What’s Your Fall Festival Story?

By Jo Cook

On October 28th plant growers and lovers descended on the campus of Metro Tech High School for the Fall Festival and Plant Sale. Elements of garden treasures and enticing activities covered the Metro Tech campus sprinkled around the Metro Tech High School and Master Gardener-grown plants. More than 1,000 visitors from all over the Valley were welcomed to the Fall Festival and Plant Sale.

What were some of the best things about the Fall Festival?

- Watching plants fly off the table as guests descend on the plant sale. The plants don’t fly but some of the buyers seemed to in the process of selecting and buying more than 1,000 plants!

- Counting the number of oooohs, aaaaaahs, and the occasional gasp over the plants donated by Master Gardeners.

- Great interactions between Master Gardeners and the public.

These interactions are exactly what makes the Master Gardener program the vibrant community resource for which it is known; an exciting group of volunteers who take adult education very seriously and want to share their passion for gardening by educating their communities. What makes this happen? Master Gardeners.

One of the elements that is most gratifying about the Fall Festival and Plant Sale is the participation of the Master Gardener Trainees called Interns. At Fall Festival time Interns are just completing their 17-week intensive training to become Certified Master Gardeners. Throughout Intern training facets of plant identification, selection, and propagation bring focus to preparations for the plant sale. Propagation classes, hands-on demonstrations during other classes, and the sage advice of their mentors prepare the Interns for identifying, growing and studying the plants they donate to the Plant Sale. When a Master Gardener or Intern donates a plant they receive one half of the retail price to shop the plant sale.

This Fall Festival had something for everyone; plants were in evidence everywhere including those grown by Metro Tech Horticulture students, and local vendors. The shoppers enjoyed vendors selling everything from soap to wind chimes, handmade greeting cards to a knife sharpener. The Master Gardener hosted Rummage Sale was a big hit as was the sale of Master Gardener planting calendars, soil probes and Master Gardener Press books.

Another wonderful year and another amazing event. We could not have done it without the help of our incredible Master Gardener Volunteers.
Arizona Agriculture Literacy Days

By Brandon Moak

It is that time of year for Arizona Agriculture Literacy Days, an event provided by CALS-CE Ag Literacy program that focuses on educating students about people’s connection to agriculture and the commodities produced on Arizona’s lands. Many youth are unaware that many products they use and eat come from what farmers and ranchers grow and often think that it magically appears in the stores.

To volunteer, contact a nearby elementary school teacher and introduce him/her to Arizona Agriculture Literacy Days. Be sure to explain that each participating classroom will receive a free copy of Arizona Agriculture: Bee’s Amazing Adventure. Register at https://cals.arizona.edu/agliteracy/AZ-Ag-Lit-Days in order to receive a copy to read and donate to a classroom. Volunteers do not need a background in agriculture to participate in the program. Arizona Agriculture Literacy Days is held every year in the fall with a special emphasis during the three days before Thanksgiving. The 12th annual event runs from October 16–December 15.

Through the culmination of months of research and careful concept development, Arizona Agriculture: Bee’s Amazing Adventure introduces children in grades K-4 to the Grand Canyon State’s diverse agricultural industry. Authored by Bonnie Apperson Jacobs and Terri Mainwaring and published in cooperation with The University of Arizona College of Agriculture and Life Sciences Cooperative Extension (CALS-CE) and Maricopa County Farm Bureau (MCFB), Arizona Agriculture: Bee’s Amazing Adventure contains interesting facts and captivating photography —complete with a glossary and curriculum guide. This children’s book accurately captures Arizona’s irrigated farming and high desert ranching. It helps students develop a deeper understanding of and appreciation for Arizona’s farmers and ranchers and the many diverse products they bring to the market, including plants that beautify homes and businesses.
On Wednesday, October 11, Master Gardeners were treated to a tour of the amazing Farm at South Mountain. The weather smiled on us as we walked through the incredible commercial vegetable gardens of The Farm under the leadership of Farm Manager Greg Brownell. A smaller group of MGs learned about the Farm’s educational venture in collaboration with the Arizona State University’s School of Sustainability and The Southwest Institute of the Healing Arts.

Greg Brownell led the eager group through ...... acres of neat rows of vegetables and flowers, which are grown to provide produce for The Farm’s three restaurants and its catering business, Santa Barbara Catering Company. At the moment, arugula, Asian greens, beets, chard, fennel, kale and radish are being planted, as we learned from a handy blackboard set outside a shed where seedlings were waiting in their small pots for transplantation.

The Farm uses mostly natural methods to control insects and increase yield, including planting rows of zinnias and other flowers chosen to repel pests and attract pollinators. It is also actively experimenting with hydroponics. ASU student interns Leah Castle and Collin Mieras showed us the clever closed growing system whereby goldfish in a constantly aerated barrel excrete nutrients which are fed into a pond containing guppies. The guppies nip on the roots of lettuce, chives, and cabbage planted in floating foam boards punched with holes about two inches in diameter. The guppies’ appetite encourages the plants to grow faster, as does the fertilizer produced by the fish waste. That water is cleaned by being pumped to another barrel and the cycle begins again. So far, this system is only experimental, and will be used as part of the education curriculum being developed by Leah and Collin.

The interns’ plan for the Learning Garden, which will be open to school groups, is for raised planter beds, a labyrinth, a chicken and/or pheasant run, planters filled with medicinal herbs and a pergola planted with cooling vines. One of the purposes of the Learning Garden will be teach Phoenix residents that planting and caring for a food garden need not break the budget. Walkways will be made of recycled bricks, old milk cartons will house sweet plants to attract pollinators, benches will be made from two by fours laid over concrete blocks.

This garden will also teach principles and practice of composting. A worm composting system is already working successfully. In the ingenious system, worms are fed vegetable and fruit scraps from The Farm’s kitchens in one bin. That bin is attached to another with holes through which the worms migrate when they have composted the first bin into “black gold”. They’re on to the next feast of decaying plant material, and on they go to a third bin. In the meantime, the soil in the first and second bins matures, with microbes finishing the work the worms started.

“In Arizona, the problem with vermicomposting is heat,” says Leah. “That’s why we’ve placed our worm bins under the shade of citrus trees.”

In addition to growing organic produce, The Farm uses it in its three restaurants, the upscale Quiessence, the breakfast café, Morning Glory, and lunch time favorite, The Farm Kitchen. The Farm is also busy hosting weddings and corporate events, and holds classes several times a week. For shoppers, small gifts and fragrances can be found at Botanica, the charming gift shop located near Quiessence and Morning Glory. www.thefarmatsouthmountain.com.

At the end of the tour, The Farm treated us to a magnificent lunch. Thank you, Greg Brownell, Leah, Collin and the entire staff of The Farm at South Mountain! As Master Gardener Linda Rominger said, it was a “delightful tour of an idyllic garden spot.”
AmeriCorps Volunteer: Christina Lopez

By Elisabeth Williams

The Roosevelt Early Childhood Family Resource Center (FRC) is a bustling place, full of families, young children and energy. Families come to the FRC for many reasons such as looking for community resources, attending a workshop or spending time with their children in a fun, educational environment. However, for some people like Americorps volunteer, Christina Lopez, the FRC offers a place to give back to their community and neighborhood.

Christina grew up in Tempe and has lived near the Maricopa County Extension Office for 40+ years. She had a long career with Blue Cross Blue Shield of Arizona for 37 years but retired from full-time work in 2013. After her husband passed away, Christina found herself wanting to get involved in her community and thought Americorps might be a good opportunity to try something new. Christina wanted to learn and experience something different. In her role as an Americorps volunteer at the FRC, each day brings something new to Christina. Some days are filled with chatty mothers who are looking for company and a cup of coffee. Other days bring exuberant children who want to play games and build castles with her. Still other days are focused on administrative tasks like helping to manage the data from workshops and classes offered at the FRC.

Christina simply says that volunteering at the FRC gives her something to look forward to each day. “I enjoy helping Gina and Carlo with their activities, meeting new families, watching the children and making new friends. I feel like I am contributing, at least a little bit. And that is important to me.”

From Tim to Timinator: A 4-H Volunteer’s Story of Stardom

By Robin Etnyre

For 23 years Tim Lonchar has called Intel Corporation his home. Upon retirement, the company provided a unique opportunity which allows Tim to be a paid volunteer to share his years of knowledge and experience with a deserving organization. As a dedicated 4-H volunteer, Tim turned his focus to the youth of Maricopa County.

Using 4-H curriculum, Tim embarked on an endeavor sharing his love for science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) with youth throughout the Phoenix metropolitan area. Starting several afterschool Special Interest (SPIN) clubs, Tim has provided direct education on robotics and electricity to a group of youth that 4-H has not reached this decade, opening the doors for them to explore new avenues.

Upon the completion of his Intel Fellow, Tim was not done impacting the leaders of tomorrow, and pursued a position as an AmeriCorps volunteer serving Maricopa County 4-H’s revamped new delivery modes program, where he started his fifth robotics SPIN Club at Holdeman Elementary School in Tempe, a school that use to host a 4-H club many years ago.

Through hard work and patience, Tim has developed several STEM kits which are easily transported into the school and provide hours of hands on educational experience. Youth learn through the 4-H supported method, called the Experiential Learning Model, which promotes youth to learn through adult mentorship and self-discovery.

Tim’s love for sharing his many passions is gratefully welcomed by the youth with whom he interacts. Their appreciation is proven by the many endearing nicknames they have bestowed on him, including the Timinator, Timmy Neutron, and Mr. T, and their bright-eyed reactions when he enters the room!

Maricopa County 4-H is eager for Tim’s expertise and are excited to see what else his passions will drive him to bring to our county!
The Director’s Cut

By Ed Martin

Fall is finally here! It’s not the temperatures outside that first alerts me, it’s our own Master Gardener (MG) team that is my first sign of Fall. The classes have started, the MG Help Desk is busier than ever, and the entire office is buzzing with conversations about plants and fertilizers and soil. I want to thank Yvonne Cooper and her crew – too many to name here – for the outstanding job they have done in keeping our program moving forward. A big thanks to all our MG volunteers for their continued support.

Our SNAP-Ed program is busy with school programs and visits, and is expanding into the area of school gardens. The SNAP-Ed team has been coordinating with our Master Gardeners and working hard to address all the requests we are getting for school gardens. The EFNEP program continues to reach out into communities throughout the county to assist adults in learning about healthy lifestyles and nutrition. Our Turf program has been working with managers on winter grasses and the Field Crops program is harvesting and getting ready for winter plantings. Dr. Ayman Mostafa, our Area Field Crops IPM Agent, received a new appointment as a Regional Specialist with the UA Department of Entomology. Congratulations, Ayman! Our 4-H staff are going strong and starting to make in-rows in new areas within the county by working closer with after school programs. They also made a push to expand our club programs and overall, we are seeing an increase in 4-H participation. Our annual Agricultural Literacy Days is being held October 16 thru December 15. The Roosevelt Early Childhood Family Resource Center is moving along at full stride and have recommitted their efforts on their outdoor classroom. Finally, I hope everyone had a chance to attend our Fall Plant sale at Metro Tech High School on October 28th. Each year the event grows bigger and better!

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Pest Management & Pesticide Safety Seminar: Day 1
When: Nov 15 & 16 7:30am - 2:00pm
Where: See Link for Location
Day 2 Information: https://extension.arizona.edu/pest-management-and-pesticide-safety-seminar-november-16th

Master Gardener Plant Clinic
When: Nov 15 9:00am - 10:30am
(3rd Wed Every Month)
Where: Maricopa County Cooperative Extension
More Information: https://extension.arizona.edu/master-gardener-monthly-plant-clinic

DIG: The Transplanted Gardener
When: Nov 16 6:00pm - 8:00pm
Where: Maricopa County Cooperative Extension
More Information: https://extension.arizona.edu/transplanted-gardener-desert-institute-gardening

MAC Family Farm Day
When: Nov 18 10:00am - 2:00pm
Where: Maricopa Agricultural Center (MAC)
More Information: https://extension.arizona.edu/mac-family-farm-day

Late Season Field Day
When: Nov 22 9:00am - 11:30am
Where: A Tumbling T Ranches
More Information: https://extension.arizona.edu/late-season-field-day-o

Good & Bad Water on Turfgrass
When: Nov 29 8:00am - 12:00pm
Where: Maricopa County Cooperative Extension
More Information: https://extension.arizona.edu/good-bad-water-turfgrass-finding-harmonious-union

Family Resource Center - Parent-Child Interaction Classes
Where: Roosevelt Family Resource Center

12th Annual Desert Turf School
Application Deadline: December 1
More Information: https://extension.arizona.edu/12th-annual-desert-turf-school

Maricopa County Cooperative Extension Monthly Event Calendar
http://extension.arizona.edu/maricopa

Check us out at:
https://www.facebook.com/MaricopaCountyCooperativeExtension

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