



THE UNIVERSITY OF ARIZONA

Cooperative Extension

Pinal County

The Desert Garden Buzz Spring, 2024

prepared by the

Southeast Pinal County Master Gardeners



Hello from the Editors

We want to **THANK YOU** for making this newsletter such a success. This is our fourth issue, and we have grown to over 200 subscribers!

If you haven't subscribed, or know someone who is interested in subscribing, visit our web site at: <https://extension.arizona.edu/spcmg> and click on **Desert Garden Buzz Newsletter**.

Happy Gardening!

Barbara Diliiegghio and Shirley DeCarufel, Editors

Elissa Cochran, Assistant Editor



Upcoming Events

Mission Garden: A Living Agricultural Heritage Museum

Wednesday, March 13, 2024 @ 1:00 pm

**In-person at: Desert View Performing Arts Center
39900 Clubhouse Dr in SaddleBrooke**

**Presenter: Kendall Kroesen, PhD
Community Outreach Coordinator at Mission Garden**
<https://www.missiongarden.org/>

Kendall will share how Mission Garden recreates over 4,100 years of local agriculture on the historic site considered to be the birthplace of Tucson. Mission Garden is a living agricultural museum of Sonoran Desert-adapted heritage fruit trees, traditional local heirloom crops and edible native plants.

The presentation will describe the history of the location, the many cultures that have farmed and gardened there, and the gardens plots that depict what different groups planted throughout all the seasons of the year. Kendal will also cover plans for additional garden plots and finish with some important lessons learned over the 12 years the recreated garden has been in existence.

Mission Garden's multi-generational, outdoor, hands-on educational setting encourages interactive exchange of traditional knowledge gathered from diverse community elders and historical documents. By exclusively growing heritage crops and heirloom trees, they aspire to test, refine, and evaluate the practical wisdom of long-term arid-adapted agricultural practices.

Everyone is welcome. The presentation is free and there is no need to register in advance. If you have any questions, please contact: dilieghio@arizona.edu

Heatproofing your Garden

Wednesday, April 10, 2024 @ 1:00 pm

In-person at: Sol Ballroom, SaddleBrooke Ranch

Presenter: Deborah North, Pima County Master Gardener

Tucson summers are tough on plants and on the gardener. Join us to learn some proven techniques that will help your plants survive 100+ degree temperatures. Deborah will highlight plants that thrive in the heat, and discuss ways to protect yourself and remain healthy while gardening on our hot, dry summer days.



This is a free event and there is no need to register in advance. If you have any questions, contact: glennamatthews@arizona.edu

Southeast Pinal County Master Gardener Garden Fair

Saturday, April 20, 2024 10:00 am - Noon

Located in the Ballroom West and on the Patio at:
SaddleBrooke Two, Mountain View Clubhouse
38759 S Mountain View Blvd in SaddleBrooke

Our fair will have a variety of tables that you can wander among at your leisure. Stop at a table to learn about gardening practices and techniques or about caring for palms or cacti. Pause to hear a Master Gardener explain how to prune, irrigate, handle plant pests, use the proper tools, grow plants in containers, and much more. If you have plant questions or problems (pictures help) you can receive an answer at the Ask Your Master Gardener table. There is no charge to attend.

Gardening for Butterflies: The Importance of Monarch Waystations

Wednesday, May 8, 2024 @ 1:00 pm

This will be a zoom presentation; please register here:
https://arizona.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_k4AJNGPYR-OPAtmLb5nMw

Presenter: Katie Rogerson

Director of Education and Public Engagement at Tucson Botanical Gardens

Katie has over 20 years of non-profit management experience in the arts, education, and environment. She will share her love of Lepidoptera (winged insects) and passion for the flora and fauna of the Sonoran Desert.

Known for its bright orange colors and its incredible annual migration, the monarch butterfly is now classified as “Endangered” by the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN). This is troubling news for an insect that represents nature at its most powerful. A tiny, delicate creature that travels nearly 3,000 miles to overwinter in Mexico. Learn more about the importance of Monarch Waystations and what plants will attract and support monarch butterflies in your garden.



For additional information and to register for upcoming zoom presentations, visit our web site at: <https://extension.arizona.edu/spcmg> and click on **Events**.



Enjoy the Wildflowers

Photo by Kaori Hashimoto

Mariposa Lily (Calochortus kennedyi)

During the winter, welcome those rainy days, even though the skies are grey. Remember that a rainy winter may result in an abundant spring wildflower bloom. Not only is the spring bloom spectacular, the wildflowers provide a huge variety of color, fragrances, and shapes to attract pollinators. We asked some wildflower enthusiasts how they enjoy the spring wildflower blooms.

Go for a hike! Tim Butler, a guide leader for the SaddleBrooke Hiking Club had some suggestions for a few of his favorite hikes. He reported that two easy hikes for viewing spring wildflowers are the Canyon Loop Trail and the Sutherland Trail in Catalina State Park. If you are looking for a more strenuous hike, Tim suggests the Romero Pools Trail for March through early May wildflower blooms. You can find wildflower updates on the Catalina State Park Facebook Page.

Although Tim is very knowledgeable when leading his wildflower hikes he always carries his favorite wildflower book, “Sonoran Desert Wildflowers”. He also uses 3 websites:

<https://www.fireflyforest.com/flowers/>

<https://southwestdesertflora.com/>

<https://www.americansouthwest.net/plants/wildflowers/index.html>

Go for a drive! On those beautiful February days hop in the car and head to Picacho State Park during the peak Poppy bloom. Tim says the bloom generally happens mid to late February, depending on the year's weather. He shared that there are a great number of other species blooming there at the same time, including Scorpion Plant, Gordon's Bladderpod, and Silver Senna (a bush). Tim suggested heading to Picacho State Park very early in the morning to avoid the traffic jam at the entrance. Jim Hagedon, a member of the SaddleBrooke Photography Club, agrees that the Picacho Peak State Park is a favorite location to capture the blooms. Jim reported that today's SmartPhones have the best camera to take close-up photos without having to use any special equipment.

Visit a Botanical Garden or Arboretum! Take a stroll through the gardens. Visit their website to find special events or lectures.

Boyce Thompson Arboretum - <https://btarboretum.org/>

Tucson Botanical Gardens - <https://tucsonbotanical.org/>

Tohono Chul - <https://tohonochul.org/>

This spring, enjoy working in your yard, and think about getting out and enjoying the area's natural gift.



Agave Snout Weevil

Last year, some of you contacted us because the leaves on your agaves were drooping to the ground. Unfortunately, we found that many of these plants had been infected with the Agave Snout Weevil, *Sycphophorus accupunctatus*.

The weevils are about ½ inch long and black in color. The female lays eggs in the spring and the larvae feed on the core of the agaves. By the time the agave looks ill, the larvae have usually severely damaged the plant and you may be able to rock or push the plant over because it is no longer anchored by its roots. Upon very close inspection, you might see grubs next to the core of the plant.

To prevent this from happening to your prized agaves, you can treat them with an insecticide that contains imidacloprid in the spring and fall. You should be able to find one at a big box store. Apply the product around the base of the plant following the directions on the bottle.

If you have an agave that has been infected, it is best to remove it to prevent the weevil from maturing and moving on to another agave. Dig up the plant and seal it in trash bags. Search the surrounding soil for grubs and seal those in bags as well.

<https://extension.arizona.edu/pubs/problems-pests-agave-aloe-cactus-yucca>

<https://extension.arizona.edu/sites/extension.arizona.edu/files/attachment/BacktotheGarden%20November%202021%20with%20pictures.pdf>



Spring Gardening Tips

Cactus: April is a good month to plant an Ocotillo. Although they can be planted year round, you will have better success by transplanting from March to October. Although they are known for the striking canes and orange-red flowers, when the leaves and flowers are dropped, Ocotillos provide interesting structure in your landscape. They adapt well to drought situations, shedding leaves to conserve plant moisture.

To plant an Ocotillo, choose a sunny, wide open area that drains well. Dig a hole that is wider than the rootball, but not deeper. Water deeply after planting. A transplanted Ocotillo will take a long time to show growth. The plant is busy growing a new root system and will take a while to send out leaves. It is not necessary to stake Ocotillo, but placing large stones over the root area (2-4" from the trunk) will prevent it from toppling over during storms.

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

Citrus: March is a good month to plant a new citrus tree. Most citrus trees are two to five years old when you purchase them. It usually takes three years for fruit production and up to six years before production is significant. Wait a year before fertilizing a new tree.

Once established, citrus trees need to be fertilized 3 times a year. There is an easy to use tool on the University of Arizona Cooperative Extension website that will help you determine how much and when to fertilize:

https://uarizona.co1.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_6lhvl6aELKBZYLH

For more information, take a look at this publication:

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

Watering: Spring is a good time to check your irrigation system. Do all the zones work? Do you need to add emitters to plants that have grown during the year? When the warmer days arrive and plants are showing signs of growth, increase watering frequency.

Pruning: Wait until after the last frost and there are signs of new growth before pruning. March 15 is traditionally the last day of frost. But, when the native velvet mesquite trees are leafing out, that is a good sign that we will be frost free until fall.

First, remove stems that are dead or damaged, cutting just above the new growth. Then, remove the longest branches, cutting just above a junction of the branches. Take your time as you prune. After each cut stand back and assess the shape. Be careful not to remove more than 1/3 of the plant when pruning.

<https://extension.arizona.edu/pubs/pruning-shrubs-low-mid-elevation-deserts-arizona>

Vegetables: It is time to start thinking about warm weather crops. If you are planting corn, consider the traditional “three sisters” arrangement of corn, beans, and squash or melons together. The corn creates a trellis for beans. The beans fix nitrogen in the soil and help anchor the corn against wind. The squash or melons take advantage of the shade and nitrogen while creating a living-mulch over the ground to shade and help regulate the temperature of the soil.

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

<https://www.nativeseeds.org/blogs/blog-news/how-to-grow-a-three-sisters-garden>

Note: The publications listed above are only a few of the many publications sponsored by the University of Arizona. View them at: <https://extension.arizona.edu/pubs>



Plant of the Quarter:
Easter Egg Emu
Eremophia racemosa

The Easter Egg Emu comes to us from Australia. It is a medium growing, evergreen bush that provides long lasting multi colored blooms in late winter/early spring. The blooms provide a colorful interest because they change color. The flowers start out as yellow buds, then change to an orange color before opening. When a bloom opens they are pink. As the flower fades the color changes to a pinkish-purple shade. Since a plant can have flowers in different stages of development all of the colors may be present. The flowers are contrasted well against the yellow green leaves.

Size	3-5 feet high and wide
Bloom	pink, yellow, orange, and purple flowers in spring and summer
Foliage	green/yellow leaves, evergreen, upright growth
Light	full sun
Water	drought tolerant when established; water once a week during the summer
Hardiness	cold and heat tolerant
Wildlife	beautiful blooms attract hummingbirds; forms berries that birds enjoy
Poisonous	no

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