



The Desert Garden Buzz

Summer 2023

*prepared by SaddleBrooke &
SaddleBrooke Ranch Master Gardeners*



Hello from the Editors!

This is the first edition of our new newsletter. Each quarter, we will be sharing information to help our friends and neighbors in South East Pinal County with their gardens and landscapes. We are very excited about our newsletter and hope that you will be too.

We would love to hear from you! If you have any suggestions or questions, our email address is: DesertGardenBuzz@gmail.com or use the contact us link above.

Please feel free to share this newsletter with others.

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Lastly, we want to sincerely thank everyone who assisted us: Amanda Rice, Barb Diliiegghio, Barb Nicolich, Ellen Sosin, Glenna Matthews, Jeff Laub, Laurie McCoy, Linda Vautrin-Hale, Rob Rizk, and Roxanne Watson.

Happy gardening!

Your editors: Laurie Foster & Shirley DeCarufel



Upcoming Presentations

The SaddleBrooke & SaddleBrooke Ranch Master Gardeners Community Education Committee is taking a summer hiatus from our zoom and in-person presentations. We will have no educational presentations in June, July and August. We are excited to begin our presentations in September!

Here's a taste of our upcoming season:

**Sept 13, 2023 Wednesday @ 1:00 pm - zoom:
Bighorn and Bush Fire Saguaro Cacti Restoration
by Jonathan Horst, Director of Conservation and Research
at Tucson Audubon Society**

We have an exciting Zoom presentation schedule for September. Jonathan Horst will share the recent history of the hundreds of thousands of saguaro cacti that were lost in the Bighorn and Bush Fires in 2020 and how a major project is underway to restore those lost and protect those that remain. Hundreds of animal, bird, and insect species make their homes in saguaros and feed on the nectar and flowers when food sources become scarce in the heat of summer; preservation of saguaros is essential to their existence. Tucson Audubon Society is also working with multiple groups, including Northern Arizona University, Universidad Nacional Autonoma de Mexico, University of Arizona, and Desert Botanical Gardens on binational saguaro common garden experiments getting underway this summer for long-term saguaro restoration.

To register for this zoom presentation please use the following link:

https://arizona.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_-3PCmVJfRMupnPilDdmKBg

**Oct 11, 2023 Wednesday @ 1:00 pm - zoom:
Irrigation Basics by Dale Suter**

Our October presentation is not to be missed. Many of us take our irrigation systems for granted, until they stop working. Dale Suter is an avid gardener and a longtime Arizona resident. He retired after spending more than 30 years in the public sector. Over the years he has designed and installed multiple irrigation systems. Two of his larger projects include expanding the irrigation system at Life Under the Oaks Lavender Farm and designing and installing over a mile of irrigation at the Oracle Community Learning Garden. His presentation will provide a basic overview of residential irrigation systems, including tips on how to design and maintain these systems.

To register for this zoom presentation please use the following link:

https://arizona.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_YAmsGv39TB2iXTETGYnbZg

**Nov 8, 2023 Wednesday @ 1:00 pm - in person:
Birds of our Area by Jim Hoagland**

Jim Hoagland will be sharing his experiences and photos of birds of our area.

Registration is not open for this presentation yet, but this should be a wonderful talk, so we wanted to let you know to mark it on your calendars.



**Helping Your Plants
Cope With Summer**

*by Laurie Foster,
SB/SBR Master Gardener*

It's 110 degrees. My plants are so hot they are wilting. I bet a cool drink of water will help.

This is often our thought process during the summer. Sometimes it is a good idea, but most of the time it isn't. Understanding why it is not always a good idea to give plants more water means understanding how plants naturally cope with our Arizona summers.

Just like people, plants don't want to do much of anything when it is extremely hot or cold. Thus they are not putting out lots of energy to grow and blossom. So the regular summer watering amount is usually enough. Also plants not only ease back in the summer, but they have other methods of helping themselves to cope with the heat. Because plants can lose a lot of water through evaporation from their leaves, many plants try to minimize the amount of sun on them. Plants like cacti reduce the size of their leaves to spines for minimal water loss. The jojoba bush leaves grow upright to minimize the amount of sun on them. Many plants grow a coating to protect themselves which accounts for the green-gray color of certain bushes. Mostly, plant leaves will wilt to reduce the size of the leaf which in turn reduces the amount of sun on the leaf.

Sometimes wilting leaves can be a sign the plant needs some human intervention in the form of watering. However, don't grab the hose or watering can immediately unless you know that the plant has not been watered recently. Remember, more plants will die from rotting roots due to overwatering than will die from the heat of the summer. It is best to wait until twilight to see if the leaves bounce back up when the sun is off them. If they do, then no additional water is needed, and your regular watering schedule can be maintained. If the leaves do not revive, then some

additional water will usually help. If the leaves need extra water several days in a row, you might want to think about amending your watering schedule if that is at all possible.

Assisting the plants to minimize the amount of sun on them can also come in the form of shade. Plants in pots can be moved to a shadier location or patio furniture can be rearranged to cast shadows on some of the plants. Plants in the ground do well with shade cloth put over them. Most plants will do well with 50% or less cloth meaning that it blocks 50% or less of the sun's rays. The plant will stay cooler with a knitted, rather than woven, cloth and one that is colored white to reflect the heat. It is also best to allow air movement around the plant by not allowing the shade cloth to lie directly on the plant. Draping the cloth over a few sticks pushed into the ground around the plant and using a few rocks to hold the cloth down will work easily for a plant that is not too large.

Mulch also works well to keep roots cooler. A 3 inch layer of tree bark, straw, dead leaves, or any other type of mulch will help cool the ground.

Help your plants stay cool this summer, but not always with water.



Summer Gardening Tips

Cactus

Summer is the growing season for cacti, so bump up the watering to once a month. You can use cactus fertilizer- follow the directions on your product. Be sure to cut back on the water when the monsoons start. During monsoons, the humidity in the air makes it a good time to plant new cacti or transplant old ones.

Reference- Cactus, Agave, Yucca, and Ocotillo AZ1225

<https://extension.arizona.edu/pubs/cactus-agave-yucca-ocotillo>

Citrus

During the summer, citrus will need to be fertilized once. Oranges and grapefruit need to be fertilized in May to June, while lemons and limes are fertilized a bit later in August to September. Citrus should not ever receive more than a light pruning and that should be done in spring. However, minor pruning can still be done to remove sprouts, to open the tree up to sunlight in its interior, or to remove unwanted individual branches. To set the best fruit, the trees should be kept uniformly moist. If trees are less than 1 year old, they should be watered every 2 to 7 days, and if they are over 1 year old, watering should take place every 7-14 days. Be sure to cut back when the monsoons start.

Reference- Pruning Citrus AZ1455

<https://extension.arizona.edu/pubs/pruning-citrus>

Irrigating Citrus Trees AZ1151

<https://extension.arizona.edu/pubs/irrigating-citrus-trees>

Pruning

The best time to prune most plants is in the late winter and early spring. In summer plants use their energy to survive the heat and should not be stressed by pruning. Plants always do better when allowed to maintain their natural shape but can be lightly pruned any time of year to remove dead, diseased, or damaged branches as well as branches that are growing erratically.

Reference- Pruning shrubs in the Low and Mid-Elevation Desserts in Arizona AZ1499
<https://extension.arizona.edu/pubs/pruning-shrubs-low-mid-elevation-deserts-arizona>

Irrigation

Plants will need extra irrigation during the summer until the monsoons start. As a general rule, annuals should be watered to a depth of 6 inches, perennials and small shrubs should be watered to a depth of 1 foot, and large shrubs to a depth of 2 feet. Mature trees should be watered to 3 feet deep. Emitters are best placed around the canopy or outside of the plant rather than at the stem or trunk. The length of time to water depends on the number of emitters you have and how many gallons of water per hour they emit. Test the soil to see how moist it is after watering by pushing a metal or wooden rod or long screwdriver into the soil as far as possible.

Vegetables

Your summer vegetables should be growing and producing. Continue watering. Renew mulch if necessary. Cool-season vegetables include beets, broccoli, cabbage, carrots, lettuce, onions, peas, potatoes, radishes, spinach, and turnips. They can be started as seedlings indoors in late summer and planted in fall, winter, or early spring depending on location.

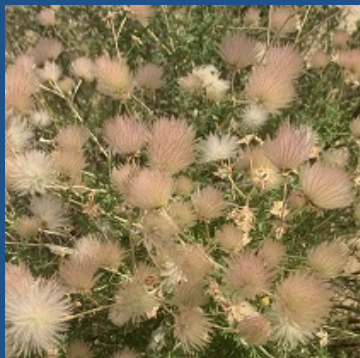
Reference- 10 Steps to a Successful Vegetable Garden AZ1435

<https://extension.arizona.edu/pubs/ten-steps-successful-vegetable-garden>

Note- The publications listed above are only a few of the many publications sponsored by the University of Arizona. Please go to

<https://extension.arizona.edu/pubs>

and put in your topic for more detailed information.



Plant of the Quarter:

Apache Plume

Apache plume, *Fallugia paradoxa*, is one of the showiest of our native plants. It has small white flowers resembling single rose blooms that appear in spring and continue

into the fall. The flowers then become short, inch long, velvety plumes that are pale pink/purple and persist on the bush for most of the winter. This plant gives the appearance of blooming with either flowers or seed plumes and will dress up your yard for the entire year. A great plant for snowbirds who like something of interest in their yard in the winter.

It is an upright, multi-branched shrub that can become large or kept smaller with less water. The small dark green leaves (silver beneath) are not very conspicuous but add a great contrast to the flowers and fruits. It is semi deciduous, but the leaves are too small to create much litter. The plumes, which are said to resemble an Apache headdress, give the bush its name. They also create very little litter because they are compact and do not blow in the wind. The bush will tolerate our alkaline soil and is a moderate to rapid grower.

Size	3-6 feet tall and 4-8 feet wide
Bloom	White flowers spring to fall and pink/purple plumes in fall and winter
Light	Full sun
Water	Low to none once established
Leaves	Dark green, not very conspicuous, semi deciduous
Litter	Low
Pests	None
Attracts	Bees, butterflies, small birds
Resistant	Deer, rabbit

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