Events & Activities

MG Association Meeting, Wednesday, May 19, 6:30pm, Prescott. See address page for map. The speaker will be Georgina Lockwood. She will talk about herbs and flowers.

Yavapai Rose Society - May 17, 2 PM at the First Christian Church 1230 Willow Creek Rd., Prescott. For more information call Bob or Nancy at 771-9300,

Prescott Area Gourd Society, May 20, 6:30pm, At the Prescott Library on Marina St.

Pond Club -this is an informal group that meets every couple of months, usually the 3rd week. Email aquaticgardens@esedona.net for more information.

The Organic Gardening Club will be meeting on the 3rd Saturday of the month at 2215 E. Aspen St, 3pm. For directions call 928-649-3451.

The Prescott Area Iris Society invites you to enter your iris blooms in the 5th Annual Iris Exhibit, Saturday, May 15, at Watters Nursery. This competition is free and open to the public.

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For years, I didn’t think too much of lavender. Most lavender perfumes and scents were too strong and intense for me and it was just another gray plant. Then I was growing an historic garden at work and I needed to add some herbs to the mix and, on a whim picked up a lavender plant. After a couple of years I had this gorgeous huge plant that bloomed with abandon and my opinion began to change. First, the scent of the plant is a lot more agreeable than you find in various lotions, perfumes and sprays. Second, the plant was really beautiful, although it took a little more maintenance than I usually give plants. I now have a lavender plant in my yard and plan to put in one or two more varieties one of these days. Lavender is also very drought-tolerant and can withstand our hot dry summers without much problem. They even prefer limestone soils, which Camp Verde has in abundance.

Like most of our familiar plants, lavender has a long history. Lavender is a Mediterranean herb that is now cultivated worldwide. The name is thought to come from the Latin lavare, “to wash,” because it was used in bath water. It was used by the ancient Greeks and Romans. The plant was used medicinally and for pleasure. Wines and vinegars were made from it. Some think the Romans introduced lavender to the British Isles but it may have even been earlier. Dark Age monks recorded it in their writings. It has been used to heal people of colds, headaches, limb paralysis, an antiseptic, disinfectant and to treat neurosis. It was also used in a tonic to prevent the plague during the Middle Ages. Lavender was also used to sweeten the air and clothes. It was strewn on clothes and hung from ceilings to deter pests like flies and mosquitoes. While less used as a culinary herb, it was used in salads.

Lavender is available as plants. While it can be grown by seed, this is mostly left to breeders looking to develop new varieties. I'll talk about some of the different varieties later. Today, all the lavender you purchase comes from cuttings and possibly tissue culture. This helps assure that you get the variety you intend. There are some species of lavender that can be grown by seed but they will show natural variations. Unless you are really adventurous and are interested in breeding new varieties, it is...
probably best to purchase a plant of a named variety.

As I have already mentioned, lavender will grow well in our native soils; it doesn’t even mind gravelly or rocky ground. Wherever you plant it, good drainage is necessary. While it is unusual for someone to have wet soils around here (but just for your information,) you can grow lavender on a mound to assure proper drainage.

Lavenders can withstand a wide range of temperatures, wind, snow and rain. Their temperature tolerance ranges from -5°F to well over 100°F. (Camp Verde can get up to 110°F on occasion and the plant takes it in stride.) As long as the drainage is good, they can survive snow, if the plant is covered only a few days. Our local bug-a-boo—late frosts—can freeze developing flower stalks but just cut them off and the plant will produce more for a bit later bloom. There are a few varieties (Pterostoechas group) that are more frost-tender and may not survive a harsh winter. (I’m sure the source of this information means an East Coast harsh winter and not our sort of occasional really cold winters.) If you are worried though lavender can be grown in pots and brought under cover for the winter.

When it comes to watering, they are fairly drought-tolerant but can become desiccated in very dry conditions, especially if planted in a windy area. Mine is planted on a bank with a variety of other drought-tolerant and native desert plants that are only watered every couple of weeks and it is doing fine. It probably would grow faster and bigger if I watered more often but it blooms reliably and I don’t want it taking over the space, anyway. New young plants are more susceptible to drought conditions than mature plants. An interesting note I read while doing research is that some of the fragrant oils produced by the plant can be reduced in drought conditions. Water by drip irrigation or close to the ground. The plant can be damaged by overhead watering.

One of the drawbacks to this plant is that it does need periodic pruning. While lavender tends to form a compact round clump, it can get rangy and the dried flower stalks can look pretty unattrac-
ive. Once a year the plant should be cut back by one third. This will reinvigorate the plant and keep it looking good. In warmer climates, pruning can take place anytime but pruning in the spring will probably delay flowering. Cutting the flowers off for drying or display can lengthen the blooming period.

In commercial lavender production, the plants are replaced every eight to ten years to maintain maximum flower production but in your yard, with good care, the plant should last considerably longer. The plant can get woody over time and will be prone to splitting. At this point, it should probably be replaced but pruning each year will help prevent this from happening. Since these plants like alkaline/limestone soils, little fertilizer is needed in our area. Some additional nitrogen could be given in the spring and after flowering but, if your plant is growing and flowering well, I don’t think additional fertilizer is necessary. A scoopful of compost once a year is really all that the plant needs. As I mentioned earlier, lavenders adapt well to containers. They are even used in topiaries. Lavender angustifolia “Nana Alba,” “Irene Doyle,” “Blue Cushion,” “Lavenite Petite,” are smaller varieties that work well in containers. Larger lavenders like “Munstead” and “Hidcote” can be container grown but need to be transplanted to the garden unless you start them in a large container. Use a well-draining potting mix. They will need to be fertilized and watered regularly. Expect that any newly transplanted lavender will not bloom well the first year. They can be planted in the fall or spring. Interestingly enough, lavenders can be used as a hedge. Plant them close together in masses or spread them out. Check the mature size of the plant (as varieties vary) to determine how far apart to plant them.

Most people plant lavenders for the flowers. The best time to pick is in the morning. Look for spikes with the first two flowers on the spike opened. When the flowers are picked at first flower break, the flowers will remain on the stalk after drying. After more of the flowers have opened, they will drop off the dried stalks. These can be used in potpourri when this happens. For fresh flowers, the spikes should have one-quarter to one-third of the flowers open.
If cutting for oil, wait until half the flowers have withered. If you plan on drying the flowers, take a clump of them and tie or rubber band them together and hang in a dark, dust-free place with good ventilation.

While most named varieties cannot be commercially propagated for profit, you can attempt to grow them for your own use. Lavenders can be cultivated from cuttings so, if you have a plant that you especially like, you might give it a try, although some are not easy to root. Take softwood cuttings in the spring or softwood cuttings and semi-hardy cuttings in the fall. Remove any flowers and dip ends in rooting hormone and place in a well-draining soil. New roots should form in three to six weeks. Root formation is dependent on the cultivar and climate. Some varieties like *L. angustifolia* can be divided, if the plant has had its lower stems covered with soil and allowed to root before you actually make the division.

Pests and diseases are not a huge problem for lavender in our area but they can be afflicted by aphids, mealy bugs and some caterpillars and also some funguses. Because of our dry climate, most of these are not a huge problem. At least in my yard, the aphids much prefer the roses to the lavender!

There are many different varieties and species of lavender and I am not sure I understand entirely the differences so I am not going to get too excited about this. What is known as English Lavender is actually *L. angustifolia* (sometimes as *L. officinalis,* French, Spanish or Portugeuse lavender may be *L. latifolia,* but there isn’t really any French, English or other nationality lavender. The reason I even bring it up is that the two most common types are different species and you may come across these names; each covers many varieties. The first is the *Lavandula* section. These are characterized by a flower stalk with staggered groupings of flowers along it. The *Stoechas* section has a tight group of flowers at the end of the stalk with large flag-like bracts at the top.

One of the most common plants found is *Lavandula angustifolia.* It has a large number of cultivars, including varieties that have white or pink flowers. Alba is the most common white cultivar. Other cultivars you might find are “Blue Cushion,” “Munstead,” “Blue Mountain,” “Hidcote,” including “Hidcote Blue,” “Hidcote Pink,” “Hidcote Purple” and “Hidcote Variety.”

*Lavandula stoechas* create a sea of colorful flags above the foliage. Colors range from pinks to lavenders to white. Some varieties you might look for are “Lumiere,” “Provocatif,” “Pukehou” and “Gethsmane.” There are a multitude of other varieties that are available, I can’t even begin to go into them all.

If you are looking for an all-around hardy, good looking plant, nearly year round, lavender is a lovely plant to include in your garden. The latest Sunset Magazine has an excellent article on lavender. If you are interested in more information have a look at it. The article also contains quite a few pictures.

By the way an acre of lavender will yield about 15 to 20 pounds of oil. When making apple jelly or raspberry jam, add a sprig of lavender to each jar.

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Sources of Lavender

Nichols Garden Nursery
800-422-3985
www.nicholsgardennursery.com
1190 Old Salem Road NE
Albany, Oregon 97321-4580

I haven’t ordered from these companies but they have a large number of varieties available.

Goodwin Creek Gardens
www.goodwin-creekgardens.com

Champion Acres Nursery
78693 Cedar Park Rd.
Cottage Grove, Oregon 97424
541-942-7766
www.champion-acres.com
Ailanthus
Tree of Heaven (Not!)

For those of you that have been to Jerome, you may have noticed a type of tree that is literally growing everywhere. Not entirely unattractive, sometimes scraggly, this is Ailanthus altissima. DO NOT consider planting it anywhere!! I don’t often write about things not to plant but this is one more. This tree will invade anywhere, creating great thickets and forcing out native plants or any plants, walls and foundations, for that matter.

Ailanthus is a deciduous tree that can grow up to 90 feet tall, although I have never seen one that big around here. The leaves resemble sumac leaves. The leaves are 1 to 3 feet long divided into 12 to 30 leaflets. The tree blooms in the spring and produces copious amounts of winged seeds. The seeds can remain on the tree until fall. When the leaves or green stems are crushed they exude an unpleasant odor.

Native to China, Ailanthus was introduced in America in the 1700’s. Pierre d’Incarville mistakenly thought it was the lacquer tree and sent seeds to England. It was then introduced in America by a Philadelphia gardener in 1784. A second route for the tree was Chinese miners during the California Gold Rush. The miners brought the seeds with them when they settled in California. To the Chinese, the tree has medicinal and cultural value. Because of its hardiness, it spread across the country. It has also spread throughout Europe. It deserves its reputation as being very hardy, as it can grow in a wide range of habitat and climates. I have heard it was originally planted in Jerome because nothing much would grow there.

The problem with it is that it does easily spread, displacing natives. Part of this is chemical. Chemicals produced by the tree are toxic to many other plants. In areas with Ailanthus you will rarely find much else growing. It is fond of disturbed areas and it produces root sprouts that can form dense thickets. Keeping them from taking over is a time-consuming task.

Since the tree reproduces both sexually and asexually, getting rid of it isn’t easy. Seedlings easily sprout and can form a tap root in less than three months and the tree grows very quickly. When the tree is cut down, it readily re-sprouts. Only repeated cuttings can kill the tree. In desperate circumstances, the tree stump should be painted with the herbicide glyphosate.

We have several that grow around Fort Verde State Park where I work. I routinely give any new sprouts a couple of quick hard kicks. When they are no more than six inches tall, you can do this. If they get much bigger they take more vigorous exercise. Don’t let them get started in your yard.
Letter to the Editor

I don’t normally print letters to the editor because I rarely ever get any, so I was pleased when I received this one from Master Gardener Ruth Jacobi. Not only did she have some kind words for the newsletter but she helped correct an error in the last newsletter. Comments and corrections are always welcome. Nora Graf

Thoroughly enjoyed this past newsletter - it’s also really looking good in its current format. Just to compare notes - your knowledge of “chicory” does not jibe with mine, as is so often the case with “common” terms. To my knowledge, the chicory used for coffee is the root of the common chicory weed, the lovely pale-blue flowered plant that we find even out here in Arizona in our fields. According to my mother, during WWII that’s what “coffee” was made from (it was originally brought here from Europe and was always used there in coffee) and that is what is added to coffee beans even today. We left it in our fields in NY because this “weed” has a long tap root and mines elements well, thereby making the minerals more readily available to the livestock. The plants are richer in a number of minerals: iron, potassium, sulfur, as I recall, and a few more, than many of the chosen pasture forages and have a high protein content. I’m even thinking of seeding this “weed” here in my own small pastures because it is a good graze when combined with good grasses. The hard part is getting over the concept of “weed.”

And, regarding Witloof chicory, I used to force it in the winter in our root cellar (back in NY State) and your directions are correct. I experimented with perlite instead of sand and the roots forced too soon and too open. I tried peat moss and they rotted. Ultimately, sand was the best and I never had a failure with sand in the forcing boxes (I used large milk crates, and the porous wooden sides, I think, were also a good thing). I couldn’t have a root cellar built here because I’m too near the water table and the river but I have to tell you that there is something wondrous about trotting down to the perpetually 50 degree root cellar and bringing up fresh chicory and carrots and apples and parsnips and mushrooms and cabbage and leeks and celeriac, and on and on, in the middle of a snowstorm in February when the temperature is 10 degrees outside and the wind is 20 knots. Knowing something about myself, though, I realize that I enjoy survival mentality, so perhaps that’s what made it so special to me.

My best, Ruth Jacobi

Dave Schafer from the V-V Ranch always has lots of cow manure to give away. Call Keith "Bopper " Cannon at 821-3299 to make arrangements. They will load it Mon through Sat before 7a or after 6p.
Volunteer Hours Submissions
If you mail or fax your volunteer/continuing education hours, they should now be sent to the Prescott Extension Office. The form for mailing/faxing has been revised to contain the same information as the electronic version, and it can be found at http://ag.arizona.edu/yavapai/anr/hort/mastergardener. Contact Mary Barnes if you have questions—928-583-0889.

Yavapai Gardens Now On-Line
The Yavapai Gardens (this newsletter) is now available on-line. (http://ag.arizona.edu/yavapai/anr/hort/mastergardener). Due to rising printing and mailing costs, we will soon be discontinuing distribution of the paper copy of Yavapai Gardens to inactive volunteers. We plan to create an e-mail group code so a message can be sent out when each new issue of the electronic newsletter is posted. We will let you know when that process is available – both active and inactive volunteers will be able to sign-up for the electronic e-mail message that will link you to the newsletter. Active volunteers will still receive the mailed paper copy unless they opt for the electronic version.

Master Gardener Volunteer Opportunities
Following are some Master Gardener volunteer opportunities. The time you spend on these activities will count toward your volunteer hours. If you have already signed up at the meetings for a particular task you do not need to do so again. Please reply with what are are interested in - give me your name and phone number.

1) The Prescott Extension Office has 2 shift openings (i.e. answering Master Gardener helpline). You don’t have to be an expert, just be resourceful and be willing to look up the answers. It is a great learning experience. Contact Bev Turnbull if you are interested (baturnb@cableone.net, phone 445-9590).

2) Camp Verde Garlic & Gourd Festival (June 12th & 13th) - take a shift at the Master Gardener table to answer questions from the public.

3) Highland Conference - Convention Center @ Cliff Castle Casino, Camp Verde - Oct 18th & 19th. Following are several sub-projects that could use your talents and time.

   * Order books, inventory, cover shift at the "bookstore table"
   * Introduce speakers, keep track of time
   * Assist vendors
   * Cover shift at registration table; collect money for gourds that are purchased
   * Secure items and put them in “enrichment” bags
   * Help set up before the conference
   * Help “tear down” after the conference
   * Solicit monetary donations from sponsors (you will be given instructions prior to soliciting)
   * Obtain door prizes for the conference

4) Desperately need 1 person to chair the sub-committee for Master Gardener school activities, and 2 people from Verde Valley and Prescott to be co-chairs for each of those geographic areas.

If you have questions regarding any of the above, don’t hesitate to ask.
Thanks in advance for your assistance.

Mary Barnes
Co-chair - Volunteer Projects Committee
583-0889
Conference Dreams

Here I am sitting in a conference thinking about my garden. Maybe it’s the floral carpet at my feet, maybe it’s that for all the great intentions, the gloriously optimistic opening speaker isn’t engaging my brain. Regardless, my mind is wandering. I’m thinking about all the spring lettuces that need to be planted. The winter “junk” that still needs to be cleaned—the seeds that still need to be started. I’m thinking how uncomfortable the chair I’m sitting in is, how I’d rather be outside digging a hole or something. (Well, maybe not digging large holes!) Maybe it’s just spring.

Even in our climate where winter is a minor inconvenience at worst, spring still brings about a burst of energy and optimism. The need to be outside, “one with nature,” surges up. We are attracted by banks of flowers showing up in nurseries. Like giant magnets, we are drawn in. It muddles the mind—why on earth are we buying tomato plants in March when we know there is going to be a least one more freeze? Why are we buying more plants or seeds than could possibly fit in the available space? Why would we buy a plant that won’t survive the first 100 degree day of summer?

We know that each year’s end garden is rarely what we planned in February. It’s spring and we are helpless against its allure. Enjoy it!

FROM THE EDITOR: Please send or email articles and announcements to the address below. Long articles will go in as soon as possible, announcements must be in by the 15th of the month to be included.

Nora Graf
PO Box 3652
Camp Verde, AZ 86322
mesquite2@hotmail.com
(928) 567-6703

Jeff Schalau
County Director, Yavapai County Extension Agent,
Agriculture & Natural Resources
email: jschalau@ag.arizona.edu

Prescott
840 Rodeo Dr.
Building C
Prescott, AZ 86305
(928) 445-6590
FAX: (928) 445-6593

Cottonwood
2657 Village Dr.
Cottonwood, AZ 86326
(928) 646-9113

The Prescott Area Iris Society invites you to enter your iris blooms in the 5th Annual Iris Exhibit, Saturday, May 15, at Watters Nursery. This competition is free and open to the public. To achieve our goal of promoting an awareness and appreciation of iris, we need to have as many different iris on display as possible. The public will vote for their favorite irises and the exhibitors of winning irises will be awarded prizes at the end of the exhibit. For exhibit rules call 776-7217 or email jbook@cableone.net.
MG Association Meeting, May 19, 6:30pm, at the Extension office in Prescott.
840 Rodeo Dr.
Building C

Speaker: The May 19 speaker will be Georgina Lockwood. She will speak on herbs and flowers.

June 17, Cottonwood. The program will be a roundtable of our most experienced gardeners answering all your gardening questions.