Events & Activities

MG Association Meeting,
May 15, Prescott, … pg 7

Yavapai Rose Society - Will meet May 20, 2:00 PM at the First Christian Church, 1230 Willow Creek Road, Prescott. Guests are welcome and there is no charge. For more information call Bob or Nancy at 771-9300, or Dave at 778-5507.

The Cottonwood Organic Gardening Club meets at the Cottonwood-Verde Valley Fairgrounds on the second Wednesday of each month at 1:00 p.m.

Come on the Master Gardener Field Trip to the Arboretum in Flagstaff on Saturday June 15. The van will be filled on a first-come basis. Call Pattie at (928)778-4810 to reserve your seat on the van … pg 3

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Just Where Are My Ruby Slippers, Anyway?
By Patti Conrad

A flowered skirt with a plaid shirt. You can’t wear that!! It clashes!! It’s inappropriate. They say it doesn’t look right. They’ll laugh at you. Just who are they anyway? They are everywhere. They are even in the gardening world. “Pink and red clashes,” they say; pink petunias and red salvia—it just isn’t done. Garden shows and gardening experts on television tell you plant this with that. Magazine articles with detailed plans for flower borders showing this plant in that color here and this plant in that color here and this other plant in this color beside it. Phooey! Phooey, I say!!*

A dear friend just died at age 86, the mother of a dear friend my own age who lives in a distant place. She loved gardening and life and people, and a cat named Bogie. She wore the clothes she liked and grew the plants she liked. Gracious and gregarious, she was also just plain fun to be around. Shouldn’t that be our gardens, too? Shouldn’t our gardens be fun to be around and in, too? Planted as we like with the plants we like, in the manner that makes us happy, our gardens should be a reflection of us, the gardener, and not an imitation of a magazine cover. Of course, we can not change weather and climate, subsoil structure, or temperatures, and we can’t
force tropicals like orchids to grow outdoors in winter at 5000 feet but find what you like that grows well for you and plant lots of it. Be extravagant!

All of the happy gardeners I know are never lonely or bored—eccentric maybe—but never lonely and never bored. They’re never lonely even when they’re alone. How could they be bored with all that weeding, dead-heading, fertilizing and planting to be done? There are garden centers to be explored, seed and flower catalogs to be searched and botanical gardens to stroll through.

If you are lonely, offer free seeds from your garden to someone. Hollyhocks grow very easily and produce prodigious amounts of seeds to share; so do cosmos. This goodwill gesture may create a friendship. At the very least, maybe there will be more flowers in the world for the bees. Join a garden club, or two, or three. Meet some other people who have something in common with you. Find your niche. You may not stay in all three clubs, but you will find friends. You will also probably end up with baskets of iris rhizomes and red hot poker starts for that flower bed you’ve always dreamed of. I can see it now—can’t you?—a pretty bench in a sea of purple iris followed later by a forest of tall red flower spikes alive with hummingbirds and you sitting on the bench in a huge straw hat decorated with purple roses and red ribbons. We need to look for happiness in our own backyards. Like Dorothy in the Wizard of Oz, we search for happiness and fulfillment by using the ideas of other people and other places in a copycat imitation. We need to take those ideas and make them ours, suited to our own backyards and lifestyles. Appreciate that we already have in our landscapes and work around it, using the existing plants as the “bones” of our design. Got a great patch of cactus? Add to it with other patches of cactusey stuff like agaves. Maybe add a tipped-over empty rusted-out water can, or add a rustic “poison water” sign. Have some fun with it.

*Don’t you just love words like “phooey”? Nowadays it seems that the entire American population has only one emphatic word of four letters to use for emphasis. This is really boring and unimaginative since there are words to use such as “Egads!” and “Zounds!” out there instead, but that’s another story.

Do something different this year. Volunteer to help with the horticulture or floriculture areas at the county fair at the end of summer. You don’t have to be an expert. There are lots of ways you can help without being a judge. Plan now to grow something to enter in the fair yourself this year. Take a vase of flowers from your garden to the reception desk at a care center or the hospital to be given to someone who doesn’t have visitors. Surprise a neighbor with daffodil bulbs and a note. Surprise your postman with a tiny pumpkin and a note of appreciation in the fall. Go to the library and check out some gardening books to learn about orchids or fuchsias for example, just for fun. Get out of your gardening rut and take an excursion to Oz. Don’t care much for spiders? Check out a book at the library on spiders and learn how to appreciate their place and usefulness in the universe. It may change your perspective. Decide to plant your pots in colors of orange and purple this
year and make them generously full. Use bigger
plants; don’t wait for them to grow into the pot.

Are you looking for more color in your gar-
den? Buy bright red roses to go with your bright
red gloves, apron and clogs or canvas shoes. Be-
sides, your bright red hat and shirt will attract
hummingbirds, too. Have more fun in your gar-
den this year and stop fretting about all the things
that aren’t perfect. Prop your feet up on a bright
red pillow and enjoy a glass of cranberry juice.
Take more time to just sit in your garden and en-
joy it. Practice ignoring the weeds.

I’m going to try putting women’s high-
heeled shoes in some of my pots this year instead
of little garden statues. I plan to press the heel
spikes in the soil and let them stick out over the
edges. After I punch a hole in the soles, I plan to
put some drapey plants in them like sedums or
ivy. I’m sure I can find lots of great colors of shoes
at the Goodwill. If not, I’ll spray paint them! Af-
after the season is over, out they’ll go. I have about
six pairs that I know I will never wear again. My
high heeled pump days are over. I came to my
senses long ago. I may as well have some fun with
them now. Besides, I think Ruby Slippers are very
appropriate for my garden in Oz. Come on, just
click your heels together three times—“there’s no
place like home.”

Teepee

Have children, or are you just young at heart? If ei-
ther or perhaps both apply, plant a teepee. Take eight
bamboo poles or any other wood stakes 8 to 10 feet high.
Take twine and loosely tie them together about one foot
from one end. Prop them up like a teepee with the stakes
evenly spaced. If you live in a windy area, you might want
to tie it down somehow so it doesn’t blow away. Now plant
any vining plant that will grow vigorously. Beans, morning
glories, cucumbers, etc. will work. Water and fertilize and
soon you will have vines creeping up the framework of your
teepee. A great place for the kids to hide out or maybe the
parents to hide out. Whatever works for you.
On a trip to California many years ago I encountered—for the first time—fuchsias. While the word “fuchsia” had been familiar to me as a color, I’d never seen the plant. Well, it was love at first sight. As much as I love desert plants, I have had this bad habit of falling head over heels for plants that are so inappropriate for our climate that it boggles the mind. Orchids and dogwood are two others.

There was a time that to find a fuchsia outside the Pacific coast was unusual but today you find them in nurseries all over, including here. My heart still does a silly dip when I see them at a nursery but I haven’t had much luck growing them, even in my greenhouse. I write this in an effort to help others succeed where I have not.

Fuchsias are native to South America and can be found as trees and shrubs. They are named after the famous physicist and botanist Leonard Fuchs (1501-1566.) Fuchs never actually saw the plant; he was dead before any specimens made it to Europe a century later. Fuchs produced a famous herbal publication. Charles Plumier, a French plant hunter honored many famous botanists by naming plants after them. (Plumeria is named after him) Plumier named the first fuchsia (Fuchsia coccinea) in 1703. Like many plants that were discovered in North and South America, fuchsia made the journey to Europe before it came back to the Americas in the form of a cultivated plant. It first came to the Royal Gardens in Kew, near London.

One of the first fuchsias to be cultivated was Fuchsia magellanica, found in Chile. Its home was in cool moist forests. In the wild it can grow into a large shrub; in cultivation it proved to be a smaller dense shrub. Brits and Scots used it as a hedge. Over time more than 100 species were found, which have been hybridized into as many as 8000 hybrids and cultivars.

The beauty of the fuchsia lies in its bright colored flowers. One word that comes up in describing fuchsia flowers is ballerina. The brightly colored sepals spread open over equally brightly colored petals. Suspended from graceful arching stems they look like little ballerinas dancing. The petals and sepals range in color from white, to rose, purple, reds, pinks and all the colors in between. The sepals and petals can be different colors or they can be the same. The plants can be upright or the stems can be long and droopy, great for hanging baskets.

Interestingly the fuchsia family (Onagraceae) includes several familiar desert and garden plants including Oenothera—the desert primrose—and Clarkias and Godetias.

For gardening purposes, they are classified as tender or hardy. Tender varieties can be grown as bedding plants and are often used in gardens with a more hospitable climate than ours. Hardy fuchsias are named so because they can handle temperatures as low as 23°F. They die back in the fall and regrow in the spring. In our climate they really need to be grown as container plants. Fuchsia will not tolerate the hot sun, so place your plant under a porch or even in the shade of a tree. During the winter, however, make sure they have plenty of light. They will need close monitoring for water and regular feeding.

Expanding your collection is easy. The plants sprout readily from cuttings. In fact if you purchase fuchsias through the mail, they are usually young cuttings. Cuttings can be taken at any time of year, the earlier you take the cuttings the sooner they will bloom, some even in the same year. Root-
ing hormone can be used but isn’t necessary. Use a peat and vermiculite or sand mixture and keep cuttings in a humid environment.

By fall most of the leaves will be gone. At that time cut back the stems as much as two-thirds and remove any thin stems, repot or topdress and water well. Wait to feed about four to five weeks. For the plant to bloom again, it needs a period of temperatures 65°F or lower.

High humidity is also important and they need to grown on a tray with water, or use misters. As most of the water in our area is hard, use rain water or reverse osmosis water. During the blooming season they are heavy feeders. Feed at least every two weeks, or at half strength, every week. Do not fertilize heavily during the winter.

Pests can be a problem. Aphids, red spider mites and whiteflies are especially fond of fuchsia. It is important that if you are bringing one into the greenhouse or house, keep it isolated until you are sure you haven’t brought problems home with you.

Pruning is perpetual with fuchsia. With rigorous pruning you can create a variety of shapes, shrubs, trees, pyramids and pillars, all of which you can find in a book, if you are interested. Just keep in mind that pinching back frequently while the plant is growing can increase flowering.

So if you are in a nursery and can’t resist their beautiful flowers, give it a try. Even if they only survive the summer, their cascade of flowers is beautiful and they may attract hummingbirds.

Arizona Odyssey

I started gardening early in life. In Tucson we had a fairly successful garden, considering my lack of knowledge. There were even fruit trees in the yard. The birds usually won but the apricot tree was large enough that they shared with us. When we moved to Scottsdale I tried again to garden but it was a frustrating process, as the gardening information wasn’t for our climate at all. During my Montana years—the gardening urge reseeded to the point of growing houseplants. But

Arizona Odyssey

I had a bad habit of forgetting to bring them back inside at night and freezing them.

Once I came back to Arizona the need to garden resurfaced, even though I found myself in Yuma’s sun and sand. Surprisingly it is a prime gardening/agriculture area—in the winter. After attending a few horticultural classes at the local college, I was off and running. One year, thanks to the college greenhouses, I had a magnificent border of stock plants. I had herbs and even grew a small patch of the tiny sweet corn that is canned whole, cob and all and is found in salads and Chinese food. I was planning on getting involved with the Master Gardeners the next time they held a class. But life has many twists and turns and I was only in Yuma two years. (Yuma isn’t as bad as most people imagine, by the way.)

Next stop was Camp Verde. I was looking forward to moving here because of some childhood memories—one of our travel stops on a vacation. Two years later I was able to move out of
an apartment and into my first (and probably only) house. Home ownership was scary—the house was smaller and older than I wanted but I’m a State employee. I’m sure most of you have read something about the furor over pay raises for State employees and I’m sure many of you have grumbled that we’re probably overpaid. Let me assure there is no waste in employee wages. Anyway, it was certainly not the house of my dreams but it had a BIG yard and a well—a gardener's heaven, or so I thought. It was soon after that time that I read about the Master Gardeners class in the paper and so here I am today.

The house is still too small, although I am making an effort to get rid of things. It doesn’t always seem to work, though. The big yard and well became a double edged sword. Lots of space, but Texas root rot abounds so limits what I can do with the space. Lots of water, but that is now threatened by a water rights battle in the valley and besides, its so hard it comes out of the hose in chunks. There is a white coating over much of the ground when the water dries. Then there is the bermuda grass problem!

Would I trade the house back in on an apartment?—Never. Will I ever get the landscaping finished?—Maybe. If I won the lottery I would move. Off course—don’t be silly, but until then, I’ll figure out what can withstand Texas Root Rot. I like to think of my yard as a living laboratory. Hmmmm, wonder if there is grant money for that? I’ll invest in sulfur and manure futures and a reverse osmosis system for the greenhouse to counteract the bad water. It isn’t the landscape I planned on, but then again, whose is?

Oh, and those years I’ve spent as a Master Gardener? Worth every moment!

### May Calendar

- **Plant warm season crops:** tomatoes, peppers, squashes, melons, etc. Summer flowers, like marigolds, cosmos, gallardia, zinnias and other warm season flowers can go in also.

- **Weed, weed, weed. Water, Water, Water**

- **Corn should wait until the end of the month. It really likes the warm weather.**

- **Check your drip system to make sure it’s in working order. Check the timer to make sure it is set for the warmer, dryer weather.**

- **Some flowers will be blooming by now; pinch back the dead blooms to keep them blooming for much of the summer.**

- **Cool season crops will bolt in the hot weather; extend the season by covering with a row cover or shade cloth.**

- **Wait until June to plant your warm season grasses.**

- **Summer bulbs can be planted early in the month—dahlias, daylilies, acidanthera, canna, gladiolus, iris, montbretia, society garlic and zephyranthes.**

- **Fertilize and deadhead roses. The cut should be made at a 45° angle above a leaflet. Water deeply; mulch.**

- **Fertilize melons and squashes. All are putting out new roots or trying to bloom and could use some additional nutrients.**

### Golden Iris Garden

Golden Iris Garden is in bloom and hosting an open house every weekend in May (or till the iris finish blooming) Open 8am-4pm weekends or by appointment. Call (928) 445-0503. Located in Prescott Valley, 4564 Robin Dr. If you are coming from Prescott it’s about 1 mile past the Costco.
MG Association Meeting

The May 15, 2002 Master Gardener Association meeting will be held at the Prescott Frontier Days Meeting Room, 828 Rodeo Dr. in Prescott (formerly known as the Shelby Hansen 4-H Building on the old Yavapai County Fairgrounds). Jeff Schalau will present a program on surfing the Internet for horticultural resources, the Yavapai County Web Site, reporting volunteer hours electronically, and discuss how to improve the Yavapai County Horticulture Web Site. Following the educational program, we will hold elections of officers and our business meeting. Directions: take Gurley St. west to Grove St., turn north on Grove, continue through two signaled intersections, then turn right (west) on to Rodeo Dr. (between Chuy’s and Sizzler), continue until you get to the green, concrete block building (see attached map on address page).

Effective May 1, Replacement MG badges will cost volunteers $5.00. Make check out to University of AZ and send to the Cottonwood office.

Fort Verde State Park needs help with their historic garden. One to two hours a week. Contact Nora Graf, (928) 567-3275

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

NOTE FROM THE EDIT OR:
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

Prescott: (928) 567-3275
Cottonwood: (520) 646-9113
FAX: (928) 567-3273

11th Annual Desert Horticulture Conference, May 17, Tucson Convention Center. Desert Horticulture is an annual conference for all members of the Green Industry: landscape architects, designers, growers, retailers, contractors, maintenance personnel and suppliers. Sessions include Managing Vertebrate Pests in Desert Landscapes, Methods of Measuring Water Use, Nature by Design: Concepts from a Flora, How Trees Grow, Large Cactus Salvage and Diseases of Xeric Landscape Plants among others. Cost is $35.00, includes lunch. Contact Jack Kelly (520) 626-5161 for more information or go to the website http://ag.arizona.edu/deserthort/

Jeff Schalau
County Director,
Yavapai County Extension Agent,
Agriculture & Natural Resources

Gourd Mania, May 4th & 5th, Youngs Farm. The Arizona Gourd Society/Southwest Gourd Association was organized in 1998 and is based in Phoenix. The Association educates people about growing gourds, their uses and crafting. They are looking to form a new "patch". Members of the Association will be at Youngs Farm between 9am and 4 pm with booths with crafted and raw gourds for sale. Between 4pm and 5pm each day they will host a meeting for anyone interested in forming a "gourd patch". All crafters are invited to join in the display and sale. (The flyer didn’t give a contact person, so if you are interested you might call Young’s Farm and see if they have a name and number.)

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