Harmony in the Garden

by Patti Conrad

I like music as well as the next person. In fact, I even have some favorite singers, like Iris DeMent, Nanci Griffith and Connie Dover. What drives me crazy is the booming or screeching of another person’s music at ear-splitting decibels from their vehicle or portable player while I am out in the garden pulling weeds or pruning. I am inclined to want to hear birdsong or bees buzzing instead. Whenever possible, if we all listened to our music with earphones at whatever sound level we liked, we could please ourselves and the neighbors. So let’s please show courtesy to each other and all use earphones. I love bagpipe music, too, and am thinking about keeping a CD at the ready to blast back at those boors with my own sonic boom frequencies.

Now someone singing in their own garden doesn’t bother me in the least. They can sing only so loud with their lungs and the lack of electronic magnification keeps the poor quality singer at a tolerable level and will make stopping to listen to a good singer or whistler a pleasure. However, lately I have noticed a definite lack of people hum-
We are humming or singing to ourselves while at some gardening or yard work task. What’s the deal? We’ve gotten so used to having the “expert” do for us in any given field that we have stopped enjoying the fruits of our own labor. We want to hire a landscape designer, we want to hire an interior decorator, we buy all our pastries and cookies from Costco, we let Martha Stewart tell us what plants are “in” this season so we try her recommendations instead of good old red geraniums. We must have professional music instead of making our own. True harmony in the garden comes from within us when we look at what pleases us and we are happy. Who cares what the neighbors think or what the experts say? It’s not like we’re making them listen to our music blaring away.

We have forgotten to have fun and we are not happy people. We attack gardening as if it were life or death. We have all been at the garden center watching the up-tight gardener fly into a tirade due to the lack of 6-packs of white petunias or Beefsteak tomatoes. Pick something else or leave a hole in the garden for later when they come in. Gardening should be relaxing and fun. There is hard work in it, to be sure, but satisfaction in completing the task is the fun. We’ve stopped humming to ourselves because we are taking ourselves too seriously as well as our gardening too seriously. What we should be aiming for is excellence, not perfection. Excellence to the best of our abilities, our soils, our tastes and our budgets is what we should be looking for. Pretty magazine pictures are nice. I love to look at all the new season’s issues almost as much as I love a box of See’s Chocolates but I knew someone in the advertising photography trade and what we see in the picture isn’t always what is really there. Sometimes “for art’s sake,” and “for the sake of composition,” extra flowers or plants are added as fillers or to add color when something isn’t in bloom yet or was nipped by frost or insects. Sometimes that reality is not reality at all. So, loosen-up and sing to yourself this year out in the garden. To start you off right, I have written two songs for you to sing among the oak brush and the red geraniums. Just remember, no amplifiers, please!

**My Darling Columbine**
*(to the tune of My Darling Clementine)*

**Chorus**
Oh my darling, oh my darling, oh my darling, Columbine
You are lost and gone forever,
Dreadful sorry, Columbine

Bright she was and like a Fairy,
And her leaves so soft and fine!
She was lovely, when I bought her,
Took her home to make her mine.

**Chorus**
Dug a hole out in my garden,
Added mulch and plant food, too.
Put her in deep so she could sleep,
She had colors, white and blue.

**Chorus**
Then I watered and I watered.
Gave her food of every kind,
Bat manure, I gave to her,
Didn’t think she would mind.

**Chorus**
She turned grey, then she turned yellow,
And she wilted over hard,
Could I save her?
It’s not for sure,
She’s still growing in my yard.

**Chorus**
I tried hormones, I tried B-1
I tried Iron and Gypsum dust,
She got smaller and not taller,
Columbine is going BUST!

**Chorus**
When I woke up the next morning,
There was nothing much to see,
Just a brown twig,
That was not big,
And the blame was all on me.
Home on the Range (in Yavapai County)

Oh give me a home with a four-acre lawn,
And the grass is all luscious and green.
With tones of big trees
And my dog has no fleas
And I'll feel in my garden—
I'm Queen!

Chorus
Home, home on the range.

Where the deer grass and buff'lo grass play.
Were seldom is heard, a discouraging word,
And as the sun dries your plants out all day.

How often at night, with the moonlight so bright,
By the light of the twinkling stars,
I stare at my yard,
Where the ground is so hard,
And it looks like a moonscape from Mars.

Chorus
Scrub oak everywhere, and the earth is so bare,
And as the grass is all crispy and brown.
Huge rocks and big stones. Full of antelope bones,
And you can't pick and shovel the ground.

Chorus
Yes, there are a few plants, but there's millions of ants,
Rattlesnakes and brown scorpions too,
Neath all the big shrubs,
There are thousands of grubs,
Killer Bees!! What's a gardener to do?

Chorus
Oh just give me a break, want to live by a Lake,
I did try, but the garden is toast!
The cactus grows well,
But it's hotter that H----!!
And I think that I'll move to the coast!

April Calendar

Water! This has been a pathetic year for rain, even worse than last year; don't forget to water trees and shrubs and perennials.

Continue to plant cool-season vegetables. There is still time to plant asparagus, horseradish, rhubarb, beets, carrots, cauliflower, broccoli, chard, lettuce, onions, parsnips, peas, spinach, radishes and turnips.

Start warm-season vegetable seeds inside. Tomatoes, peppers, melons, squashes should be ready for transplanting in May.

Perennial flowers can be transplanted in April and May. Those that bloomed in the summer or fall may be divided now, also.

Plant annual flowers. Calendula, candy tuft, poppies, stock and alyssum are good choices. Zinnias and marigolds prefer warmer weather.

Fertilize annuals and spring vegetable transplants with a low-strength fertilizer.

You can still prune fruit trees, vines, grapes and roses. Hurry though; it's easiest to prune when you can see the structure of the plant.

In spite of the lack of rain this year, there are weeds coming up. Get them now while they are small and haven't started to bloom.

This is a good time to plant pasture grasses and alfalfa.

April 27th is the normal date in Prescott for the last occurrence of 28° temperatures, the critical temperature for fruit blossoms.
MG Association News

The March 20th meeting was held in Cottonwood. Terri Mikel, from Maricopa County Extension gave a great program on plant names. We always talk about knowing the Latin names will help you get the plant you really want rather than the one the sales person thought you wanted. Latin names are also very revealing about the characteristics of the plant, a bit of history and sometimes very humorous. Thanks Terri for a fun program!

Make sure you report all your volunteer and education hours. There is a new form that can be accessed online. Fill out a form for each month! This makes it easier for Bev Emerson to keep track of the hours. If you don't turn your hours in, you won’t get credit for them.

Next Months Meeting will include election of officers. Please make an effort and make it to Prescott for the meeting. We are still looking for a location, but will let you know next month where it's going to be.

Officers and Committees

President: Anna Wilson
President elect: Lucia Murphy
Secretary/Treas: Ralph Young

Program/education: Diana Keleher, Ann Long, John Paustian, Bernadette Selna, Sal Sarrentino

Volunteer Projects: Elinor Benes, Jonella Blake, Bill Cart, John Hassell, Jim Musgrove, Eunice Ricklefs, Ralph Young

Membership: Beverly Emerson (Chairman), Larry Anderson, Jonella Blake, Nora Graf, Tacla Machesney, Sue Rogers, Cindi Shaffer

Social: Judie Bennett, Cecy Gilbert, Laura James
By-Laws: Charlotte Ewalt, Eunice Ricklefs
Nominating: vacant

Master Gardener Conference, Flagstaff, October 3-4—Start planning now. Set aside those dates to come to beautiful Flagstaff for the next Arizona Highlands Conference. They could also use some help from Yavapai County to work on the conference. Contact Bev Emerson or Tom Degomez if you have some time to help out. Also see page 7 for some information on how you can help. Bev Emerson (928)646-0379, Tom DeGomez (928)774-1868

Farmers Markets: Two Farmers markets are starting up soon. The Cottonwood Farmers Market will be opening up first, with the Prescott Market following. These are great opportunities for you to support local agriculture and get fresh produce. Please support both efforts. The Master Gardener's will have a table at the Prescott Market. We need volunteers to help out. Get in touch with Eunice Ricklefs (928)771-9559

April 6—Native Plant Workshop, Sedona. Call between 9 and noon, call Keep Sedona Beautiful at 281-4938 for a reservation.
Ephedra
by Nora Graf

Many of you have heard of the herb present in many “health” supplements. It has been used in diet pills and in energy boosters. The problem is that it can be very dangerous and has been implicated in many deaths across the country. But did you also know several species grow in the southwest and one is probably familiar to most people as “Mormon Tea?”

A species in China has been used for medicinal purposes for over 5000 years. It is used as a decongestant. Scientists eventually found the active ingredient ephedrine, today used commonly in asthma drugs. China is still a major exporter of the drug. The Chinese variety has more of the active ingredient than the American species.

American species range throughout the southwest from elevations as low as 1000 feet to as high as 7000. The plant appears as mostly stems. The leaves have been reduced to tiny scales. It can range in color from a grayish green to greenish yellow. Most reach a height and width of around 3 feet, although Ephedra trifurca can get 6 feet high and 8 to 10 feet wide. The male plants produce tiny cone-like structures and the female plant produces a small red berry. It flowers in early summer. Ephedra is one of the most primitive plants and among the oldest. It is related closest to Equisetum (horse-tails,) ginkgos and conifers. They are gymnosperms.

The name Mormon Tea came about as Mormons drank it as a substitute for coffee and tea. I think it’s an acquired taste, as I found it pretty horrible when I tried it, although some descriptions claim it is pleasant. To each his own, I guess.

The tea has been used for a variety of ailments. It is considered a good decongestant, diuretic, fever and cold medication. Somewhere it got the reputation as a cure for syphilis and gonorrhea. Apparently it was frequently served in brothels in the 1800’s.

Ephedra can make an interesting landscape plant. There is a variety for every elevation, although it might be difficult to find in nurseries. Ephedra needs full sun and is very drought tolerant. Only water once a month in the hottest areas. I suspect it would survive very well on natural rainfall any place in Yavapai County. Do not overwater! Well draining soil is essential. It can be divided periodically. Pruning is required only to remove dead stems and those stems that reduce the symmetry of the plant. This might be an interesting plant to include in your desert landscape.

Have you ever wondered how a weed can grow and thrive in soil you can’t break up without large machinery? How many times have you struggled to create new garden beds in soil covered with weeds. How do they do that? You have the pick out, but you are really wondering if you know of anyone that has dynamite. And there they are, spritely and green, poking up through the ground like it’s nothing more than a bag of potting soil.
As American as Apple Pie?

Actually it should be as Kazakhstan as Apple Pie, because, in spite of the adoption of the apple as an American emblem, it came from somewhere else. Malus sieversii (no common name) is thought to be the principal ancestor of all the apples we buy today and it was found in Kazakhstan. They even bear thorns—they are relatives of the rose! And just so you know, China beats us out on worldwide apple production; we’re second.

Speculation abounds over the origin of the eating apple. Some say M. sieversii hybridized with the crab apple. Others say no. Research is ongoing. Regardless, by 3000 BC apples were being cultivated and by 1000 BC they were a normal part of the human diet. The Romans help spread them through their territories. By medieval times orchardists understood them well enough to be able to harvest apples year round by planting different varieties, if they were rich enough to afford it. The less privileged were less enthusiastic. It was thought that apples caused bad stomachs, fever and ill humors. By the 17th century attitudes changed and their bad reputation was overcome. Apples were brought to the New World and mainly used for cider and cattle feed. Cider was an important substitute for water. Grafting techniques apparently didn’t come to America with the apple and American apples were grown from seed, creating an astonishing amount of varieties—some good, some not. Johnny Appleseed (John Chapman) really did expand the apple varieties as he planted seeds throughout the Midwest. It wasn’t until 1845 that grafting came back in favor with the increase of commercial groves.

One of the unfortunate things that has happened to apples is that we have taken a bewildering number, seven thousand or more were cultivated in the 19th century and 20th century man has whittled it down to perhaps half a dozen in our stores today. Never having been a great fan of the Red Delicious, I yearn for an apple that will surprise and delight me.

But this is not a diatribe against the homogenization of America; I'll save that for another time. This is about how interesting apples are, genetically speaking. The apple tends to be very loose with genetic material. It can be normal with 17 pairs of chromosomes. It can be haploid with 17 single chromosomes or it can be polyploid (which means that things are just whacko) with triple, quadruple, etc. up to having bundles of six (up to 85 chromosomes.) There are other things that go on also but that is pushing my scientific knowledge a bit far with alleles and things.

The wonder of this is that the apple has an astonishing range of varieties out there and is fun, I'm sure, for researchers to manipulate. Did you know the Jonagold is a contrived cross between Jonathans and Golden Delicious? The Baldwin just sprang up one day. Plant an apple seed and you will get a new plant possibly quite unlike its parent. This helps explain why grafting has become so important. The only way to provide consistency of fruit, (important for commercial growers,) is to graft a known variety onto a root stock, which comes back to the history of apples. If started from seed, every tree could be different.

There is still experimentation (the old-fashioned kind with pollination and seeds vs. Genetic engineering) to create new varieties. While I am certain genetic engineering is also going on, I'd just like an apple that was crisp and slightly tart with a heavenly flavor. Please, no more apples that ship better than they taste.

All the information for this story came from an article in Oct, 2001, issue of Natural History Magazine, “Engineering the Apple,” by Sue Hubbell which in turn came from a book by her called “Shrinking the Cat: Genetic Engineering Before We Knew About Genes,” Houghton Mifflin, publisher. If the rest of the book is as interesting as this article was, it would make a great read.
Dear Prospective Sponsor,

We are seeking your assistance in sponsoring the 3rd Annual Arizona Highlands Garden Conference at Arizona Snowbowl, Flagstaff, Arizona on October 3 and 4, 2002. The conference is being organized by the Arizona Highlands Master Gardeners: a group of Master Gardeners in Coconino, Gila, and Yavapai Counties. The Arizona Highlands Garden Conference will focus on gardening practices for the mid and high-elevation areas of North-Central Arizona. It is open to the general public from hobbyist to professional. Topics to be covered will be:

- Composting
- Soil Improvement
- Xeriscape
- Landscape Plant Selection
- Shade Trees
- Wildlife Interactions
- Vegetables
- Using Hardscape
- Insects and Disease
- Irrigation
- Yuccas
- Garden Tools
- Fruit Production
- Perennials
- And more...

There will be areas for vendor’s exhibits and sales at the conference site. All sponsors will be prominently recognized for their donations in the conference agenda and program. We are seeking donations in the following areas:

- Cash contributions to support conference expenses
- Gardening tools, supplies, seeds, plants, etc.
- Educational materials
- Door prizes

Please join us in promoting this exciting horticultural event. Not only will your contribution make a difference in the success of the conference, it will also demonstrate that you are active in the support of community-based educational organizations. Contributions should be sent c/o Tom DeGomez, Extension Agent, 2304 N. 3rd St., Flagstaff, AZ 86004. Checks should be payable to “University of Arizona”.

Sincerely,

Tom DeGomez
Agent, Agriculture and Natural Resources, Coconino County
UNIVERSITY OF ARIZONA GARDEN CONFERENCE
2002

The Arizona Highlands Master Gardeners of Gila, Yavapai, and Coconino counties are pleased to announce the Third Annual Arizona Highlands Garden Conference, to be held at Arizona Snowbowl, Hart Prairie Lodge, Flagstaff, AZ, October 3 and 4, 2002. Master Gardeners, in association with the University of Arizona Cooperative Extension, invite your participation as a Sponsor, Vendor, Exhibitor or Contributor.

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- Listing as Gambel Oak Sponsor

**BOOTH SPACE** – Table and 2 Chairs Provided
- Business Name Listed in Program

**NOTE:** Non-profit and/or educational organizations will be provided booth space for $15 plus conference registration fees.
Dear Yavapai County Master Gardeners,

Please feel welcome to drop in and audit lectures during the 2002 Master Gardener Course. The room is large. However, this year’s participants will have priority on seats at tables. I hope to see you there or at the Master Gardener Association Meetings.

Yavapai County Master Gardener Schedule - Spring 2002

Verde Valley Fairgrounds, Professional and Amateur Arts Building, Cottonwood, Arizona
All classes will meet between 9:00 AM and 12:30 PM on dates listed below:
4/3, Pesticide Safety, Jeff Schalau
4/10, Fruit Trees and Vines, Mike Kilby
4/17, Backyard Wildlife Conflicts, Larry Sullivan
4/24, Final Exam, Jeff Schalau

Are you a Sponge? Do you want to learn new things, see new sights? Soak up new experiences? Come on the Master Gardener Field Trip to the Arboretum in Flagstaff on Saturday June 15, 2002. It's their annual Horticultural Fair with educational exhibits and talks, and a plant sale which includes hard-to-find plants, such as certain species of penstemons. The van will be filled on a first-come basis. Call Pattie at (928) 778-4810 to reserve your seat on the van. If you want to follow in your own car, that's ok too. Please call and let Pattie know you are coming so she can give you the information you need.

The Shovel the curse of every gardener. Who would have thought, such a simple looking instrument could actually be a medieval torture device, designed to bring searingly painful blisters to the hands no red-hot poker needed.

Furthermore, It tortures the back, leaving you unable to walk. It causes muscle pain in the shoulders and legs, not to mention the bone jarring and, I’m sure brain jarring, effect when you jump on it only to discover a dull shovel and hard ground or rock. That is not a good combination and this doesn't include the fall as you are completely standing on it and it begins to tip over. Balance is everything.

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 P.O. Box 3652 Camp Verde, AZ 86322

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