



Photo Credit: Christine Nimitz

Monarch butterfly resting on lantana during the 2016 Real Gardens for Real People tour.



THE UNIVERSITY OF ARIZONA  
COLLEGE OF AGRICULTURE & LIFE SCIENCES  
**Cooperative Extension**  
Maricopa County

# Maricopa County Cooperative Extension

May 2016

IMPROVING THE LIVES, COMMUNITIES, AND ECONOMY IN MARICOPA COUNTY

IN THIS ISSUE

## Real Gardens for Real People 2016

This year's 15<sup>th</sup> Annual Real Gardens for Real People tour, presented by Maricopa County Master Gardeners, was held on March 12.

More than 630 people toured the gardens of five homes in Northeast Phoenix along with a school garden and outdoor classroom at Sonoran Sky Elementary School. The home gardens were all created and cared for by Maricopa County Master Gardeners while the school garden and outdoor classroom were created and cared for by kids under the direction of a Maricopa County Master Gardener.

Sonoran Sky Elementary also served as the site of a fun and festive Garden Fair that featured vendors selling garden art, plants, tools, and other garden-related products.



Photo Credit: Christine Nimitz

Maricopa County Master Gardeners also provided horticultural information and sold Master Gardener Press books and soil probes. Several food trucks and other refreshments were also made available to guests.

"What distinguishes our garden tour from other garden tours, is that we deliver high-quality, research-based gardening information and education to the community we serve," explained program coordinator Jo Cook. Each garden featured informal, expert educational sessions on topics such as water conservation, composting, container gardening, fruit trees, pruning, vegetable gardens, and more. "One of the things we do that tour goers love, is that we label a majority of the plants in the gardens," says Cook. "They can take photos or notes of plants they like and build their shopping lists as they go."

The tour is a key fundraiser for the Maricopa County Master Gardener program. To view the educational resources, visit [www.RealGardensforRealPeople.com](http://www.RealGardensforRealPeople.com) and click "6 Stylish Gardens." Choose any of the gardens to access those resources.



## Keeping a Green Lawn Year Round



## Happy Birthday Dr. Seuss!



## Program Spotlight: Field Crops IPM

## Keeping a Green Lawn Year Round

By Kai Umeda

Bermudagrass is best adapted for home lawns and athletic fields in the low desert as it performs well from spring through fall. Its downfall is that it goes to sleep and turns “blonde,” a straw-colored turf, in December with the cold winter frost and then slowly greens up around Valentine’s Day. To overcome the couple months of “blonde” turf, winter ryegrass is commonly overseeded from October to June. That’s 9 months of a winter turf competing with the better heat-adapted and less water consuming bermudagrass. As the heat turns up in the spring, bermudagrass greens up and then thrives through the humid monsoons.

As you read this, in early May, begin mowing down the ryegrass to help “burn” itself out and allow the bermudagrass to compete. Water less frequently, than what was applied to the ryegrass and follow the Arizona Meteorological Network (AZMET <http://ag.arizona.edu/azmet/>) lawn watering guide. Wait another month to fertilize when more of the bermudagrass is visible and competitive against the winter ryegrass.

For those sites that were not overseeded with a winter lawn, the dormant bermudagrass is well underway for the summer, so begin feeding the lawn with an inexpensive nitrogen fertilizer



and water regularly by following AZMET recommendations. Monthly feedings, regular mowing, and aerating (punching holes) and/or dethatching operations during June, July, or August will make for a lush lawn that will be like “baling hay” in the yard. Next winter, to keep a year round green lawn, consider painting instead of overseeding. Neighborhood yards and school athletic fields could be green like a Super Bowl field.

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## Happy Birthday Dr. Seuss!

By Elisabeth Williams

Fun was had by all at the annual Roosevelt Early Childhood Family Resource Center’s celebration of Dr. Seuss’s birthday! This year, the FRC hosted a community pajama party to celebrate on March 2. Although the Pajama Party was geared for children ages 0-5, the Dr. Seuss Pajama Party was open to the entire family. Many older siblings, parents, and even grandparents attended! There were a variety of fun Dr. Seuss themed activities to support and enhance the development of



young children. The activities helped children build new skills and explore new textures, ideas, and problem-solving. Some of the activity stations included the “Hop on Pop” obstacle courses for children big and small

to have the opportunity to jump, balance, and crawl to build their big muscles. Children engaged their five senses with a variety of sensory boxes, experienced “Bartholomew Ooblech” goop, and explored new art materials with “The Lorax” finger painting. Children also played “The Lorax” chip toss ‘n’ count to build early math skills like counting, sorting, & problem-solving.

Over the course of the evening, staff read Dr. Seuss books and the Cat in the Hat even made an appearance!

As part of the event, dinner was provided to the 48 families in attendance. The Dr. Seuss Pajama Party would not have been possible without the help of 12 volunteers from the community, MLK Early Childhood Education Center, the Maricopa County Extension Office, and staff family members.

Thank you!

### Contact Information:

Family Resource Center  
 (602) 980-3692

Field Crops IPM



**Alfalfa Roots**

Alfalfa roots are commonly 3-5 feet deep and can extend 8-15 feet in some soils.



**Milk Production**

An average Arizona alfalfa field can potentially produce a milk yield of 3200 gallons/acre/year.

FAST FACTS

**365 Days**

Alfalfa is a very high yielding crop. It can grow 365 days a year in central and southern Arizona.

**260,000 Acres**

Alfalfa has the highest acreage of any crop or commodity grown in Arizona, with more than 260,000 acres.

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**Program Spotlight:  
 Field Crops IPM**

**The Benefits of Alfalfa to the Southwest Ecosystem**



The possibility of a “mega drought” in the southwest is a subject of great concern for our region. Issues of concern include: probable causes and possible solutions for the shortage of water in the region, how to harmonize environmental goals, urban expansion and agriculture needs and the share of water going toward crops in the region, including alfalfa hay production that supports the dairy and livestock industry.

**Alfalfa in the southwest ecosystem provides many environmental benefits: it is a rich habitat for wildlife, provides an insectary for diverse beneficial insects, improves soil characteristics, fixes atmospheric nitrogen, traps sediments and takes up nitrate pollutants, mitigates water and air pollution, and provides aesthetically pleasing open spaces.**

- Areas depleted of row crop or specialty crop production, like many agricultural areas in the western US would benefit environmentally by stabilizing soils when incorporating a perennial legume such as alfalfa.
- Alfalfa fields are important contributors to the biodiversity of agricultural systems by functioning as insectaries for beneficial insects, many of which are pollinators or natural enemies that play important roles in the low desert agroecosystem. Beneficial insects move from alfalfa fields into other crops, where they play crucial roles in pollination and biological control.
- Alfalfa also plays an important role in insecticide resistance management by acting as a refuge, especially for aphids and whiteflies. Low desert alfalfa production is quite different from production in other areas where non-dormant, irrigated varieties provide a year-round habitat for insects.
- As a perennial crop with deep roots, high water use efficiency, use of residual moisture and high flexibility with summer deficits, alfalfa is a lower risk crop. Unlike any other commercial crop in the region, alfalfa can reinitiate itself after water deficiency or even summer cutoff.
- Non-dormant alfalfa hay varieties are uniquely adapted to the low desert climates of central and southern Arizona and the adjacent region of California along the Colorado River. Unlike many other production regions in the nation, low desert alfalfa is irrigated and produces an average of eight cuttings every year. Alfalfa acreage in the region is likely to increase given the importance of the dairy industry and other livestock enterprises in addition to the reduction in cotton acreage due to low cotton prices.

# The Director's Cut

By Ed Martin

It's that time of year, we are coming to the end of our annual Farm City Breakfasts. The breakfasts are hosted by UA Maricopa County Cooperative Extension, the Maricopa County Farm Bureau, and the Maricopa County Board of Supervisors. We have five breakfasts, one in each district. Each breakfast takes place at a Farm Bureau member's location and includes great food cooked by Cooper's BBQ, eggs from Hickman's eggs, and milk from the United Dairymen of Arizona and the Milk and More store. In addition to food, we discuss issues that affect our rural and urban populations alike. We get to have a conversation with our elected Board of Supervisor officials and better our understanding of how those who raise our food and fiber can better work with our cities and towns to make Maricopa County a better place to live. Keep checking our Facebook page as we continue to update our information as we hold these important events.



We are starting our DIG (Desert Institute of Gardening) classes and getting ready to graduate our latest class of Master Gardeners. Our annual celebration of Dr. Seuss's Birthday was held at the Family Resource Center. There have been numerous agriculture and turf grass meetings as growers prepare for planting and turf starts to transition back to summer grasses. Dr. Barry Pryor from the UA School of Plant Sciences in Tucson gave a class on mushroom production. The workshop was standing room only – I heard he's coming back – so check our calendar and sign up soon. Also, space is still available for the Summer Ag. Institute, Turfgrass Field Day, and Beginning Farmer Program. The National Ag. in the Classroom Conference will take place on June 22-24<sup>th</sup> at the Wigwam Resort in Litchfield, AZ. Finally, I would like to recognize Ms. Anne Cimarelli-Stears, a Health Educator, Senior with our SNAP-Ed program, who was recognized by the UA Commission on the Status of Women for Outstanding Mentoring. Congratulations Anne! Well deserved!

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## ABOUT TOWN

### Turfgrass Field Day

When: May 04 7:30am - 1:00pm  
Where: UA Karsten Turf Research Facility, Tucson AZ  
More Information:  
<http://extension.arizona.edu/turfgrass-field-day>

### Brain Builders for Life Training

When: May 14 & 21 8:00am - 5:00pm  
Where: Maricopa County Cooperative Extension  
More Information:  
<http://extension.arizona.edu/brain-builders-life-maricopa-county-may-14-2016>

### Turning Dreams Into Reality: Starting a Farm in Arizona

When: May 17 & 18 8:00am - 5:00pm  
Where: Maricopa County Cooperative Extension  
More Information:  
<http://extension.arizona.edu/turning-dreams-reality-starting-farm-arizona-0>

### Desert Institute Gardening: Veggies & Herbs

When: May 19 6:30pm - 8:30pm  
Where: Maricopa County Cooperative Extension  
More Information:  
<http://extension.arizona.edu/desert-institute-gardening-healthy-you-benefits-growing-and-preparing-your-own-veggies-and-herbs>

### Summer Agricultural Institute

When: May 6 8:00am - May 10 5:00pm  
Where: Begins in Phoenix and travels north to Yavapai and Coconino County Arizona  
More Information:  
<http://extension.arizona.edu/summer-agricultural-institute>

### Desert Garden Institute: Raised Beds

When: June 19 2:00pm - 4:00pm  
Where: Maricopa County Cooperative Extension  
More Information:  
<http://extension.arizona.edu/desert-garden-institute-raised-beds-your-mark-get-set-go>

### 2016 National Ag in the Classroom Conference

When: June 22 7:00am - June 24 6:30pm  
Where: Wigwam Resort, Litchfield AZ  
More Information:  
<http://extension.arizona.edu/2016-national-agriculture-classroom-conference>

### Master Gardener Summer Intern Training Class

When: July 12 6:00pm - 9:00pm  
Registration Deadline: June 12  
Where: Maricopa County Cooperative Extension  
More Information and Registration:  
<http://extension.arizona.edu/university-arizona-cooperative-extension-master-gardener-volunteer>

### Maricopa County Cooperative Extension Monthly Event Calendar

<http://extension.arizona.edu/calendar/month?ctid%5B%5D=16>



Check us out at:

<https://www.facebook.com/MaricopaCountyCooperativeExtension>

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