

Yavapai Gardens

Master Gardener Newsletter

October/November 2016



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Watch out for the Jumping Cactus

by Nora Graf

You grew up in the desert if you know that cholla cactus would jump at you if you walked close to it. It is the plant equivalent of a rattlesnake. The good news is that cholla cactus does not wildly leap at you to defend itself, even if the nickname of jumping

cactus persists. It is still a wicked plant to grow in your landscape if you have children or pets. On the other hand, the perception of the cactus jumping at you is well-deserved. Cholla consists of jointed thin cylinders. The connections between cylinders are weak and even the slightest brush can break that connection and the dense detachable spines will penetrate almost anything including skin, leather and clothing. The plant also sheds joints readily. When you are walking in the desert it's easy to bump a joint loose with a foot or elbow. The spines latch on to any surface they touch. The tip of the spine slightly bends when it enters something and becomes a hook, making it difficult and painful to remove. I have personal experience so please take my word, IT HURTS! If you own pets, these can be an expensive choice. Pets tend to experience cholla face first and that means a trip to the vet. Humans get into trouble also. Unless you are like the person in the photo, chances are you can tolerate it. The larger spines can be pulled out with a pair of tweezers or pliers. (More info on removing cactus spines follows this article.

That said, chollas can have a place in a native landscape plan. Chollas provide homes for some birds and rodents. The papery sheaths that cover the spines cause the plant to glow when the sun



is low in the sky. Think of all the classic photographs of shimmering cholla in the desert. The flowers can be small and are colorful, and can cover the ends of the stems, creating a beautiful show. They also make good barriers if you want to keep people away.

Depending on the species, chollas can be shrubs, bushes, arborescent (resembling a tree in properties, growth, structure, or appearance) or small trees. They can be pruned to keep them under control. Seeds are one way they propagate but those joints on the ground can grow roots. Wildlife, dogs, and even you can spread the plant by carrying joints to new areas. Like prickly pears, the new growth has short green leaves that drop off as the stem matures. The plant is supported by an internal woody structure.



Most of you have seen the woody interior as it is used for making a variety of craft items like lamps (quite popular when I was a kid).

They are adapted to our climate and take little special care. Good-draining soil and sun are essential. In Yavapai County one of the limitations for them would be cold weather but there are several cold-hardy species. If



you don't mind the spines, try one of these.

One of the more manageable species is *Cylindropuntia leptocaulis* (or *Opuntia leptocaulis*), also known as the Christmas or pencil cholla. (There are several different

species whose common name is pencil cactus.) It is native to the Verde Valley and is cold tolerant. This cholla grows over a wide area. It grows at elevations ranging from 1000 feet to 5000 feet, from Texas into Mexico, Arizona and California. It prefers heavier soils in desert flats and in bottomlands, and can frequently be found growing underneath or around shrubs and trees, and even fence posts. Birds eat the fruit and spread the seeds in their droppings in those locations. Christmas cholla is often small but can grow to 6 feet. The stems are 1/2 inch with the main trunk reaching 4 inches in diameter. Spines are white to gray, 3/4 to 2 inches long, with some plants being

spineless. The flowers show up mid-summer. They



aren't gorgeous, being green to yellow-bronze, but the bright red grape-sized fruit will show you why it was named Christmas cholla. In fact you would hardly notice the plant until the fruit ripens. It is a good

wildlife plant as it provides nesting sites for cactus wrens and is a food source for deer, bobwhite quail, wild turkey, other birds and small mammals that eat the berries.

Cylindropuntia kleiniae (Kleins pencil cholla), is native to central Arizona. This is a large, over 6 feet tall, plant and will create a dense bush that can be pruned to fit in smaller spaces. Like the Christmas cholla, it has small diameter pencil-size stems. They will turn purple in the winter. It has widely spaced silver spines. The flowers are a pretty rose color about 1 1/2 inch diameter. The fruit is bright red and persists on the plant until fall. It is very cold tolerant and its stems don't droop like some other chollas do come cold weather. Limestone flats and hills are its preferred habitat (perfect for the Verde Valley) and it can be found along washes at elevations ranging from 2000 to 4400 feet.

Cylindropuntia echinocarpa (silver cholla, golden cholla) comes in two different forms, one with silver spines, the other golden. It resembles the



teddybear cholla, *Cylindropuntia bigelovii*. The spines create a dense cover for the joints. It is considered a medium-sized cholla, only growing four to five feet tall and about half as wide. In colder areas it can be slow growing. Like the *C. kleiniae* it is a good

winter plant because the arms do not droop very much. While the flowers are a pretty greenish yellow, the dramatic spines make this plant attractive. In Arizona it can be found in the high elevations of the Mogollon Rim. Its range includes Arizona, Nevada and California.

Cylindropuntia imbricata (tree cholla) as its

common name implies is a large plant but is also the one most tolerant of wet and cold conditions.



They can grow over six feet tall and can be a dense three to four feet wide. The trunk is heavy and the stems can be over an inch thick. It can make a statement in a

landscape. The bonus is it has lovely pink to bright reddish-purple 2 inch flowers in late summer. In the winter the stems get droopy and dehydrated looking. Spines are short, $\frac{3}{4}$ inch and are yellow to gray in color. There is a cultivar that has white flowers and there is one with no spines, although I do not know how available they are. Tree cholla can be found in gravel and sandy soils, mostly in grasslands, 4000 to 6000 feet. It has a wide range including Colorado, Arizona, Utah, Texas, Kansas, Oklahoma and north central and central Mexico.

Cylindropuntia whipplei (plateau cholla, Whipple's cholla, snow leopard cactus) is one of the most attractive chollas you can plant. It has large, 2 inch, yellow flowers and silvery spines. The plant can take on different appearances



depending on where it is growing. In high altitudes *C. whipplei* may look different than one growing in Arizona. In Arizona the plant is usually more upright. Its native range goes

from 5000 to 7400 feet in elevation and can be found in Arizona, Colorado, New Mexico, Nevada and Arizona. It is extremely cold hardy. This cholla forms dense, low spiny thickets which are hard on livestock. This cholla is very spiny so guard your fingers when planting.

There are several other chollas that will work in cold climates, along with a large variety of other cacti and succulents. For more information check out "Cacti and Succulents for Cold Climates" by Leo J. Chance, Timber Press, 2012. Don't forget to pick up pliers, tweezers and band-aids before planting.

Removing Cactus Spines

At some point, if you spent any time in the desert you



will be poked and/or stabbed by cactus spines. Some leave you with a small hole in the skin and a temporary ache. Others can result in you being miserable for days. So grit your teeth, prepare for

some pain, but there are solutions.

There are two different types of spines on a cactus. There are the impressive large spines that are readily visible. They range from the giant thick ones like on a barrel cactus to the thinner sharper ones on chollas. Some spines are barbed—some are not. Then there are very tiny ones that can look like soft fuzz. These are called glochids. No matter how soft and fuzzy something appears on cactus, do not touch it with your bare hands.

If you have a cholla joint attached to your clothing the easiest way to remove it is with a comb, preferably a large comb with a long handle (so you can avoid the spines) but any comb will do. Comb the joint out of the fabric. You will likely have to apply some force so don't get your hand close or accidentally flick the joint onto another part of your body or onto someone else.

If you can see the spines, use a pair of pliers or tweezers to remove them. It can be painful but if they aren't pulled the pain won't go away and they could become infected. If you have the misfortune to get covered in spines (see picture) I would suggest going to the emergency room or urgent care.

The tiny fine spines are difficult to see so getting them out with tweezers is possible but difficult. The recommended technique is to tweeze out as many as you can see and then use a thin layer of glue (like a white glue) covered with a piece of gauze. Let the glue dry and use the gauze to peel it away. Using products like adhesive tape, duct tape or a commercial face mask does not work as well and results in leaving spines in the skin and inflammation.

Another option is to use panty hose to remove small spines. Ball up the panty hose and rub it across the affected area. Move the panty hose around so you use a fresh area every few rubs. It may not remove all of them but will help if you have no glue handy. Clean the area with soap and water to help prevent infection once you get the spines out.

Meet A Master Gardener - Scholly Ketcher

by Lori Dekker



On a beautiful late summer afternoon, I met a Master Gardener with an English accent and a heart of gold. Yep, Scholly Ketcher is her name, and kids and gardens are her game. Scholly describes herself as a “jack of all trades and a master of none,” which to me seemed like a modest description

of a woman who has worked as a pediatric nurse (US and England), a preschool director (in England), a gardener with a wide range of plant interests, who also paints, cooks, manages the finances for Yavapai County Girl Scouts and actively volunteers as a Master Gardener. She managed to do all this while moving around the US and back and forth from England while raising two little girls. She and her husband, Duncan, a retired Boeing engineer, are hands-on Williamson Valley homeowners—in other words, they do lots of their own remodeling and landscaping.

She attributes her accomplishments to what her husband terms “enjoying messes.” She has always gardened, and like many of us, started with mud pies “frosted” with flower petals. Today she grows herbs, flowers, vegetables and potted plants, and is planning for a small fruit orchard. She and Duncan are slowly building raised beds and pathways around their large yard, because having grown up on the east coast of England, she has a love of English Cottage Gardens and would like to try one here in the arid South West—well, wouldn’t we all?

Scholly and Duncan have built their raised beds around a subterranean irrigation system that places perforated irrigation piping several inches below the surface of the soil. An envelope of pond liner encloses the bed a few inches or so below the pipes to provide a fairly closed system. On watering days she fills the system with water (and she says it

takes a lot) and when it tops off the water slowly, with kudos to capillary action, moves upward into the root zone. She says it’s not good for seedlings but a highly efficient way to use water for more established plants. An overflow mechanism prevents pooling and rot in the bed.

On the Master Gardener side of her life, Scholly spends two or more days a week tending and teaching in the Head Start Preschool garden, just around the corner from the Extension office. It’s a well-groomed but lush little patch filled with vegetables started from seed by the preschoolers



themselves. Tomatoes, radishes, and carrots join forces to teach city kids that our food comes from seed in the ground and is helped along by the labor of many. It’s a great and valuable lesson AND the tomatoes are sweet, to boot! In her off-hours (does this woman clean house or sleep?), Scholly manages the Chino Valley and Prescott Farmer’s Markets, and she’s always looking for help with those projects. Meeting Scholly Ketcher was a privilege and a joy. Any Master Gardener with an opportunity to meet her should do so, she’s a fun gal loaded

with great ideas and interesting stories. This reporter is hoping for scones and clotted cream at our next Master Gardener Association meeting!



Community Gardens – A Time-Honored Tradition

By Lori Dekker and Marti Griggs



Community gardens might seem like a modern concept, generated by the needs of an increasingly

urban population. In fact, they have been around for a very long time. The first American community garden was planted in 1759 in a Moravian settlement just outside of Winston Salem, North Carolina. Even then it was not a new idea, springing from an old English tradition of “allotment” plots where landowners rented plots to their landless neighbors for food production. The concept has evolved through a long and fascinating history.

Modern community gardens really took off in Detroit in the 1890’s. Educational and social reformers, as well as folks concerned with city beautification, pushed the idea of cooperative gardens as a way to assist the unemployed, and to teach civics and good work ethics to youth. As cities got more crowded, green spaces for food production were welcomed and community gardens flourished.

During World War I, in an effort to expand domestic food production, the federal government embarked on several efforts to make gardening a patriotic act. The Bureau of Education incorporated agriculture education into the public school curriculum with a program called the *United States School Garden Army*. There was also the War Garden Commission that called on citizens to become “soldiers of the soil” by planting *Liberty Gardens* and *War Gardens*.

The Great Depression brought hungry unemployed people to the fore. Community gardens were an obvious solution and agencies,

public and private, along with sympathetic individuals labored to provide growing space to the needy. By 1934 an amazing 23 million households were participating in cooperative gardening ventures and it’s postulated that \$36,000,000 (in 1930’s dollars) of food was privately produced in what became known as *Thrift Gardens*.

World War II rekindled the patriotic gardens campaign with *Victory Gardens* promoted as a means to improve health, recreation and morale. By 1944 nearly 20 million families with *Victory Gardens* produced 40 percent of the vegetables in the United States.

In the 1970’s, inner city decay, environmental concerns and Back-to-the-Land movements gave rise to another campaign to create viable community gardens. Not only were people worried about what they ate and how blighted their neighborhoods had become, there was a growing desire to connect and get to know one’s neighbors. Community gardens became a focus of local networking, increasing community involvement and developing community resources.

In the 21st century, the U.S. Department of Agriculture launched the *People’s Garden Initiative* by planting an urban garden on the National Mall and gardens throughout all fifty states. The concept is alive and well within Yavapai County with a wide variety of community gardens located in schools, parks, places of worship and community centers.

Calder Whitely, Director of Prescott Community Gardens, echoed the desire for the gardens to be a community hub, not only for food production, but also for education, socialization, community networking, and nutrition awareness. He is reaching out for support from local businesses and partnering with two local schools to assist with agricultural education. The gardens provide the “lab”





portion of the coursework. Students are learning basic biology, nutrition and food production and soon (hopefully) they will be taking their products to the Farmer's Market to

develop marketing skills.

Master Gardener Marianne Jimenez is Cottonwood's Community Gardens (CCG) Manager with 42 vegetable garden plots in Riverfront Park and a community fruit orchard on the Willard Street Extension. Many of the trees were donated by businesses, including local nurseries and there is a program for individuals to donate a tree to the orchard in memory of a loved one. Cottonwood joined in the *Let's Move* program initiated by First Lady Michelle Obama. The goals of the program are to encourage better eating habits, diminish childhood obesity and provide healthy, affordable food to the community. The CCG also strives to educate people in good garden practices and help people new to the area learn about gardening here. The biggest challenge for Marianne has been discouraged gardeners who are unprepared for the difficulties of gardening in the region. It takes a concerted and ongoing effort to keep people motivated.

Gardens for Humanity sponsors a variety of programs and projects in Sedona and the Verde Valley. These programs expand the traditional idea of cooperative gardens with an emphasis on education and environmental stewardship. Their projects include the Peace Garden at the Sedona Creative Life Center, the Big Park Butterfly Garden, the Sedona Winds Assisted Living accessible garden, the community garden at St. John Vianney Catholic Church and several school gardens in Sedona, Cornville, Camp Verde and Cottonwood. According to Richard Sidy, President, there are several opportunities for Master Gardeners to become involved. Other areas throughout the County are offering their local neighborhoods the "garden" experience, where the public can share in the value only a garden can bring.

No matter what they are called, community gardens have been an important part of American life - bringing people together, serving a variety of purposes and providing a place to share the love of gardening.

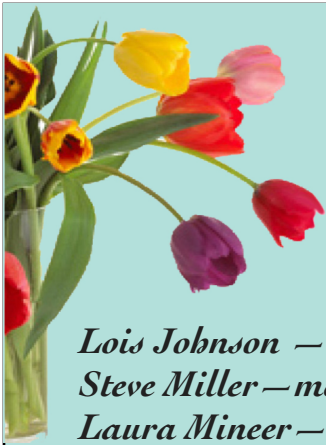
Potato Soup

I'm sitting here, the end of September and its' cloudy, cool and rainy out. Fall seems to arrived on schedule this year. We are usually still grumbling how hot it still is. There may be more days of heat yet to come but for today it seems like time for a nice soup to enjoy with the fall weather. I love potato soup and it is a really easy soup to make. So if you are looking for a hearty meal to get through the rain this could be it.

6 slices bacon (about 6 oz.), cut into 1-inch pieces
 1 onion, diced
 1 clove garlic, chopped
 1/8 teaspoon dried thyme
 3 baking potatoes (about 2 lb. total), peeled and cut into 1/2-inch pieces
 3 1/2 cups low-sodium chicken broth
 1 cup sour cream
 Salt and pepper
 2 tablespoons minced fresh chives

1. In a large pot over medium-high heat, cook bacon, stirring occasionally, until crisp and browned, 6 to 8 minutes. Transfer to paper towels to drain. When cool enough to handle, crumble.
2. Discard all but 2 Tbsp. fat and return pot to medium heat. Add onion, garlic and thyme and sauté until onion is soft, about 7 minutes. Add potatoes and broth; bring to a boil. Reduce heat to low; simmer until potatoes are tender, 12 to 15 minutes. Working in batches, process in blender with sour cream until smooth. Season with salt and pepper.
3. Ladle soup into bowls and top with chives and bacon.





Congratulations on completing 50 hours of volunteer service!

*Lois Johnson — mentor, Carol Young
Steve Miller — mentor, Suzette Russi
Laura Mineer — mentor, Jane Harrington
Carol Quasula — mentor, Linda Kimberly.*



Searching Yavapai Gardens

Looking for a topic or article in a past issue of the the newsletter? It's easy to do. In your search engine type in "Yavapai Gardens" and then your topic. For example: "Yavapai Gardens" propagation
You must put the quote marks around Yavapai Gardens.

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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MG NEWSLETTER



Next Meetings

October 8, MG Recognition Picnic
Dead Horse Ranch State Park, Cottonwood

Next Meeting: November 16, 6:30 pm, Prescott