



THE UNIVERSITY OF ARIZONA

Cooperative Extension

Pinal County

The Desert Garden Buzz Summer, 2024

prepared by the

Southeast Pinal County Master Gardeners



Hello from the Editors

Our Community Education Committee takes a break during the summer months, so there isn't an Upcoming Events section in this quarter's newsletter, but here is a preview of the presentations that they are busy preparing for fall:

- September 11, 1:00 pm. *The Importance of Bees and Other Pollinators in Your Garden*
- October 9, 1:00 pm. *Animals and Pests in Your Yard - What Not to Plant*
- November 13, 1:00 pm. *Winterizing Your Garden - Proper Plant Selection and Care*

And we are always available to help with home landscape concerns. For information on how to reach our Plant Helpline, visit our web site: <https://extension.arizona.edu/spcmg>

Have a great summer, and Happy Gardening!

Shirley DeCarufel, Editor

Barbara Dilegghio and Elissa Cochran, Assistant Editors



Heatproofing Your Garden

Photo of Deborah North, Pima County Master Gardener

Article By Bob Allen, Southeast Pinal County Master Gardener

When Deborah North returned to Arizona from the very green Northwest in 2003, she quickly learned that to enjoy gardening in Tucson required significant retraining. She entered the Pima Master Gardener program in 2004 through the University of Arizona and never looked back!

On Wednesday, April 10, Deborah shared her knowledge with 72 eager-to-learn gardeners in a lecture titled "How to Heat Proof Your Garden." The Southeast Pinal County Master Gardeners sponsored the event at the SaddleBrooke Ranch Sol Ballroom in Oracle.

Her first piece of advice? Remember you live in a desert! Our Sonoran Desert is notorious for dry, alkaline soil high in mineral but low in organic material content. Add intense sun, high summer temperatures, low winter temperatures, little rainfall, high winds, and insect pests, and you will ask yourself, "How will I ever grow anything here?" Deborah demonstrated that with knowledge, patience, and an understanding of our unique climate, you can get plants to thrive in our desert!

Do you know how large containers need to be if you use them for gardening? (Answer: 18 to 24 inches.) How much sunlight should shade cloth block to protect your plants during Southeastern Arizona's notoriously hot summers? (Answer: 30% – 40%.) Deborah shared those and many more tips with the eager audience of gardeners.

Other hints? Be kind to yourself! Wear sun protection, sunglasses, stay hydrated, and garden early in the day when it's cooler. When the temperature reaches 90 degrees plants stop taking in water.

Amend your soil with organic matter to improve water holding capacity and choose native or desert adapted plants for landscaping. Water your plants deeply with increasing frequency as the weather gets warmer. Water annuals or grasses to a depth of 8 to 12 inches. Water shrubs to a depth of 18 to 24 inches, and 24 to 36 inches for trees. Use a long screwdriver as a soil probe to measure how deep your irrigation goes. But do let the roots dry out a bit before watering them again. Desert plants evolved to thrive on periods of dryness, followed by deep watering. There are some great watering guides, articles about choosing plants, planting and keeping them healthy at the Southeast Pinal County Master Gardeners web site:

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

Everyone learned a lot from Deborah North that day, and the good news is she's returning to SaddleBrooke Ranch at 1 p.m. on Nov. 13. She will talk about "Winterizing Your Garden." Plan to attend this free event at the Sol Ballroom at SaddleBrooke Ranch.

Herbicide Caution

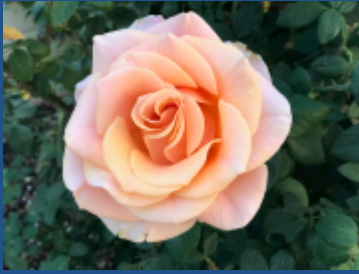
from the Plant Helpline Committee

During a recent plant call, our Master Gardeners learned that a landscaper had removed a tree and applied Roundup to the stump. Unfortunately for the homeowner, an adjacent 20-foot tree died within 30 days.

Dr. Ursula Schuch, University of Arizona Professor and Specialist, Environmental Horticulture, said that the Roundup likely contained an additive such as imazapyr. Homeowners and/or landscapers can unknowingly apply these products to their garden with disastrous results to nearby desirable plants and future plantings. There is no known product that will neutralize these chemicals.

She shared the following publications which illustrate how confusing these products can be:

- <https://extension.arizona.edu/herbicides-essential-information-homeowners>
- <https://extension.arizona.edu/sites/extension.arizona.edu/files/pubs/az1914-2021.pdf>



Summer Roses in Bloom

By Mary M. Toth

Photo of Marilyn Monroe Rose

You can enjoy roses from your established plants during the heat of summer with a little planning. When the temps rise in June to October, you can help relieve their stress and encourage blooms by mulching, adding companion plants, increasing their watering schedule and providing extra hydration.

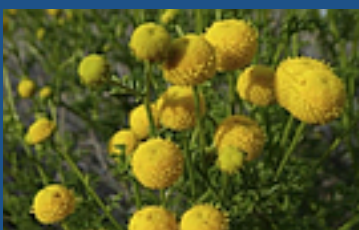
Mulch provides moisture retention by slowing water evaporation and protecting the tiny feeder roots close to the surface. Many well-established rose plants will develop a canopy to shade the root system and a small amount of mulch will work well for them. Be sure to use pine needles or forest mulch and not rocks, which retain and reflect heat.

Companion plants will bring additional eye appeal to your rose garden and also provide wanted shade. Several favorites are: lavender, salvia, vincas, marigolds and shamrocks.

Be sure to increase your watering schedule and set your timer for early morning or late evening to help retain moisture. One of the best things you can do for overall hydration is to hose off or mist the leaves early in the morning before the temps hit 90 degrees. This will wash off the dust and bugs and provide welcome moisture.

Roses need to be fed during the summer so the plants remain healthy. Remember on the first day of each summer month to lightly fertilize. Summer blooms will be small and best clipped early in the morning. Don't wait until the end of the day or they will be dehydrated. Don't forget to deadhead so your roses will continue to produce blooms during the summer.

Some favorite roses that thrive in the summer heat are: Mr. Lincoln, Veteran's Honor, Rio Samba, Fragrant Cloud, Marilyn Monroe, Wild Fire, First Prize and Double Delight.



Why is Stinknet a Problem?

Stinknet, also known as globe chamomile, is a non-native weed with bright yellow flower globes. The plant has dark green, carrot-like leaves which have a pungent odor, similar to turpentine, especially when crushed. It is common in the Phoenix area, and has recently spread to Tucson and surrounding areas.

Why is it considered to be such a problem?

- **Allergen:** can be a problem for people with seasonal allergies and can cause respiratory distress and contact dermatitis.

- **Invasive:** forms a dense cover, crowding out native plants that support our wildlife and livestock. It also overwhelms our beautiful wildflowers.
- **Fire Hazard:** dries out and forms seeds in the summer. The dry plants can easily ignite and become tinder for wildfires.
- **Prolific:** produces thousands of tiny seeds. These lightweight seeds stick to clothing, shoes, and vehicles allowing it to spread and infect new areas.

If you find Stinknet, try to remove it before it goes to seed; but take care to wear a face mask, gloves, and protective clothing. Alternatively, some herbicides will kill actively growing plants. However, if it has gone to seed, carefully bag the plants to contain the seeds. You may want to use a pre-emergent in the fall and winter to prevent any Stinknet seeds that have fallen to the ground from germinating.

Learn more:

- Tucson Audubon Society: <https://www.stinknet.org/>
- University of Arizona Cooperative Extension: <https://extension.arizona.edu/stinknet-invasion>



Propagating Cactus and Other Succulents

Cacti and succulents are ideal for desert landscaping. They are favored because they require little additional water and grow well in our soil. They are tough plants and have unique growth patterns. For most of the plants in our area, the best time of year to propagate is late spring and summer when the plants are actively growing. When nighttime temperatures are above 60 degrees, there is a better chance for root development which is the key to success.

Before you get started, it is important that you have the right tools. You need a sharp and sterile knife for cutting, as well as proper protection from the spikes and needles. Thick, long gloves and tongs are helpful for handling the plants. Also keep a towel or rug handy to move larger pieces.

Propagating Cactus from Cuttings

This is the easiest and quickest way to get new plants from existing plants. Vegetative propagation relies on the plant's ability to grow new roots and shoots from an existing part of the plant such as a leaf or stem. Always take a cutting from a healthy plant making sure there are no blemishes, bruising, disease or rot.

Try to cut off a piece of cactus at a 45-degree angle. This angle protects the parent plant because there is a lesser chance of water collecting in the wound. A columnar cactus can be cut anywhere along the cactus stem. Try to cut the stem near newer growth. If you are cutting a pad, remove the pad at the node, which is the area where the pads attach to one another. Globe shaped species are usually propagated by removing small globes from the parent plant. Note: If you're taking cuttings from multiple cacti, disinfect your knife after each plant with a solution of 1 part bleach and 10 parts water to prevent the spread of bacteria.

The cutting should be placed in a dry area away from direct sunlight. Lay the cutting so the cut portion is exposed to the air. Leave it alone until it forms a callus or scab. This process may take a few days or a couple weeks. Feel the bottom of the cutting to make sure it's dry to the touch. If

the cutting is planted before it forms the callus, it will be prone to disease and rot. Some growers like to dust the cutting edge with Sulphur powder to prevent fungal spores from forming.

Once the cutting has fully callused you can plant it. Some growers like to dip the callus end into rooting hormone to promote stronger root systems. Use a pot that has good drainage and is filled with cactus soil or a 50/50 mix of perlite and compost. To plant, just make a hole that is large enough to fit the bottom of the cutting. Put the callused end of the cutting into the hole so that about 1/2 of the cutting is buried. If the cutting is leaning, bury it a bit deeper.

Keep the cutting in a warm, bright spot. Place the cutting with the same orientation as the parent plant to avoid sunburn. The pot should get 6 hours of sunlight throughout the day. You can lightly mist the surface of the soil when it is dry to the touch every few days to encourage the cutting to send out roots. In the summer, rooting may occur around 4-6 weeks. You will know when a cutting has taken root when the cutting fills out and/or shows signs of new growth. When new growth is present, water the cutting as normal.

Propagating Agaves and Yuccas from Cuttings

Agaves and yuccas grow offsets (pups) from rhizomes. To make the removal process easier, water the area around the pups that you want to remove.

To remove agave offsets, always leave a small portion of the stem that connects to the parent plant. Slide the shovel under the pup and gently lift. Some pups will pull away easily, but others may need the root connecting it to the parent plant cut. The pup should show signs of an independent root system. Leave the offsets unplanted for a few days to dry out the roots and heal any cuts to the roots. Try to trim the roots back to about 4 inches. The offset can be placed in the ground or planted in a pot. Once rooted, agave offsets will start growing and a regular regime of soluble fertilizer can begin.

Yucca pups are attached to the stem of the parent plant or very close by. You should choose an offset that is healthy, large, and growing well, at least 6" wide. Make sure it is green, not whitish. Cut the offset as close to the stem as possible. (Be careful not to cut the stem.) You can place it in the ground or in a pot. Some growers like to remove the pups in the fall because there is a lesser chance of damaging the parent plant.

Growing from Seed

Growing cactus and agave from seed is very economical. Using seeds provide the opportunity to grow unique plants to trade or give to friends. Agave seedlings are easier because they can be handled and have less seedling diseases.

Starting with clean, fresh seed is important. You should also sterilize your soil. This can be done in a 350-degree oven for 30 minutes or microwaving moistened soil in the microwave. Once the soil has cooled, use shallow containers that provide for good drainage. Soil that is 50% perlite or pumice works well. Nighttime temperatures that are around 65 degrees provide for good germination and growth.

Spread the seed evenly over the surface of the pot and lightly cover with soil or sand. For cactus seed, put the seed container in a tray and fill the tray with water. Agave seeds are larger, so overhead watering is fine. Cover the container with plastic wrap to help with critical moisture retention levels during germination.

The seeds should show signs of germination in about two to three weeks. When the seeds germinate you can gradually reduce the humidity by lifting the side of the plastic wrap. Do not permit the soil to remain waterlogged or totally dry out. A mister or spray bottle is very helpful at this stage.

When a cactus seedling reaches about 1", or an agave seedling has two or three true leaves, they can be planted in individual pots.

References:

- Agave, Yuccas, and Related Plants - A Gardener's Guide, Mary and Gary Irish, Timber Press, Portland, Oregon, 2000
- Gardening in the Deserts of Arizona, Mary Irish, Cool Spring Press, Beverly, MA, 2007
- How to Propagate Agaves and Cacti from Cuttings and Seed, Jack J. Kelly, The University of Arizona Cooperative Extension, AZ1483
<https://extension.arizona.edu/pubs/how-propagate-agaves-cacti-cuttings-seed>
- Raising Cactus from Seed, Daiv Freeman, cactiguide.com
- Separating and Repotting Yucca Offshoot Pups, Heather Rhoades, January 9, 2023
<https://www.gardeningknowhow.com/ornamental/foilage/yucca/separating-and-repotting-yucca-offshoot-pups.htm>



Plant of the Quarter:

Trichocereus hybrids

*Photo By Ellen Sosin,
Southeast Pinal County Master Gardener*

Trichocereus hybrids, also known as Torch cactus, are absolutely stunning and make a wonderful addition to a succulent garden. There are several varieties, with different flower colors. All are moderately sized, columnar cacti, with multiple stems and large, showy flowers. Although the flowers only last a few days, this cactus can bloom a few times during the spring and summer.

- Height:** Usually 2-3 feet high, although some varieties can grow to 6 feet
- Flowers:** Flower color depends upon the variety: white, yellow, orange, pink, red, fuchsia, or lavender
- Sun:** Full to partial sun, light afternoon shade is recommended
- Cold:** While these can tolerate temperatures well below freezing, it is best to protect them during prolonged cold temperatures
- Water:** Drought tolerant, but prefers to be watered every 1-2 weeks from spring through fall
- Fertilizer:** Apply a balanced, 10-10-10 fertilizer a few times each year
- Soil:** Needs well-drained soil

<https://www.desertmuseum.org/visit/sheets/TrichoX.pdf>

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