

Yavapai Gardens

Master Gardener Newsletter

October—November 2021



Thinking about Pest Control

by Nora Graf

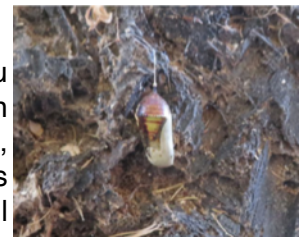


Chrysalis 1st day I found it.

People go slightly crazy over pests in their gardens, sometimes too much so, but I understand the compulsion to destroy. When you see the devastation that a tomato hornworm can cause or when the broccoli has turned to a grayish fuzz of aphids, the desire to get rid of the insect is almost overwhelming. The answer though is not to get out the sprayer and douse everything in pesticides. Step back, get a stout drink perhaps or sleep on the problem and come back later to assess the issue calmly or consider planning ahead of time ways to reduce problems.

Some things to consider....

Your expectations may be too high. You can't control everything, especially when it comes to nature. There is no perfect, simple, inexpensive way, whether its cost or time issues, to control everything. There are also few safe ways either. Even so-called organic methods sometimes have issues. There is a difference between what we want and what will actually happen. It is important to understand that action on your part may have serious unexpected consequences that you may not even notice.



Sept 26

You should be starting at the beginning to control pests, not just when you see them. Plan for pest problems the same way you plan your garden. What are the most vulnerable plants? What pest problems do you commonly have? What solutions can be built into your system? Can you encourage beneficial insects; can you discourage unwanted insects? Maybe rotating crops would help discourage pests. Will interplanting pollinator plants encourage beneficial insects? How about cleaning up garden litter at the end of the season to discourage insects that hide in the litter over the winter? Using a row cover to prevent access to the plants before they become infested works for many plants. And the big question is how much damage can you tolerate? I've seen quite a

Table of Contents

- Thinking About Pest Control . . . 1
- Storing Pumpkins & Squashes . . . 3
- The End is Near . . . 4
- Meet a MG—Nancy Christie . . . 5
- Summertime Blues . . . 6



Sleepy Sulfur (maybe)

number of people come in to the help desk with leaves that have a few yellow spots or damage that is just natural wear

and tear that leaves go through during the growing season. Be realistic about what's a real problem and something that is a minor cosmetic problem. The big consideration: Is it worth it to invest in a lot of time and money to "save" some plants? Maybe not. It depends on the gardener. As I've mentioned before I've become a pretty "laissez-faire" gardener. Almost everything in my garden is on its own except for watering and maybe pulling a few weeds.

Decisions to be made.....

Is the plant worth growing if you have to spend so much time and money on it? I gave up on broccoli because the aphid problem was horrific. It just didn't seem to be worth the constant effort to try and get rid of the aphids. Spraying it with water sort of worked but when I washed the harvested florets, a constant stream of aphids appeared in the water. I did not want to use any pesticides and so I finally dumped it all into the compost pile. Never really grew it again.

Carefully consider the use of pesticides. Gardeners use a lot of pesticides and the companies that make them work hard to convince you how safe they are for pets and children but they don't talk much about the trickle-down effect of pesticides. In a study that looked at soybeans, slugs, and beetles, scientists found that the pesticides that kill slugs were also killing beetles that fed on slugs. When you kill a caterpillar or larva you are not just killing the caterpillar you are removing, moths, butterflies, beetles, and



American Goldfinch

a lot of other insects from the ecosystem. After spending some time watching Sphinx moths feeding on morning glories, it's hard not to wonder how they are not much different than hummingbirds even if the caterpillars (hornworms) are pretty annoying. I hate

mosquitoes but bats eat mosquitoes. Pesticides aren't designed to kill fish but they certainly kill the insects they feed on. I don't mean this to be a rant against pesticides, I just want gardeners to fully consider the consequences of using pesticides and be a lot more careful when they are used. I read one study that estimated that 40% of all insects face extinction because of pesticides. And then what about all the animals that eat insects to survive?

Can you accept less than perfection? Holes in leaves are pretty common. A few holes in the leaves are no reason to rush to spray with something. Even if you plan on eating the leaves, a few holes shouldn't make any difference. A bit of scarring on fruit and vegetables doesn't mean you have to throw them all away and even holes from birds can just be cut away. Chances are they will still taste better than store-bought even though they have imperfections.

How much time do you want to spend seeking perfection? Now if you want to spend hours chasing down every bug and weed, that's fine. It certainly can be a relaxing and fun activity for some. How much money do you want to spend buying pesticides or various so-called miracle cures? Just think about it, perfection shouldn't always be a goal.

Protecting Pollinators from Pesticides

Adapted from a bulletin from the National Pesticide Information Center

<http://npic.orst.edu/envir/pollinator.html?fbclid=IwAR3GhjS8p6GETc918gFsDqJ7LxbxmTZzp41sw8wWO9y1qRvGq4HMHMjrjyHE>

As you might note from the article above I am a great believer in not using pesticides but I am also realistic and know that people will continue to use them. So, if you feel the need I hope you use some of the ideas below to help protect important pollinators.

If you have a pest problem try alternative methods first. This needs to be done by planning your landscape. Once the pests arrive you have limited options. The idea is to make your landscape more complex. Use a variety of plant types to create refuge areas you won't spray.

Having a complex landscape makes room for a variety of insects, both predator and prey insects hopefully keeping the damaging insects, not gone but at levels that don't decimate your plants. Include native plants in your yard. They don't all have to be

native but search for plants that attract pollinators and include them in the landscape. Just don't ever spray them.

Tips if you do spray

READ the insecticide label and **FOLLOW** the instructions. Especially **READ** the section Environmental hazards! Don't **EVER** think more is better!! Learn about



White Admiral

EXTENDED RESIDUAL

ACTIVITY. This is the amount of residue that may be harmful to pollinators. You can look up the active ingredient of the product (and since you have carefully read the label you should be able to find it on the container) using this website page.

<https://catalog.extension.oregonstate.edu/sites/catalog/files/project/pdf/pnw591.pdf>

DO NOT spray flowers directly.

DO NOT spray when pollinators are active. If you see butterflies and bees going from flower to flower, wait until later to spray.

Some pesticides come in granular or liquid form. Use the granular form. They leave less residue than liquid.

Get up close and personal to the plants you are spraying. In other words, don't stand at the highest point in your yard and wield the sprayer like a firehose. Minimize the drift of the product by getting close to the target.

Mosquitoes are horrible but the chemicals used in birdbaths and ponds can be toxic to many insects. (Pollinators have to drink too.) Read the label, some products may be better than others. I know you can't refill ponds every couple of days but for small birdbaths, dump out the old and put in new every few days. It takes approximately 10 days for larvae to develop into adults so emptying the old water and replacing it every 5 days or so will save the pollinators and reduce the mosquito population.

NPIC has several articles from universities, government agencies, and Cooperative Extension available on pesticides and pollinators. If you have questions about any pesticide-related topic, please call NPIC at 1-800-858-7378 (8:00 am - 12:00 pm PST), or email at npic@ace.orst.edu.

Storing Pumpkins and Squashes

Growing hard-shelled pumpkins and squashes for long-term storage should start with the varieties you select. I realize it's too late for that but here are some ideas to help keep your harvest this year.

Summer squash like zucchini, patty pan, and crooknecks will not store long so just eat those when harvested but the winter squash, those with hard shells, can be stored for quite a while in the right conditions. First, you need to have a hard rind. It's best to cut the woody stem of squash from the vine. Do not break the stem off. If that happens go ahead and cook the squash and freeze it for future use. Leaving the stem on prolongs the lifespan of the stored squash. The stem should be about 3 to 4 inches long especially on pumpkins. Typically, pumpkins don't last as long in storage as other squash. Be gentle handling them. Any injuries, bruising, and cuts in the rind will cause the squash to spoil quickly. Curing the squash after picking will help lengthen storage times. But the recommendation is to place them in an environment of 80 to 85°F with a humidity of 80-85%. I'm not sure where you could find an environment in Arizona like that but if you can it may help prolong the storage time. The best thing here would be to cut the squash from the vine. Don't pile the squash; you should have room to lay the squash out so none touch each other and let them dry for a few days until moving into your storage space. Dry surfaces are important.

Get them protected before the cold weather hits. These are not cold weather vegetables and once the temperature goes below 50°F for a week or if they are left out during rain periods they will quickly spoil even if they are protected. (Not a huge chance of that around here but you never know. It's been a bit of an odd year when it comes to rain).

The temperature in storage matters, 50-55°F is probably ideal, 60°F is ok. If you can keep them between 70 and 80% humidity. I understand this is not Oregon but do the best you can. If temperatures drop below 50°F the squash will begin to deteriorate quickly. You need good air circulation. Do Not Stack! The surface of the squash must remain dry. If you can, store on open shelves rather than storing on the floor or ground. If you have to store them on the ground, turn them frequently so they will stay dry. Do not store next to ripening fruit like apples or pears. The ethylene gas given off by the fruit will cause the squash to yellow and shorten the storage life.

Information I found from Oregon State University Extension shows that immersing the

Continued on page 4

The End is Near

by Nora Graf



Moving On!

Twenty-seven years plus a few months ago I started this newsletter. Well not exactly started, there was a one-page newsletter that would be sent out once in a while to the Master Gardeners. I was a new member of the Master Gardener program and was looking for projects to do. I started out at our version of the help desk. There was no desk and no mentors. I would get a call from someone that had called the Extension office looking for answers to some gardening problems. Back then I got to drive out in person to look at the problem. I have to admit that seeing the issue is easier than trying to understand from a skimpy description and out-of-focus picture. It was interesting, I still tell stories about some of the things I saw but it was also difficult because I wasn't always confident I got the answer right. At some point, I asked the agent at the time, Deborah Young, if I could work on the newsletter. She approved and I plunged into it hook, line and sinker. It was a monthly newsletter and I typed it on a typewriter and cut and taped down pictures and then we ran it off on a copy machine and stapled, folded, and stamped it and even dropped it off at the post office. I had many wonderful volunteers who helped out with it and it was more fun than it probably sounds. Computers made it easier finally and the internet made it easier still and cheaper to produce but I always kind of missed going into the office every month to run off copies.

While I have enjoyed it most of the time, the deadlines have been killing me for several years now. I've become less a gardener and more of an observer of my landscape. I think most people would be horrified with my yard but it does nourish a host of

insects, butterflies, moths, birds and unfortunately gophers which were the final straw for keeping any semblance of a garden going. The let-it-alone policy has been worth it; this is the first year I've found a monarch chrysalis on my property and the lizards are back and so are tons of tiny iridescent flies and lots of other surprises.

I have finally decided it's time to quit writing the newsletter. This is the second to last Yavapai Gardens. I will finish up my tenure with the December-January issue. There will still be a newsletter. Yavapai Connections will continue keeping you informed of what is going on.

It has been everything from a massive headache to pure joy over the years. I learned a lot from doing it. I know more about plants and gardening than I ever expected. It challenged me all the time, mostly trying to find something new to write about and humbled me when I realized that I was completely wrong about things, which was more often than I would have liked.

Thanks for letting me do this for so long.

Pumpkin Squashes cont.

squash in water at 135-140°F for three minutes, then removing them and drying the surface immediately may improve storage as it helps kill microorganisms on the skin. Drying is less an issue here than in Oregon because of our low humidity but it is important if you try this to make sure the skins are completely dry. Chlorination seems to have no effect on this process so don't add bleach to the water. If you don't want to deal with hot water, wiping down the skin with 10 parts water to 1 part bleach may be helpful.

Storage times. These are if you have almost perfect conditions. Time may vary depending how they are stored:

- Acorn ... 1 to 2 months
- Butternut ... 2 to 3 months
- Hubbard ... 3 to 6 months
- Banana or Turban types ... 3 to 6 months

Pumpkin varieties:

- Jack O' lantern ... 2 to 3 months
- Connecticut Field ... 2 to 3 months

Meet A Master Gardener—Nancy Christie

By Linda Guy Photograph by Scolly Ketcher

As a career environmental educator both employed by and on the boards of several nonprofits over the years, New Hampshire Nancy Christie (MG class of 2015) has led a fascinating life that epitomizes the word “service.” Whether addressing a landscape or life in general, Nancy’s advice is invariably to “have some goals, make a plan, track your progress, modify as needed!”

Growing up in a 1783 Cape Cod-style farmhouse (barn long gone) on 30 acres in a town of 500, Nancy’s love of the earth and all things “nature” was kindled and nurtured.

She fondly remembers helping her parents in their ½-acre vegetable garden: planting, thinning, weeding, hauling sawdust from an old sawdust pile on the property (the result of a lumbering operation in bygone days), and harvesting.

In the 1960s, a five-year work-study bachelor’s program in environmental biology from Antioch College (Ohio) led to a variety of experiences around the country, including the thrill of becoming the first female seasonal Ranger Naturalist at Isle Royale National Park in Michigan’s Lake Superior, where she was expected to wear a skirt and heels for 3-mile hikes (she wore boots). She was reprimanded for having written a note to Lady Bird Johnson asking that pants and boots be included in the female Ranger’s uniform.

Nancy worked for years at the Schuylkill Center for Environmental Education in Philadelphia, inspiring meaningful connections between people of all ages and the environment. Returning to her home state in 1996, Nancy’s final job was as the Executive Director of the New Hampshire Lakes Association, with the mission of protecting the state’s 1,000 lakes. She is justifiably proud of her organization having led the effort to stop the use of lead fishing sinkers, responsible for so many loon deaths, and initiating the Lake Host program to keep invasive species such as milfoil out of the lakes.

Desiring a retirement in the West, she and husband Noel DeSousa found Prescott during a two-



year search, a town reminiscent of their New England roots with its central square, Victorian homes, and natural surroundings. They moved to a property near Copper Basin Road in 2011 and immediately began installing both active and passive rainwater harvesting systems, which have grown to 1,700-gallon capacity. Nancy’s goal has been to complement her mature juniper-pine landscape with additional natives and naturalized plantings, adding color and providing food and shelter for birds and all manner of wildlife, with which the couple tries to peaceably coexist. Xeric gardening and

composting are givens.

In light of her considerable science and education background, Nancy is particularly suited to share her experiences with native gardening, composting, and rainwater harvesting with the public at the Prescott Farmers Market. She’s also quick to share tales of her gardening challenges, confessing a 50% survival rate, quite a frustration with plants that grow here naturally, after all. But the scientist in her invariably

kicks in as she tries to determine the problem: Too little water? Too much? A difficult winter? Disease? Gophers? Always when planting natives, she tries to mimic the conditions under which she finds the plants growing in nature.

With well over 600 hours of volunteering with the MGA, Nancy has also been involved with the Yavapai County Fair and the Logistics Committee for Monsoon Madness. She recently served for two years as MGA Treasurer. Nancy keeps current by attending guided wildflower and native plant hikes, meetings of the Arizona Native Plant Society and Citizens Water Advocacy Group (she is a member of both) and the annual Native Plant Workshop offered by Keep Sedona Beautiful.

She is a past member of the Highlands Center Development Committee, and the boards of Prescott Creeks Preservation Association and the Granite Mountain Interagency Hotshot Crew Learning and Tribute Center. Hiking, tent camping, bird watching, canoeing, and travel to all the beautiful state and national parks and forests round out her interests and very active life.

Summertime Blues

by Nora Graf

This article appeared in the October 2003 issue of Yavapai Gardens and after such a hot summer I think it still applies—with a few small changes. I liked this article when I wrote it and still like it today. Life has certainly changed since then, so forgive the reference to pencil and paper but it's still relevant.

I was talking with some Master Gardeners one day and discovered, like me, they sometimes were just waiting to rip their garden up. We were tired of weeding, we were tired of watering, we were tired of tomatoes (probably an exaggeration) and zucchini (not an exaggeration) and having to deadhead, fertilize, and generally pay attention to what was going on outside. We really are waiting for the first frost to come and kill everything so we no longer had to worry about it. We are waiting for winter.

Unfortunately for many of us, winter doesn't necessarily mean the end of growing here. Our mild temperatures allow us to grow some things year-round. No blessing of a deep snow cover here. Nothing to hide the bare ground unless you put in winter grass. Many people think we are blessed with our mild winter weather. We are not blessed if we have to mow year-round!

Are you begging to rip up those bold and bright but tiresome marigolds? Does the thought of another red ripe tomato just exhaust you? Have you muttered under your breath (perhaps even out loud—gasp!) that you just don't care if the weeds take over? Well, join the crowd. Gardening can be exhausting and tiresome. It is a lot of work that never seems to end some days. But fall is on the way, the days are noticeably shorter, the mornings not as warm and, while the tomatoes may still be blooming, you know there will not be enough time, heat, and sunshine for them to ripen. Does this mean you are going to rush out at the first report of frost and cover your plants? Probably but by the third frost, you may not even care that you didn't remember to cover them in time. It's become the survival of the fittest at this point. You are just glad for the break. Pull up the dead stuff, maybe



Is it winter yet?

mulch a little, and go inside and enjoy a cup of coffee and read the newspaper. It's time for a break from garden tyranny.

Of course, it isn't long before those new catalogs start coming. When they arrive, you cautiously set them on the table, perhaps you walk around them a

few days, but then in a moment of weakness or a moment to spare, you sit down, flip open the cover. The large sucking sound you may hear is the sound of your brain succumbs to spring fever. Out comes the pencil and pad. Wow, isn't that a spectacular new salvia, those new colors of petunias would work well in the window box. Maybe those pansies would look good in the window box too.

Then there is the new tomato, the new green pepper, the new cucumber all begging to be tried.

Slowly, like a tiny seedling pushing through the soil, the need to garden spreads through the brain. By Christmas, new ideas are being mentally incorporated into the landscape, seed and plant orders are prepared. Maybe you have even cleaned and sharpened the gardening tools.

January arrives and the seed orders are mailed. On our often-beautiful winter days, you find yourself wandering in your yard. Perhaps if I move this over there. That coreopsis might do better if it was planted on the other side of the house. What about a fruit tree here; you know they will be arriving in the nurseries soon.

By February, full-blown spring fever has arrived, in spite of the time of the year; you are yearning for a fresh ripened tomato. You find yourself haunting the garden centers, knowing that any moment that truck will arrive with instant spring in it. The bare root trees need to be purchased now, the window of opportunity is small for the best choices.

By March you have entirely forgotten how you felt in September just waiting to yank things out of the ground and get the gardening season over. This is a sign of a true gardener.



Congratulations

for completing your first 50 hours

*Stephen Lovejoy – Marty Boxer
Craig Courtemanche – Paula Lund*

*Dawn Kraul – mentor is Scholly Ketcher
Kathy Siemers – mentor is Leigh Ann Frankel
Linda King – mentor is Peggy Stair
Sarah Amyotte – mentor is Maria Goodman*



Varigated Fritillary

All the pictures of butterflies and birds were taken in my yard. Thanks to the rain, it was a butterfly paradise this year. Nora Graf

Yavapai Gardens Searches

Because the Yavapai Gardens newsletters are on our website as pdf files, they are not searchable. However, the specific horticulture topics found in each newsletter are now noted next to the newsletter link. Hopefully this will help if you are looking for a particular subject. Thank you Jo Graves and Kim Corcoran for compiling the data. <https://extension.arizona.edu/yavapai-gardens-newsletters>

2020 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.

Nora Graf
mesquite2@hotmail.com
PO Box 3652
Camp Verde, AZ 86322
928-567-6703



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

Prescott Office
840 Rodeo Dr. Building C
Prescott, AZ 86305
928-445-6590
MG Help Desk 928-45-6590 ext 222

Camp Verde Office
2830 Commonwealth Dr #103.
Camp Verde, AZ 86322
928-554-8999
MG Help Desk 928-554-8992

Issued in furtherance of Cooperative Extension work, acts of May 8 and June 30, 1914, in cooperation with the U.S. Department of Agriculture, Jeffrey C. Silvertooth, Associate Dean & Director, Extension & Economic Development, Division of Agriculture, Life and Veterinary Sciences, and Cooperative Extension, The University of Arizona.

The University of Arizona is an equal opportunity, affirmative action institution. The University does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, religion, sex, national origin, age, disability, veteran status, sexual orientation, gender identity, or genetic information in its programs and activities.

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

MG NEWSLETTER



Next Meetings

Meetings continue to be online. Watch for Mary Barnes emails for information.

