade in the morning or in the evening? Morning sun will dry the dew from the leaves, reducing the chance of fungal diseases infecting the leaves.

Speaking of dew, the next consideration is water. How close is the water source to the vegetable garden. Many vegetables need to have consistent moisture. That means a water source should be easy to access to keep the soil moist throughout the growing season. The farther the water is from the garden, the less likely it is that the garden will get watered on a regular basis. Have you ever wondered why the tomatoes crack, or the radishes split? One of the most common reasons is that the soil was very dry and then it rained a lot and the plant was trying to store as much water as possible, causing the cracks and splits.

Another consideration is airflow. Many foliar diseases are caused by fungal pathogens. Most fungi need water standing on the leaf for eight or more hours before they can infect the leaf. Good airflow will dry the leaves out before the fungi can infect the plant.





A hedge, a solid fence, or even a house may obstruct airflow. Another way to obstruct airflow is to plant too close together, but that is a discussion for another time.

Lastly comes the phrase “out of sight, out of mind.” This is very true for a vegetable garden. When selecting where to place the garden, consider ease of access. Many people find that when the garden is way in the backyard, they don’t tend it often enough. The soil dries out. The weeds take over. The crops don’t get harvested in a timely manner. In short, the garden doesn’t succeed. Select a garden site that is close enough that you will see it and want to tend to it.

These four site characteristics are the most important when selecting the location for a vegetable garden. Remember, a vegetable garden site needs a minimum of eight hours of direct sunlight, consistent moisture, good airflow, and easy access. A site with all four of these characteristics will ultimately produce more, have fewer problems with fungal diseases, and be better taken care of because it is visited more frequently and loved. Keep in mind that if you don’t have anywhere in your yard that works, many options, such as container gardens, can help you have a productive garden anywhere.



You can find the original article at: <http://blogs.extension.org/gardenprofessors/2015/03/24/garden-site-selection/>



Pholisma sonoreae photo from Wikipedia

Pholisma areanarium

by Nora Graf Photos by Ashley Hall



Sometimes you forget what a complicated world it is. You get jaded, like when you go to five nurseries and they are all selling the same plants. Sometimes you think you know a lot only to discover that you know al-

most nothing. A reminder that one has to guard against that attitude came via a Facebook posting from the V-bar-V ranch. John Hall (Yuma Field Office) & Ashley Hall, (UA Cooperative Extension) were surveying north of Yuma when they discovered blooms of a very interesting plant.

Pholisma areanarium, also known as Desert Christmas tree, scaly-stemmed sand plant, is an underground parasite. This perennial grows with minimal surface presence. Sand plant parasitizes the roots of such plants as bur sage, burro bush, Yerba Santa, rabbitbrush, ragweeds and California croton. It completely lacks chlorophyll and the stems and roots are brownish-gray or whitish in color.

Periodically it flowers quite dramatically by sending up to a 12 inch stem with hairy, glandular, pointed leaves. (These were 3-4 inches tall) This is the only above ground appearance of the plant. Flowers form between the leaves. The mushroom-shaped stalk has a beautiful cluster of centimeter wide flowers that are lavender to bright purple petals with a white margin. It flowers April through July.

Sand plants are found in northwestern Mexico, southern California and Arizona in various sandy habitats including desert, chaparral and coastal dunes.

A second species *P. sonoreae* (sand food) also grows in Arizona and is equally strange but it grows only in sand dunes. The name comes about because apparently native Americans used the plant as food.



Rhubarb as an Annual

by Nora Graf



Over the years one of the questions I have been asked frequently is “Can I grow rhubarb?”. I have always responded that it is probably too hot for it to do very well, especially in the Verde Valley. Folks in Prescott should be able to grow it without too many problems but in hot areas it’s a bit more difficult.

I would say give it a shot but if it just isn’t working it’s time to give up on the perennial aspect and grow the plant as an annual and consider growing it from seeds. This will still give you the rhubarb taste you love, just maybe not that brilliant red color people associate with the plant. When one of my editors asked why not the red color, I had to do some searching to find out and it turns out the answer is vague and uncertain.

Rhubarb comes in both red and green. With plants the nursery has already selected for red which is what people are looking for. With seeds the outcome can be more variable. You might end up with red, somewhat red, pink or green plants. Some claim the red is the sweetest, others say the color doesn’t matter.

For the lowest elevations in the County, zone 9 or higher, start the seeds in a cool location (including inside) from late August to early October. The seeds have a large paper-like shell. To increase and speed germination soak the seeds in water for 1 to 2 hours. Once the seedlings reach about 4 inches, transplant into the garden. They will grow through the winter and be ready for harvest in late spring. Even in low elevation areas it can get very cold on occasion so if there are freeze warnings just cover the young plants with a row cover or cold frame. Harvest all the stalks before it gets too hot.

For zones 8 and lower, which may still be a bit hot for the perennial, you can still grow them as an annual with a spring planting. Start the seeds inside or under cover 8 to 10 weeks before the average last frost. Transplant the seedlings about two weeks before the average last frost in the garden that has been amended with compost or well-rotted manure. The plants should be about 4 inches tall at transplanting. Don’t forget to harden the plants off before putting them in the garden. Mulching will help keep the roots cool and maintain even moisture. Cover with some sort of row cover until the danger of frost is past.

When it starts to warm up provide some afternoon shade if the plants are in the sun during the hottest time of the year. Even a row of taller plants shielding the sun from them will work. Maintaining even moisture during the summer is crucial. Dry soil equals dead rhubarb.

Once the plant has about 10 stalks you can start to harvest. If you are growing the rhubarb as an annual just go ahead and harvest the entire plant. For rhubarb newbies only harvest the stalks. THE LEAVES ARE PISONOUS!! The leaves have oxalic acid which you do not want to eat.

If you want to try and keep them as a perennial, go ahead and harvest a few of the stalks if you must have rhubarb. But it’s best if you leave the plant to grow that first year. You must leave some of the leaves on to keep the plant going through the summer. Since they are going to have a tough time surviving the summer only harvest in the spring and fall and you can harvest all the leaves before the first frost. The frost will kill them anyway.

In Florida they are having good luck with the variety “Victoria” but there are a couple of varieties you can try.

Sources of Rhubarb

Burpee Seeds (They only sell rhubarb seeds online)

<http://www.burpee.com/vegetables/rhubarb/>

Johnnys Selected Seeds

<http://www.burpee.com/vegetables/rhubarb/>

877-564-6697



Containers

by Nora Graf



I've never liked container gardening. It seemed that come summer my containers were just one giant oven, frying roots unless you were out there watering two-three times a day. I tried to use timers and drip hoses which worked very well until they didn't which was always on the hottest day of the year. I would come home from work to a mass of dead and dying plants. My container gardening diminished considerably over the years. Now I am rethinking that. One, I am home more now that I am semi-retired. Two involves a confession. I have been writing about gardening many years and I think some of you have some fantasy that I have this magical space. In reality I have a yard filled with unruly Bermuda grass and some plants valiantly trying to break through. Along with the Texas root rot present in the soil I have reached the point where I just don't garden as much. But I miss it, so this is where the rethinking comes in. I'm back to containers again, bigger ones though. It seems the only way to defeat the grass. It's just in the thinking stages, but since spring is coming, I had an idea for the newsletter. So a little about containers.

Pluses

- * You get to control the soil and can tailor the soil to the plant.
- * You can move them around so the plant gets the optimum light.
- * You can have a garden even if you don't have a yard.
- * You will need to weed less.



Minuses

- * You'll notice I didn't say they were any easier than growing in the ground; they have their challenges.
- * They need more frequent water.
- * Large containers can be very heavy. The larger the

container the harder it will be to move it.

- * They need more frequent fertilization.

How to Create a Container Garden

Pretty much anything can be a container if it can hold a bit of soil. I have seen everything from stock tanks to boots being used as containers. Just have fun with it but a leather boot is going to take a lot more care than a stock tank.

Container size should suit the plant or plantings. If you are growing rosemary you will have to have a larger container than for basil. If you are growing multiple plants in a container it would need to be larger than if you are just growing one. Do a little planning before you start planting. Root bound plants dry out quickly and won't grow as well.

Plastic and fiberglass pots are generally inexpensive as compared to others and they are more attractive than they used to be. They are also lighter and hold water

better which makes them easier to move and you can water less. They will begin to crack in the sun eventually but it should take many years.



Terra cotta or clay are the old reliables and they still add a rustic charm to a container garden. They are heavy, though, and prone to cracking from freezing and thawing. They also will have a buildup of white crust on the outside and don't hold moisture as well as other pots.

Cast concrete can give you a rustic look and can be left outside in all weather but they are very heavy so if you need to move them it could be a real chore. With our hard water, crusts can build up on the outside and they will dry out faster than plastic. Some concrete containers are made with vermiculite or perlite (Hypertufa) containers. These are lighter but still heavier than plastic.

Polyurethane foam can weigh 90% less than terra cotta or concrete. They hold water well, resist chipping and cracking and can insulate the roots in hot and cold temperatures.

Wood containers are easy to make yourself, are natural-looking and will help protect roots from rapid temperature changes. Most woods will start to rot quickly in situations where it gets wet often. Try using cedar or locust. There are preservatives you can use but they can be toxic and best avoided, especially if you are growing edibles.

Metals are probably the worst choice as they conduct heat and the temperature can fluctuate wildly. You



will need to line them with plastics especially if you are growing food. This container would work best by planting in a plastic container that would fit within the metal one. Using a large stock tank would be a dif-

ferent ball of wax. They would still heat up but because they have a large volume of soil that would help control the temperature. They are also designed to hold water, but would need drainage holes. I have seen them used successfully so it might be a real option.

For years and years gardeners were told to cover drainage holes with shards of broken pots or put small stones in and more recently, packing peanuts, but please don't do any of these things; they aren't needed and they may be more harmful than helpful. They will actually inhibit the movement of water. Today's recommendation is to just use a paper towel, coffee filters, newspaper or piece of screen to cover the holes. If you need to reduce the volume of soil in a container then use gravel or Styrofoam; just keep in mind it will impact the drainage.

Use a good potting soil to fill the containers. Don't use the soil from the yard. You can be importing problems. Also our soils tend to be heavy on clay so they compact, and absorb water poorly. Mixing a potting mix with some of your homemade compost creates a nice soil for a container. You will read about lots of mixes you can make, but keeping it simple would be my suggestion. If you are reusing potting mix from a previous year, dump it into a wheel barrow or container and refresh by adding compost and perhaps some slow release fertilizer. The nutrients in containers are easily flushed out with all the watering that is necessary, so a refresh is needed for used material. If the mix is dry, wet it thoroughly (not soggy) before putting it in the container. Dry mixes have a hard time absorbing water, especially if they have a lot of peat moss in them.

AVOID the super-absorbent polymers; they don't really work and, while they are touted as being inert, there is evidence they do break down in the soil. (If you are interested go to the link below.)

http://puyallup.wsu.edu/~linda%20chalker-scott/horticultural%20myths_files/Myths/magazine%20pdfs/MythsHydrogels.pdf



Drainage is important for container plants. Most plants don't like soggy soil, although you can create your own bog in a container if you want, but that's another story. Make sure your container drains. If it doesn't you will need to add some holes. For most projects you can just take a drill and put in fairly large holes or multiple small ones. Make sure you have the correct drill bit for the material. Metal, concrete and clay will need special bits, all of which are inexpensive and readily available at hardware stores. If you are not sure what kind of bit you need, hardware store employees should be able to help you.

If you have a decorative pot you don't want to put a hole in, find a plastic pot that will fit inside it. Just remember to check that the drained water doesn't build up.

One of the problems in hotter areas is that the containers dry out quickly. Using lighter colored containers will slow down drying as they can reflect some of the heat. You will have to get a feel for which containers need water

but you can expect to have to water nearly every day in the hottest part of the summer. Try not to let them dry out completely. It is a lot harder to rehydrate the soil. You can mulch just like you would with an in-ground garden. Drip systems can be used for containers.

One of the offshoots of constant watering is the need to fertilize more often. Most fertilizers can be used includ-

ing your home made compost. Liquid, slow release fertilizers and dry fertilizers should be used at quarter strength. Less concentration, more often, is the way to go. You can also use a soluble fertilizer and spray it on. Start with once every two weeks. If the plants are yellowing they might need more. Like all of gardening there are few hard and fast rules. You need to adapt to your conditions.

A shaggy plant seems to be more noticeable in a container, keep them deadheaded and the old leaves cleaned up for the best appearance. Watch for pests!

Pretty much any plant can be used in a container; experiment and have fun.



Arizona Wildflowers

photos by Nora Graf

Arizona is blessed with magical wildflowers. It's worth getting out in the spring to see them. These pictures come from a variety of locations in Arizona.



Scarlet Gilia



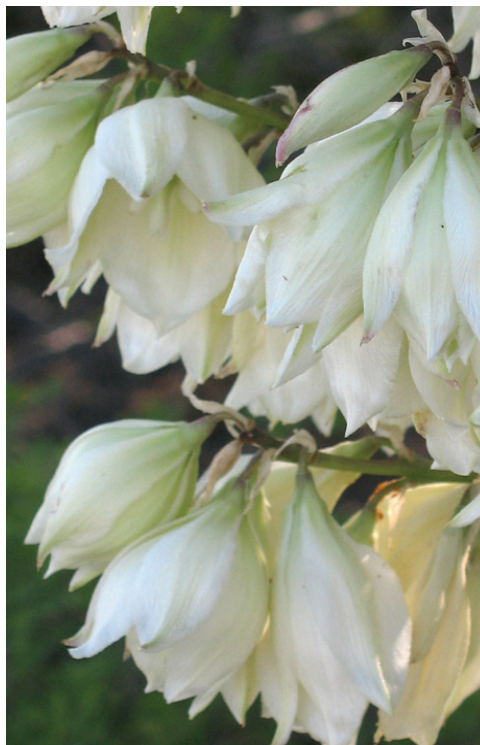
Fairy Duster



Lupine



Astragalus species? (locoweed)



Yucca



Manzanita

MG Announcements

End of Fiscal Year is June 30th!!

Please make sure all your hours for the fiscal year, which ends June 30th, are reported by July 5th. Your cumulative hours are used for recognition at our September 12th MGA Recognition picnic.

July 11th Monsoon Madness Plant and Yard Sale

If you signed up to volunteer, please monitor your e-mail for instructions from Missy Sandeen. A recent e-mail message provided the dates and times of all activities. It is always a fun and sometimes wet event. If you have questions please contact Mary Barnes, mcbarn1@cableone.net, 583-0889.

Verde Valley Farmers Market

Starts June 6th. 8am to 12 noon. At the town ramada in Camp Verde, next to Fort Verde State Park on Holloman St.



2015 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.

Nora Graf

PO Box 3652

Camp Verde, AZ 86322

mesquite2@hotmail.com

(928) 567-6703

Jeff Schalaus

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

Prescott

840 Rodeo Dr.

Building C

Prescott, AZ 86305

(928) 445-6590

FAX: (928) 445-6593

Camp Verde

2830 N. Commonwealth Dr

Camp Verde, AZ 86322

(928) 554-8999

MG Desk (928) 554-8992

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



MG NEWSLETTER

Next Meeting

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

June 17th is the Class Welcome – It will be held in the Mackin Bldg (across the driveway from the Prescott Extension office). Start time 6:30pm. No need for MGs to bring refreshments; dessert will be provided.

NO MEETING IN JULY, Monsoon Madness instead. July 11.

