New Master Gardeners Association

On Tuesday, July 17, a group of people got together to lay the foundation of a new organization just for Master Gardeners. The Yavapai County Master Gardeners Association is being formed to provide continuing education for Master Gardeners and hopefully, in the future, be the catalyst for more outreach programs in the community.

This will be an opportunity to bring in a variety of speakers on various gardening subjects throughout the year. It will be an opportunity for gardeners to get together and talk and have a little fun. Gardening shouldn’t just be about hard labor.

At this writing the organization has decided on a few things and started to put together a set of bylaws. Meetings for now will be scheduled every two months (possibly starting in November) alternating between the Prescott area and the Verde Valley so no one will have to travel far every time. For those folks in the farthest regions of the county, my apologies for not being able to accommodate your travel concerns but we hope that you will take the time to participate when you can. We are going to try and find someone willing to coordinate carpooling (you don’t necessarily have to be the one driving) to make it easier to travel from location to location. While the group is starting with simple plans, it is hoped that the idea will be embraced by the Master Gardeners and its mission expanded over time. I will keep you posted in the newsletter as plans progress. get in touch with Jeff Schalau if you have any ideas or suggestions.
Native Seeds/SEARCH
(tis article came from their website www.nativeseeds.org)

Editor Note: Native Seed/SEARCH is an organization dedicated to preserving seeds and cultural diversity. Below is information about the organization. While you don't have to be a member to purchase seeds, they do great work in preserving genetic diversity and promoting the use of desert-adapted plants in the garden. Two of my favorite plants came from them, Segulaca squash, (a giant wonder of a squash) and Mrs. Burns Lemon Basil.

Southwestern Native American farmers produced a great variety of food despite the region's marginal growing conditions. After centuries of environmental destruction, cultural change, and land transfers, these farming systems have survived—but just barely. As late as 1925, the Tohono O'odham people cultivated 10,000 acres in Southern Arizona with traditional floodwater methods. Today, only a few scattered plots remain. For one tribe living near the Grand Canyon, the process has reached its logical and devastating conclusion; all crop varieties have been lost.

NS/S was founded in 1983 as a result of requests from Native Americans on the Tohono O'odham reservation near Tucson who wished to grow traditional crops but could not locate seeds. Since then, we have become a major regional seed bank and a leader in the heirloom seed movement. Our seed bank is a unique resource for both traditional and modern agriculture. It includes 1800 collections, many of them rare or endangered; more than 90% of these crop varieties are not being systematically preserved elsewhere. Beside the expected drought tolerance of desert plants, many of these crops are resistant to rusts, insects, chemicals, and other stresses. They provide an irreplaceable "genetic library" to draw upon to ensure sustainable, environmentally safe agriculture in the future.

We now have almost 4,600 members and a catalog mailing list of over 20,000 families. Membership is open to everyone, with minimum annual dues of $25: Native Americans living in the greater Southwest may join free and receive seeds at no charge.

NS/S maintains several programs which support our core mission of promoting and distributing heirloom seeds.

Our Desert Foods for Diabetes project works to promote the production and consumption of traditional desert foods to combat diabetes, a major health problem among Native Americans.

Wild Chile Botanical Area. The Wild Chile Botanical Area was officially designated as a special management area within the Coronado National Forest on June 3, 1999. Establishment of this 2500-acre area as a site rich in genetic resources makes it the first such designation designed to conserve wild relatives of economically important crops, in particular, the wild chile. Through research, training and education, the botanical area provides government, non-government and private interests the opportunity to work together toward the common goal of conserving our natural resources.

Through our Native American Outreach Program we have discovered a great enthusiasm for reclaiming traditions and adapting them to modern life. We are working to expand our Native American membership, currently 20%, and continue to provide garden workshops and support, discounts on traditional foods, and serve as an information clearing house.

Yavapai County Master Gardeners
We initiated the **Arizona Regis-TREE**, a model program designed to recognize and protect outstanding heirloom fruit and nut trees. Trees and other perennials in more than eighty locations around the state are now registered through the program.

**NS/S Conservation Farm.** Since 1983 Native Seeds/SEARCH has searched for an appropriate parcel of land to set up a Conservation Farm which would serve as our primary location for evaluating and regenerating seed from our seed bank and for resale in our catalog. On December 19, 1997, NS/S and The Nature Conservancy (TNC) purchased adjoining farmland in Patagonia, Arizona. NS/S claimed 60 acres of flood plain fields and TNC acquired 100 acres of the remaining farmland and adjacent riparian corridor. The farm is the largest step our organization has taken in its fifteen-year history and will help ensure the survival of our seed bank well into the next century.

Our newest project, a **Cultural Memory Bank**, focuses on collecting, recording, and organizing cultural and historical data about each crop variety in our seedbank - recognizing the valuable links that exist between people and plants.

The **seedlist** represents our continuing effort to offer and distribute seeds adapted to the desert environments within our region. You will find planting instructions provided for each crop. These general guidelines were developed for low-desert (<3500 ft) conditions. They are based on our experience in Tucson, where summer rains come in July or early August, summer temperatures regularly exceed 100 degrees F, and planting for the cool season can be anytime from September to November. For warm-weather crops, the low desert has eight frost-free months, which include extremely hot and dry conditions. Gardeners in other climates will need to adjust their planting times. It is helpful to know your average last frost dates; ask experienced gardeners or the agricultural extension agent in your area. We are not sure how crops will do outside their area of origin, but we regularly send seeds to gardeners across the U.S.

Please write to us about your successes and failures. All Seed Packets are $2.00 each.

**Our Seed Policy:** When placing an order for seeds, please remember that Native Seeds/SEARCH is a non-profit conservation organization, not a commercial seed company. We have a limited quantity of seeds. Because of high demand, we must limit orders to 6 packets of each variety. An order, for example, may include up to 6 packets of Cochiti Popcorn, 6 packets of Hopi Red Watermelon and so on. Group exceptions may be considered. Please contact us. We have a special seed policy for Native American farmers and gardeners. We encourage everyone to grow and keep pure seed lines and to contribute surplus seeds to tribal gardens.

All Native Seeds/SEARCH seeds offered here have passed germination tests. Most of them are hand cleaned and organically grown. They are not treated. They are stored in cool dry conditions. Freezing is the only method of pest control.

*Ed. Note: While they are a mail-order organization, they also have a physical presence in Tucson. Their store on 4th Ave is a real treat to visit. If you are in downtown Tucson stop in at 526 N. 4th Ave. They are open Tuesday thru Saturday 10am - 5 pm.*
Mesquites
by Nora Graf

Mesquites are legumes in the genus Prosopis. Members of the genus are found world-wide and in the United States they are found in all desert areas, including places in Oklahoma, Kansas and Arkansas. Along washes or areas that get a bit more water they become trees, in drier areas they are more like shrubs. One of the most extraordinary things about the mesquite is its ability to put out long and deep roots. I mean really long and deep. Roots have been excavated have been found to grow down 150 feet.

There are three U.S. species: the Velvet mesquite (Prosopis elutina), Screwbean mesquite (P. pubescens) and the Honey mesquite (P. glandulosa.) I recently read about some new genetic studies that might place the screwbean mesquite in a separate genus, but for now they are still mesquites.

Mesquites have been much maligned over the years. Ranchers did not like them, as they invaded grasslands as the grass was grazed off. Once the mesquites established, the grass could not compete or grow under mesquites, thereby reducing grazing. On the plus side, most grazing animals love mesquite beans. They are a tasty treat. Unfortunately, cattle are very effective spreaders of the seeds, acting as four-legged Johnny Appleseeds throughout the West. The seeds even have improved germination after passing through the digestive system of animals.

In the early days of Arizona’s growth boom, they were ignored as landscape trees. In fact, they still have a pretty poor reputation. They also have thorns—a problem if you have children. Today the mesquite’s popularity is slowing improving. They are now grown in the nursery trade and organizations (like cities, Arizona Department of Transportation and schools) use large numbers of mesquites, as they are very drought tolerant and low maintenance.

Mesquites hybridize very easily. Through crossing different varieties of mesquites from other parts of the world, you can find thornless mesquites. Curiously, though, a thornless mesquite seems to have the ability to start growing thorns, if it comes under extreme stress.

In the wild, the mesquite bosques are rapidly disappearing. Long considered a trash tree, stands of mesquites are still being destroyed. Mesquite bosques are vibrant natural communities that harbor large numbers of animals. They are favorite nesting sites for birds. My first sighting of a vermillion flycatcher was in a mesquite bosque next to the Salt River. Hummingbirds use them as nesting sites. You’ll often find lizards lurking along their branches, that is, if you can find them. They blend quite well with the bark and unless they move, they are difficult to see.

In the United States, threats to the mesquite come through development—large bulldozers ripping them out by the hundreds. In Mexico, they are threatened by charcoal cutters. All that mesquite charcoal has to come from somewhere. In certain areas south of the border they have virtually eliminated mesquites of any size. While the mesquite isn’t considered threatened or endangered in any part of its range, certain stands of the trees should be preserved, as they do serve as home and food to such a large range of species.

If you are in the process of planning a landscape, consider using mesquites. With a bit more water than they would get naturally, they become a large shade tree. Once established, they do quite well without extra water and, except for an occasional pruning if the branches grow down too low for you, there is no maintenance. They are not completely free of pests but there are none that really threaten the tree. Do not plant them near sewer or water lines if you fear you have leaks in either. A mesquite root can insinuate itself through
very small holes and quickly take advantage of the constant source of water. Soon you’ll be digging up the water line, trying to figure out what is going on.

One of the “wives tales” about mesquites is that they carry Texas Root Rot. Not true. They have evolved with the fungus and seem to be able to resist its attacks. Buying a tree in a nursery or starting your own from seed will not bring Texas Root Rot into your yard. If you bring in a tree from the wild, or soil from a landscaping company, the soil may contain the fungus and it will eventually spread through the yard, especially if you dig up and move piles of it on occasion. So don’t fear bringing in a nursery grown tree.

The easiest way to grow a mesquite is to start your own from seed. It’s a little tedious freeing the seed from the pod, but pounding in a mortar and pestle or even taking a hammer to them works. I’ve even whipped them through a blender but it’s darn hard on the blender. Pick fresh seed and after removing the outer shell, place seed in a deep container with loose well-drained soil. They put out a very long root quickly in their development so give them room. If you are using older seed, treat first by soaking in hot water. Germination happens in about 10 days. After that, prune for shape and when the tree has reached a nice size, transplant in the yard. Continue to water for the first year and start to gradually taper off until by the third year it should be able to survive on rainfall.

Screwbean mesquites have a completely different type of seed pod; it looks—yes, it really has a resemblance to a screw. They form in little bunches on the tree. Screwbeans have the showiest flowers of all the mesquites. These mesquites tend to be smaller, multi branched trees. You generally don’t find them in nurseries but seeds are available in a few locations. The seeds need to be soaked in hot water before planting.

The beans of the mesquite are very sweet and nutritious. They can be ground and used as a flour. If you don’t want to try that process yourself, (it is a bit difficult) the flour can be purchased in a few outlets. Native Seed/Search does have it in their catalog.

If you are a fan of mesquite bar-b-que and don’t want to buy mesquite charcoal, gather up the beans and place them on your briquets and enjoy the flavor of mesquite without cutting down trees.

For those with mesquite trees, try these recipes:

Mesquite Bread
from Carolyn Niethammer’s American Indian Cooking

1 c. Finely ground, sifted mesquite meal
1 c. Whole wheat flour
1 teas. Baking powder
1 teas. Baking soda
2 Tbls. Oil
3/4 c. Water

Combine dry ingredients. Add oil and water and mix until dough forms a ball and cleans the side of the bowl. The amount of water needed may vary with the weather. Lightly grease a cookie sheet or flat pan. Form the dough into a half-sphere loaf on the pan. Bake for 30 minutes at 350°F.

Mesquite Beans are quite sweet, so if you have time try this:

Mesquite Syrup
from Michael Moore’s book, Medicinal Plants of the Desert and Canyon West. Can be used as a sugar substitute in just about everything. With a ratio of 1/4 pound of washed pods per quart of water, cook them for at least twelve hours at a low setting in a crockpot; strain; reduce the tea by slow boiling to a thin syrup consistency. When cooled, it thickens into a strong, robust, sweet syrup. Collect pods in September and October, culling and discarding those that are light and hollow from insect predation, keeping the heavier full pods for making molasses.
Mesquite: nutritious, tasty, and there when you need it.
by Mary Savak, Native Seed/SEARCH

When most people here in the Southwest think about mesquite, they usually think of barbequed potato chips and "mesquite smoked" meats. At NS/S, we try to remember that these trees have supplied vitamins, fiber, and calcium to people living in the southwest for centuries. Native people ground the fibrous, outer husk of the mesquite bean into a fine meal. This meal, when mixed with water, was made into thin crackers which were dried in the sun and stored for future consumption. Fresh and dried beans are still in use as a nutritious food source.

Several years ago a friend and I were out in the Rincon Mountains, east of Tucson. We had driven down a long, dusty road to go hiking. When we returned several hours later, the truck had a flat, lifeless tire and we had no spare. We had eaten all of our little hiking snacky-snacks and had about a quart of water between the two of us. Classic. We had 30 miles of dirt road between us and Tucson, on a Monday afternoon. (Not a big traffic day out in the Rincon foothills.) To make a long story short, we failed to get a ride from a couple of Old Milwaukee enthusiasts practicing their target shooting. Thus, we began to walk back to town. We wondered when we thought we might be able to eat again, as one does when stranded in the middle of nowhere.

I looked up at the mesquite trees, in their late spring glory, and saw beautiful clusters of pink striped pods. I picked some and offered one to my friend. He looked at me like I was a little nuts but waited for further instructions. I munched on the pods until they were a juicy pulp, enjoying the fresh sweet taste in my mouth. I spit out the hard seeds, but only after gleaning off their yummy seed coat. As my hiking companion hesitatingly brought the pod to his mouth and bit down he smiled. He ate the whole thing, seeds and all. We chewed contentedly for nine miles before we ran into tourists with a cell phone. It was a mesquitey adventure I will never forget.

We promote mesquite at NS/S as a traditional food and in our diabetes program. Its fiber, calcium and low gluten content make its nutrients easier to metabolize. The best way to use mesquite is to harvest the pods right after they have yellowed and fallen off the tree. Traditionally, the dried pods were coarsely pounded, the hard seeds were removed; then the remaining material was ground into a fine meal and stored for the coming year.

The Arizona Highland Garden Conference

Now is the time to mark on your schedule the Arizona Highlands Garden Conference. This way when someone asks what you are doing October 8 & 9 you can check your calendar and inform them you already have plans for those days. The conference will be held in Prescott this year. (No excuses, about being too far to travel!) It will be held at the Chapel Rock Conference Center. Some rooms are available at the center and there are plenty of accommodations in Prescott. Check out the website for the agenda and information on the conference center, along with a registration form. The cost is $60 if you register before September 7—$75.00 after. This is a great place to meet other gardeners and exchange information. See you there! Plus I just heard the door prizes are great. They include a Mantis tiller and lots of books from Sunset magazine!

Registration form and location information are at the end of this newsletter or check the website at: http://ag.arizona.edu/yavapai/ahgc/conference2001.html

The Farm Fresh brochure is now available in paper form and on-line for those of you who wish to enjoy fresh produce from local growers. Being a small farmer is getting tougher and tougher these days, yet they provide us with a great source of food. Take the time to check them out. Prescott, Cottonwood and Clarkdale also have farmers markets you should check out.
Summertime Fun
by Nora Graf

Is it hot enough yet? Have you fried yourself trying to get the lawn mowed, the yard cleaned up? How about repairing the cooler? If yours is like mine, it breaks down on the hottest day of the year. This year the pump quit on the first 100+ day of June.

I’ve been getting up 5:30-6:00am so I can do some work outside before I feel like that egg in the frying pan. Generally, by 11am I’ve given up on most things and moved inside. I have gotten three large containers made from some salvaged wood for my new raised beds. I’m working on three more and hope to have the soil in and the irrigation system finished in time for some fall crops. They look a bit cattywampus as I’m not great at construction and I’m using salvaged wood which isn’t exactly straight and even—but what the heck, it was free!

I’m also watching my peach tree die from Texas Root Rot. Now why won’t that huge honey-suckle on the back fence die instead? It’s right next to the trees so why does it survive, even thrive, when the trees die. One of the mysteries of life, I guess.

After traveling all over the State in search of Native Plant sales, my newly planted shrubs are all enjoying this heat. So far I haven’t lost a one. Even those I bought at the Highlands Gardening Conference last fall, in spite of being run over by a very large piece of construction equipment, have survived and are growing. The Dalea formosa is a little short yet; it suffered the worst; the truck left nothing but a little stub above ground—and I mean little. It was no longer than a quarter of an inch above the ground and not much bigger in diameter than a pin. Now that’s determination! The Prince’s Plume (Stanleya pinnata,) I bought on the advice of the lady from Plants of the Southwest is really a striking plant, although still small. It was run over twice by heavy machinery. While it hasn’t reached its full size of 4 feet yet, it is a beautiful plant. Its flowers are tiny but bright yellow and form a plume on top of the stalk. I think it will be a striking addition to the area as it grows and gets taller. It’s very drought tolerant and doesn’t mind poor soils; just what I need. A few things from last year are doing well. I bought a geranium plant (not pelargonium) in Flagstaff and put it in the shade along with another plant and they’ve both become like monsters in grade B horror movie, creeping out and covering the earth. The only trouble is I don’t know what they are. The labels had dissolving ink on them and the names have long since disappeared. Oh well, it isn’t always necessary to know the plants names to enjoy them.

The kitchen has seen its share of activity this summer, also. Actually, it’s pretty obvious if you came into the house. Housekeeping is not one of my better skills. I’ve put up jars of mint jelly. Not something most people use much, I know, but my entire family are great lovers of lamb. And mint sauce is a great addition to lamb. My jelly will travel to several locations in Phoenix to cover a number of legs of lamb. There is basil drying and last week two large containers of pesto went in the freezer to savor come winter. Tonight I’m making bruschetta, a combination of garlic, tomatoes, fresh basil and olive oil on homemade French bread, plus there is corn from Hausers Farms in Camp Verde. Hope you are having as much fun as I am this year!
Volunteer Opportunities & Events

Saturday, August 4, International Year of the Volunteer, Sharlot Hall Museum in Prescott is hosting an event in honor of the International Year of the Volunteer on Saturday August 4 between 10 AM and 3 PM. The event officially recognizes volunteers as a unique source of knowledge, energy, and dedication. As Master Gardener Volunteers, I hope you can attend this unique volunteer recognition event. Wear your Master Gardener Badge proudly and come prepared for complimentary food, drinks, door prizes, and fun. Jeff Schalau and his wife, Dorothy, will be playing old-time music at the gazebo at 11 PM.

Saturday, August 11, Farmers Market Cooperative Extension is going to have a booth at the Farmers Market. Volunteers are needed to help out between 8am and 1pm. This would count toward your volunteer hours, so if you can help call Jonella Blake at (928) 774-9471 for more information. The market is at the corner of Goodwin and Cortez St. We will be answering questions about gardening and pest control, have resource materials, promoting Master Gardening and visiting with the public.

Saturday, August 25, V Bar V Ranch Explorers Field Day, Mahan Park, off Lake Mary Road, Happy Jack, Arizona, 9:45am - 3:30pm

Each year Yavapai County Cooperative Extension sponsors a trip to the University of Arizona Experimental Ranch, the V Bar V. The day trip includes a number of activities and programs at the ranch, a Bar-b-que lunch and transportation up and back. The cost is $5.00 for students, $10.00 for Adults. Call to register (928) 646-9113, ext. 10. Registration deadline is Friday August, 17.

This years programs include:
- History of the V bar V, Forest Management, Meat Cutting, Food Safety for Consumers, GPS demonstrations, Cattle Handling and Branding, Semen Collection & Viewing, Plant Identification & Nature Walk and Forage Use. There will also be various displays.

If you have never been to the V Bar V this is a great opportunity. It is a beautiful place and the programs are always interesting. There will be buses leaving from Camp Verde and possibly from Prescott, Call to sign up NOW!

Yavapai Rose Society - Will meet Aug, 2:00 PM at the First Christian Church, 1230 Willow Creek Road, Prescott. There will be a Consulting Rosarian Question and Answer period. Guests are welcome and there is no charge. For more information call Bob or Nancy at 771-9300, or Dave at 778-5507.

Cottonwood Organic Gardening Club. Meet at the Cottonwood-Verde Valley Fairgrounds on the second Wednesday of each month at 1:30 p.m

Yavapai County Cooperative Extension Website: This includes a searchable web site of past Backyard Gardener columns (weekly newspaper columns in the Red Rock News, Camp Verde Journal, and Cottonwood Journal Extra). The Backyard Gardener covers a range of horticultural topics and other locally relevant issues. Occasionally, a guest column is authored by a Yavapai County Master Gardener volunteer. The web site is: http://ag.arizona.edu/yavapai/anr/hort/bygg/

Visit the horticulture pages also. You will find Gopher Control information, Arid Gardening Portal, Plant Climate Zones, Master Gardener Information (including past issues of Yavapai Gardens, the Master Gardener Manual On-line, and options for reporting volunteer hours On-line or by mail). The horticulture links section also takes you to many useful sites about pest and disease control, native plants, and other topics.

The Yavapai County fair is coming up in September, how about trying to enter something this year? Fairbooks are available at the Extension office.
Corn Chowder

With plenty of fresh locally grown corn available, now is the time to try some corn chowder. Try this recipe from “The Victory Garden Cookbook” by Marian Morash.

4 oz. salt pork
1 medium onion
2 cups 1/4-inch potato chunks
2 cups combination chicken broth and water
Salt & freshly ground pepper
2 cups scraped corn (see below)
1 cup corn kernals (see below)
1/2 cup heavy cream.

Remove rind and cut salt pork into "logs" 2 inches long by 1 1/4 inches thick. Blanch in boiling water for 5 minutes. Drain, pat dry and cut into 1/4-inch cubes. Sauté in a large saucepan over medium heat until crisp; remove, and drain all but 3 tablespoons fat. Chop onion and cook in fat until softened and golden. Add potatoes, broth and water, 1 teaspoon salt and scraped corn. Bring to a boil, lower heat, and cook, partially covered, until potatoes are tender. Stir in corn kernals and cook 5 minutes longer. Add heavy cream; cook until heated through. Season with salt, pepper and pork bits if you like. (Serves 4-6)

Variations

For smoother texture, puree corn
Add cooked chicken pieces
Substitute fish stock and add pieces of cod or bass 8 to 10 minutes before serving.

Scrapped corn: Run a knife down the center of a row of kernes, slicing right down to the end of the ear.

Continue until all the rows have been prepared. Place the corn over a bowl. Then, using the back of the knife, push or "scrape" down the kernals: the flesh and "milk" will spurt out. Go back and forth, up and down the ear until it's finished. (There are devices called corn scrapers you can purchase)

Cut kernals: Starting at the tip of the ear, run a sharp knife straight down to the stem, leaving 1/8-1/4 inch of pulp behind on the cob. (This prevents you from inadvertently cutting off the tough cob fibers.)

The "Arizona Master Gardener Manual" is now on-line. Check out http://ag.arizona.edu/pubs/garden/mg/

NOTE FROM THE EDITOR:
Let me know about your garden, the types of seeds you planted, interesting articles you found—anything of gardening interest. Send to: Nora Graf
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