May Flowers

by Nora Graf

It’s spring and what am I doing? I’m inside writing the newsletter and not out gardening. Something’s wrong with this picture! I do have lettuce in and the garlic is doing fine, thank you, but the first week of April says I should be doing a lot more. So I am just going to remind everyone of what they should be doing; it will be the first of May when you see this and you should be busy!!

It’s too late to be starting seeds indoors but the nurseries should have a nice selection of flowers and vegetables for planting.

If your soil temperature is above 60°F, you can plant herbs. These can be started directly in the ground by seed or buy already potted plants. Basil, marjoram, mints, oregano, thyme, hyssop, lavender, sage and savory are just some the herbs that can be planted now.

Vegetables can also go in. Yavapai County has a range of zones so make sure you know what your last frost date is, but sometime this month get in your tomatoes, peppers, cucumbers, squashes and melons. Cucumbers, melons and squash start easily from seed and there is a huge variety available if, you skip the bedding plant section of the nursery and check out the seed rack.

The joy of annual flowers begins now. Coreopsis, cosmos, gaillardia, salvias, zinnias, marigolds, hollyhocks, and sunflowers among them. Some of these can be purchased as plants. I saw cosmos the other day at the store. I struggle with the idea of buying annuals in gallon containers. I’m not sure they are worth the expense, since they grow so well from seeds or can be bought as small plants in six packs. Being a gardener is often about patience, and watching a plant mature and waiting for that first blossom is as important as the concept of “instant color,” well, to me anyway, it’s important.
There is also time to plant shrubs and trees. Agaves, cactus, agastache, evergreens are available for permanent plantings.

May and June tend to be the driest months of the year, so make sure your irrigation system is working correctly. Nothing worse than going away for a few days and coming back to a system that failed and killed a few plants in the process. Make sure any leaks are repaired and that the emitters or sprinklers are working properly. Tomatoes, especially, benefit from consistent watering. It may be time to consider putting them on a drip system with a timer. I know that hand watering is a soul-satisfying experience but they really would benefit more by putting them on the clock.

In conjunction with checking the irrigation system, mulch, mulch, mulch and help your plants by preserving moisture and save on your water bill because you won't have to water as often.

Many plants need fertilizer this time of year, lawns and roses especially. Nitrogen promotes rapid growth but that may not be the best for the plant. Too much nitrogen may promote growth but sacrifice blooming. Before you fertilize, read the labels and select the best fertilizer for the plant.

Weeds need to be controlled; get them while they are small and certainly before they flower—more flowers=more seeds=more weeds next season.

Bugs and more bugs. The explosive spring growth of plants creates a banquet for insects and diseases. Don’t spray indiscriminately. Identify the problem and then identify the best solution. Aphids can often be controlled with sprays of water. Horn worms can be hand-picked. If you feel you need to spray, read the container carefully. Only use a product licensed to treat your pest. Remember killing the various worms kills butterflies and moths. Even the tomato horn worm, gardener’s mortal enemy, turns into a pretty moth. Just be careful and remove only the bugs that are doing the worst damage. A perfect garden can include holes in the leaves.

Once you finish all that, sit back with a cool drink and enjoy your garden.

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**Interesting Web Sites**

I know that some people are daunted by the stress of growing roses. All the pruning, fertilizing and spraying. For those that are interested in a more organic process, I found a website that you might be interested in: www.organicrosegardening.com

Are you looking for absolutely fabulous beetle pictures? Go to: www.living-jewels.com/photo.htm

Butterflies of North America
www.npwrc.usgs.gov/resource/distr/lepid/bflyusa/bflyusa.htm

Dave’s Garden includes garden watchdog for checking out catalog companies, plant scout, bookworm and other interesting gardening information.
www.davesgarden.com

For Tomato Lovers
www.tomatofest.com

Looking for information on a particular plant?
www.hortiplex.gardenweb.com/plants

Plant Select for the Rocky Mountain and Plains States
www.plantselect.org

The Language of Flowers
www.victorianbazaar.com/meanings.html
MEET A MASTER GARDENER - Paula Stuart
by Jeannette Teets

Paula Stuart, our MGA Treasurer, Membership Committee and Social/Refreshments Committee member has been a Certified Master Gardener since 2004. Paula was born in Naperville, Illinois and received her BA and Masters Degrees in Math at Northern Illinois University in DeKalb, IL. (Paula points out that barbed wire was invented in DeKalb.) Her favorite part of math is Geometry, and feels her love of math came from her father who was an accountant. From Illinois she moved to Colorado where she had a teaching contract and taught high school math for 20 years.

Paula has two married children, Laura and Eric, from her first marriage, and three grandchildren. Laura’s family including newly born daughter, Elise, live in Madison Wisconsin, and Eric’s family, including daughters, Britteny and Corttney, live in Colorado.

Paula and husband of three years, Craig, met many years ago in Colorado though a biking club. Paula has a sister living in the Sedona area who she had often visited, and while on a trip to Utah with Craig suggested he needed to see the beautiful area. He was hooked. They decided to subscribe to the Red Rock News so they could formulate plans to move here one day, and some time later saw an ad for a business for sale and decided to take the plunge. They bought their first home in the Village of Oak Creek at the Sedona Golf Resort, purchased the Village Frame Shop, got married at Enchantment Resort in August of 2003, and have lived here for the last three years. While Craig runs the business Paula teaches two days a week at Yavapai College in Clarkdale, and also teaches elementary school teachers how to teach math.

Paula and Craig are both very athletic and enjoy biking, hiking, tennis. In fact, they plan a bike trip in October with the Museum of Northern Arizona, Flagstaff, traveling 30 miles per day from Flagstaff to the Grand Canyon and camping in the canyon. They’re planning a trip to the Grand Canyon in May and hiking Havasu Canyon. Paula plays tennis three or four times a week, and exercises her hands by knitting. She and Craig share a love for gardening. Paula loves perennials, native plants and herbs, and Craig raises orchids, violets and bonsai.

Paula’s first “green thumb moment” came while living in Illinois. She took a native prairie class, at Morten Arboretum in Lisle, IL, and ended designing her own landscape plan for her home. She found gardening to be challenging in Arizona, thus her interest in becoming a Master Gardener. Wanting still more horticulture education, she worked part time at Nursery Source in West Sedona and because of the setup of their computer system was forced to learn plant botanical names, which she found fascinating; she also learned from two Master Gardeners at Nursery Source, Jean Searle and Vicki Luna. She now works the summer season, at the Village Ace Hardware garden center. Some of her favorite plants are any of the lavenders, pineapple sage, Mexican bush sage, chaparral, and native grasses, especially Indian rice grass.

In addition to working in her garden she takes care of the property they sold up the street. She and Craig wanted more of an unrestricted view, so decided to move. She was concerned that a new buyer might not want to tackle their property with its plethora of plants, but it didn’t seem to bother the new buyer. He simply asked her if he could hire her to continue to nurture the yard, as he didn’t have the time, and she jumped at the chance. Now she enjoys working in both her previous and new yard.

In between all her other activities, Paula is a member of the local Petal Pushers gardening group, will act as a docent at the May 13th Sedona Area Garden Club garden tour working at the “cactus house”, and writes articles on gardening for the Village Voice, most recently on Nandina/heavenly bamboo. Now, as a result of being inspired by a gourd class she took with Master Gardener Nora Graf, she plans on growing gourds from start to finish so she can become a gourd artist. Best of luck, Paula!
When does “organic” not mean “organic?” When the labels aren't clear. The growth in the organic food industry continues to climb at about 20 percent per year. However, when shopping for organic food, the labels may not be telling you the whole story. Here are some examples of organic labels and what they really mean:

**100% Organic:** No synthetic ingredients are allowed by law. Production must meet federal organic standards and be independently verified by inspectors.

**Organic:** At least 95 percent of ingredients are organically produced. The remainder can be non-organic or synthetic ingredients. Yes, this means your “organically labeled” foods can have up to 5 percent non-organic ingredients in them. Organic labels on seafood are meaningless because the USDA has no standards for them.

**Made with Organic Ingredients:** At least 70 percent of ingredients are organic.

**Free-range or free-roaming:** Often seen on eggs, chicken, and other meats, this label suggests that an animal has spent a good portion of its life outdoors. But the standards are weak. For example, the rule for poultry products means that outdoor access is made available for “an undetermined period each day.” So, if a coop door was open for just 5 minutes a day, regardless of whether the chickens went outside, the animals’ meat and eggs could legally be labeled “free-range.”

**Natural or All Natural:** This label does not mean organic. There is no standard definition for this term except when it’s applied to meat and poultry products, which the USDA defines as not containing any artificial flavoring, colors, chemical preservatives, or synthetic ingredients.

So, when shopping for organic foods, know the rules of the labels before you buy. For more information, go to: Consumer Reports.

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**Creative Container Gardening**

*b* by Nora Graf

Container gardening is gaining in popularity. In many ways it is easier; less weed control, no dealing with heavy native soils and so on. Now that yards are getting smaller it’s a way of increasing your garden size. In Arizona, though, containers are tough because of the dry conditions. If you don’t have them on an irrigation system, you need to be home to water twice a day in the summer heat. I’ve lost more containers plant because I didn’t get to water them one day! If you like containers and want to expand your collection of containers, go beyond the mundane; almost anything can be a container.

The conventional terra cotta (clay) containers are beautiful, but they are heavy and, with our hard water, the salts can cause the pots to flake apart. Plus they take the most water. They do come in all sorts of sizes and can now be found with various decorations.

Plastic pots are quickly replacing the clay pot. The good news is they
are looking better. They hold the water better and they are light and easier to move.

Now that we have gone past the conventional, look at other things. How about the old wheelbarrow with the holes rusted through the bottom. Easy to move, interesting and holds a lot of plants. I saw a picture once where someone had taken an old pickup truck and turned it into a container garden.

Check out the garage for other empty containers, wooden boxes, empty tins and old buckets. How about it, do you have an old watering can laying around? Put it to good use. Check closets for baskets, hat boxes and cooking pots. Someone even used shoes to house plants. I think Pattie Conrad in Prescott used shoes in her garden one year. You can grow in plastic bags, margarine tubs, the plastic tubs cat litter comes in.

Create your own containers. Note this cool picture of a hanging garden built out of redwood

Build your own tufa containers. Recipes and instructions are available online and in books. One of these newsletters also had an article on making your own containers.

The point is, don't be constrained by the usual—check out flea markets and yard sales and see what you can find.

If there are not drainage holes in the bottom, there is a drill bit that will go through it. For masonry and metal just check the package the drill bit comes in; it will tell you the recommended material for that bit.

One last thing, it really does work better if you hook up an automatic watering system. There are inexpensive timers that hook directly to the hose. Good Luck and have fun.

Alta Vista Garden Club presents the Prescott Garden Tour

Saturday June 10, 2006, $10.00 donation
8am to 4pm
Attendance is Limited
For tickets or more information call Cathy Michener
928-541-9341 or email cathymichener@earthlink.net
Brunch: $5.00
For reservations call 928-8308

The Prescott Area Iris Society is gearing up for a very busy May. Our Spring Iris Exhibit “Rainbow of Colors,” will be held May 13, 10am-3pm at Mortimer Nursery. There is no entrance fee. We encourage all iris growers to enter a bloom or two of their prettiest iris in order to give the public a stupendous Iris Exhibit. Our goal is to educate the public by showing the gorgeous irises that grow in local gardens. The public will vote on their favorite iris and favorite arrangement. Prizes will be awarded. If you want to enter an iris bring them to Mortimers between 8:15-9:30am on the 13th. Exhibit tubes will be available for individual iris. Floral arrangements should feature iris and any include other flowers. Mark the container with your name. For more information call 776-7217 or email jbook@cableone.net
Varmints. At this season of the year, the air in the vegetable garden begins to assume a bluish tinge. Muttered imprecations, staggering oaths, fine old bucolic cuss-words, the by-hecks, by-gollies, the witness of Heaven called down. You set a row of Cabbage plants, and the blanketly-blank cut worms lay them flat. Put tar paper collars around the new batch to foil the cut worms, and rabbits appear from nowhere to complete another destruction. Crows drop down from the skies, plant their feet in a Corn hill and breakfast off the newly-sprouted shoots.

Of course, the logical gardener will say, “Why don’t you take precautions? You know perfectly well, etc., etc.” All that is true; we do know perfectly well that such varmints must be foiled and routed, but sometimes we forget. Sometimes we nurse the vain hope that the angel of cut worms and crows and rabbits will pass over our humble little vegetable patch this year. Most times, though, we are wearied by the poisonous side of gardening. We are really not cast for the role of the Borgias. It is distasteful to go forth each day with a plant in one hand and Paris green in the other. Our idea of Heaven is a garden where bugs and varmints never penetrate, where the sprayer and the dust gun are unknown and even visiting dogs, who led astray our own border-shy wire-haired fox terrier are kept “without the gates.”

Strawberries. Let other gourmets sing the praise of Asparagus and other and less prosy composers write odes to the slither Rhubarb. The burden of my encomium rests around the ruddy, toothsome flanks of the Strawberry.

We keep two beds going—the old and the new. After the second year of bearing, the runners of the old are rooted in pots of compressed peat moss and then the whole bed is forked up and the plants with their bugs and diseases, are consumed in fire. After this the loam is forked, a liberal spattering of bone meal given and then Crimson Clover sown. By late August the Clover is high enough to spade under for a manuring crop. Then the new plants, which meantime are growing along in the little pots, are set in rows. December, and the patch nestles beneath its bedding of Rye straw held down from the obstreperous Winter wind with chicken wire. By May, straw is well tucked under the plants and the flowering stems laid on it. Then commences disbudding for big fruit—removing all but one or two flowers on a stem. Then also begins the hunt for slugs, damn them! And finally, when color begins to appear in the swelling berries, the patch is canopied with a net that foils the slyest endeavors of the most persistent robin. After these simple exercises, all you need do is to provide the cream and sugar.

Ed. Note: PARIS GREEN is an extremely poisonous, bright green powder that was formerly used extensively as a pigment (e.g., in wallpaper) and that is sometimes used as an insecticide and wood preservative or to kill plant fungi. It must be used with great caution because of its poisonous nature. Chemically it is a copper acetarsenite that may be prepared from arsenic trioxide and copper acetate.

Those High-Falutin’ Names. The novice among gardeners is often annoyed by the way his more accomplished brothers insist on using botanical names for flowers, trees and shrubs. He—often it is she—remarks that the good, old fashioned names should be used, and not these high-faluting’ teeth-cracking titles. John Ruskin, good old John, clung to the same sentiment. For a matter of fact, botanical Latin is the Esperanto of gardeners and the so-called common name has such infinite variations that they change with every locality. Some years ago students of this subject went about the various shires of England setting down these common names. Their findings were bewildering. For Viola tricolor, they record thirty-seven; for the Digitalis, seventy-one; for Centaurea, fifty-five. And so on through a long line of familiar flowers of garden and meadow and roadside.
2006 CALENDAR OF EVENTS FOR MASTER GARDENERS

May 13, Sedona Garden Tour, Contact Sondra Thompson for more info (928-284-5574)
May 19-21, Home, Garden and Lifestyle Show at the Gateway Mall in Prescott
*May 17, 6:30 (Prescott) MGA Meeting, “Landscape Designing with Native Plants” by Steve Morgan **This meeting will take place at the Highland Center for Natural History
June 10, Prescott's Alta Vista Garden Tour, Contact Kathy Grant-Lilley for more information (445-7196)
June 17, Annual Arboretum Field Trip to Flagstaff, Sign up by contacting Patti Conrad (in the evening) at 778-4810
*June 21, 6:30 (Cottonwood) MGA Meeting,
July 15, (Saturday), 10:00 a.m., Field Trip to Prescott Veteran's Hospital to see their greenhouse and grounds and learn about their occupational therapy program. Sign up by calling Missy Sandeen at 771-9856 by July 10th
*August 16, 6:30, (Cottonwood) MGA Meeting,
August 26, V Bar V Ranch, Call Cottonwood office for more information
*September 20, 6:30 (Prescott) MGA Meeting, “Working with Bulbs” with Valerie Phipps from Mortimer’s Nursery
September 21-24, Yavapai County Fair
October 21, Master Gardener Picnic, at Jerome State Park in Jerome, 11:30-1:30
October 13-14, Highland Garden Conference
*November 15, 6:30 (Prescott) MGA Meeting, Gary Young from Young’s Farm in Dewey will be talking about the history and sale of the farm

*For Yavapai Master Gardeners Only

To suggest any additions to the calendar or to ask any questions, please email Melissa Sandeen at rksandeen@netzero.net. Thanks

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.
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MG Association Meeting
May 21, 6:30pm, Prescott