Events & Activities

MG Association Meeting, Wednesday, Aug 19, 6:30pm, See address page for more information

Sept 18-19 Arizona Highlands Garden Conference. Flagstaff, see pg 4

Alta Vista Gardening Club, Prescott, fourth Tuesday of the month, 12:30pm. Call 928-443-0464 for location and information.

Prescott Area Gourd Society, third Tuesday of the month, 6:30 pm, at the Smoki Museum.

Prescott Orchid Society, meets 3rd Sunday of the month, 2pm at the Prescott Library, call Cynthia for information. (928) 717-0623

Prescott Area Iris Society call 928-445-8132 for date and place information.

Verde Valley Iris Society call Linda Smith at 928-567-7470

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An Aztec Beauty
by Nora Graf

Dahlias are not as popular as they once were but should be considered for our gardens because they do extremely well here. Besides that, when you take a visitor to see your garden you can regale them with an interesting plant that has traveled the world. Did you know they are the national flower of Mexico?

The Aztecs grew dahlias and they were strictly an unknown New World plant until the 1570’s. Francisco Hernandez was sent to Mexico by the Spanish king, Phillip II, to study natural resources of the area. He stayed in Mexico from 1570 to 1577. There were two plants that Hernandez discovered, Acocotli and Cocoxochitl (means water pipe), that resemble dahlias. He found the Aztecs using the stems of the tree dahlia, Dahlia imperialis as water pipes as they were long and hollow. This information was published by Hernandez’s “History of Mexico.” The book, although completed, was not published until 1651 for some reason. Hernandez recorded that the tubers of the plants were used as a food plant.

It wasn’t until 1789 that dahlias make another appearance in history when Antonio Jose Cavarilles from the Royal Gardens of Madrid in Spain received plants sent to him by the director of the Botanical Garden at Mexico City. These three tubers were named, Dahlia pinnata, D. rosea, and D. coccinea. The genus name came from the Swedish botanist Andreas Dahl. While the intent was to explore their use as food, they found that while edible they weren’t very good; even the cows wouldn’t eat them. The genus contains 35 species, all found in Mexico and Central America and today they are extremely rare.

The species did not do well in Europe but with the first cross of dahlia species they created a plant that became very popular in both American and European gardens, becoming the modern dahlia hybrid. These first crosses were between D. pinnata (mauve flowers) and D. coccinea (scarlet flowers). In 1804 the species D. variabilis was tossed into the mix. D. variabilis had semi-double flowers in pale purple, pink and yellow. Within four years there were 55 different cultivars growing in the Berlin Botanical Garden. During the 1800’s and 1900’s hybridization continued, so by 1936 there were 14,000 of them. Today there are over 50,000.

The genetics of dahlias is what gives us their many forms. Most flowers have two genes that affect the plant’s look. Dahlias have eight genes. These are responsible for the remarkable diver-
ity that dahlias show. They come in a large number of colors and forms.

Doubles come in both formal and informal forms. They are likely a result of a cross between *D. pinnata* and *D. coronata*, somewhere around 1805 but there seems to be some confusion about that story. In 1816 an English nursery offered the first double. In 1819 a Dutch grower had produced 72 varieties and in 1826 over 100 varieties were available in Germany. They generally replaced the single varieties in gardens. There were also mostly purples and reds. From these came the “quilled” varieties, now known as the anemone flower dahlia. Bicolors appeared, the Dahlia Society of England formed and in 1934 it is estimated that over 20,000 seedlings were grown annually. From there other colors and sizes were developed—miniatures, cream colors, pompoms and so. Then in 1860, they fell out of favor and were relegated to obscurity.

Cactus types: A Holland grower, Van der Berg, received a shipment of seeds and plants from Mexico in 1872. While most of the shipment was ruined, he salvaged and planted those he thought might live. One of them was a new type of flower with a rich red color and a high degree of doubling. He named it in memory of the Mexican president, Bonito Juarez. Because from a distance it resembled the spines of a cactus, the name cactus stuck. This was the parent of all current cactus types.

Single: These are sometimes known as Collarette, Orchid or Mignon single types and probably are cross of *D. coccinea* with a variety of other dahlias. Early on these were all red and crosses with *D. crocea* and *D. barkerae* helped expand the color palette.

Anemone: These seem to have come from Ireland, first showing up in 1826, but a flower introduced from Germa-
Look for the “eye”; it is the crown from which the stem will grow. Give plants plenty of room as they are large—up to 2 feet.

If you have been bothered by deer in your yard, you might give dahlias a try. They seem not to be a favorite with deer but groundhogs like them, so watch for gopher problems. How they fare with javelina though, I’m not sure.

Do not over-water. Excess water will cause the tubers to rot. Add compost or fertilize the plants through the summer. Extra nitrogen would be useful through mid summer but lay off towards the end of the growing season.

For the best blooming, disbudd. Disbudding is removing the outer two buds that form from the three at the end of each stem. This improves the size and gives the flowers room to grow. You can also remove the terminal bud on the stems when they are about a foot high. This will encourage more branching, providing more blooms. (You can also take cuttings to increase your plants!) They should continue to bloom a long time.

Heavy frost, freezing ground and too much moisture will kill the plants. In our area we shouldn’t have to dig up the tubers. If you can avoid those three things the plants should come back next year.

Dahlias have some pests, among them slugs. They like the young plants. In some locations they can suffer from fungus and especially spider mites. We do have spider mites here so keep on eye on them. The Dahlia Society suggests getting rid of the entire plant. I would suggest trying to spray them off with water. Just make sure the stems and leaves have support.

Princess Paige is the 2008 garden and container dahlia of the year.

The Place: Lisle, Illinois
The Time: 1977
This story begins in the western suburbs of Chicago. The location, Lisle Senior High School.

Fast forward ahead 31 years.

The Place: Cottonwood, Arizona
The Time: 2008
The location: Cottonwood police department public works building.

Meeting room, first class Master Gardener class of 2008. As an introduction each student announced their name and where they are from. One of the students introduces herself as Elizabeth Loose, retired guidance counselor from Chicago. Another student introduced herself as a nurse from Prescott.

The second class the exercise was repeated: this time Elizabeth introduced herself as Betsy Loose from the western suburbs of Chicago. Donna O'Rourke then experienced a flashback to the days of her youth. She spoke to Betsy after class and confirmed her suspicions. Betsy was Donna’s high school guidance counselor from Lisle Senior High School where she graduated from in 1977. They had brief contact afterward but nothing to make them remember each other instantly.

Now I would like to have been a fly on the cubicle wall during their last meeting. I can imagine the conversation—it would have gone something like this: “Betsy: Young lady you have good grades and a bright future. What are your plans? Donna: Well I want to become a Master Gardener in Arizona! Betsy: Then follow me kid!”

Of course none of this actually happened except the part about a retired Guidance Counselor meeting one of her former students 31 years later in Master Gardener class in Cottonwood, Arizona. The names are the same; the facts have been embellished. Smudged, OK made up. For the real story ask the two participants!
Arizona Highlands Garden Conference
September 19, 2009
du Bois Conference Center   Flagstaff, AZ

From The Ground Up

Web Site for registration and all information http://cals.arizona.edu/coconino/highlandconference.htm
Registration materials are available at the Cottonwood and Prescott Extension offices or Contact Beverly Emerson: bjemerson11@juno.com    or (928)646-0379

The Arizona Highlands Garden Conference is planned and presented by University of Arizona Cooperative Extension Master Gardener volunteers from Coconino, Yavapai, Gila, and Navajo Counties. The conference offers presentations on a variety of topics related to high elevation gardening and landscaping. This year’s theme is ‘From the Ground Up’ and features two nationally known speakers:

Jeff Lowenfels, author, radio host, and America’s longest-running garden columnist
Brad Lancaster, a dynamic teacher, author and rainwater harvesting expert.

Conference registration is $65 if received by September 1 and $80 if received after Sept. 1. To register fill out and mail the registration. Participants may also register for a pre-conference tour of six Flagstaff gardens for an additional fee of $15.

PRE-CONFERENCE GARDEN TOURS Friday, September 18, 2009 10am-4pm $15
Visit six gardens in Flagstaff, one of which has been a Master Gardener project for over six years and features over three dozen roses, a garden with wonderful outdoor living space, an award winning Xeriscape garden, and a local landscaper’s garden paradise that features an island, lake with water lilies, extensive perennial beds and much, much more. You will also receive information about several community gardens in Flagstaff. This is a self guided tour with Master Gardeners at each site to answer your questions. Once we receive your registration and additional $15 fee, we will send you information about the tour and a map to the gardens. You will be on your own to visit each garden between the hours of 10 am and 4 pm. You must pre-register to attend. For more information, call Eleanor at 928-606-4930.

LODGING
Rooms have been reserved at La Quinta Inn & Suites located less than one mile from the du Bois Conference Center. We have been given a conference rate of $107 to $116. You must reserve your room by August 18.
La Quinta Inn & Suites
2015 South Beulah Blvd. Flagstaff, AZ 86001 (928) 556-8666, $107 - two double beds for up to 4 people, $116 - king size bed, free Bright Side Breakfast
Monsoon Madness two was a great success. Over 558 people attended. Revenue-wise the gross sales were $6136, minus expenses of $615 for a net profit of $5521. Almost double the profit of last year.

This year we added several new events and fundraisers. Bob Sandeen offered garden tool sharpening and was kept very busy, netting $387. There are a lot of grateful gardeners around town using their new, very sharp pruners, loppers and grass shears.

The free seminars were well attended and will surely be a permanent part of Monsoon Madness.

Many thanks to the 44 Master Gardeners who donated items for the sale. We never expected to get more stuff than last year, but we did. In fact, we received almost twice as much as last year. I am sure Sherry Morton appreciates the extra space in her greenhouse now that 150 plants she was growing for the sale are gone. Lesley Alward must also feel the same way. I hope that Jeannette Teets is feeling none the less for wear after digging up 1000 iris bulbs and packaging them for the sale. I know Richard Wise was feeling chipper staffing the hold area after his carpentry stint making the sandwich boards and donating his excess ornamental grasses for the sale.

Special thanks go to the Monsoon Madness Committee. Missy Sandeen and Sherry Howard did a great job of organizing the event. It was difficult getting us enthusiastic committee members to speak one at a time. All those great ideas just kept bursting forth, sometimes at random. Not that Mary Barnes, Bev Bostrum, Robin Weesner, Jeannette Teets, Cynthia Cartier-Roberts, Angie Mazella, Cathy Michener and Tom Watkins needed a lot of prodding to put together a smooth and exciting Monsoon Madness.

What made Monsoon Madness special were the “behind the scenes” details: Posters, banners and signs artfully produced by Judy Mannen; Farmer’s Market posters by Lynn Hazlewood; Sandwich boards for the signs by Richard Wise. The signs, banners and posters were designed to be permanent and reused for Monsoon Madness three, four and five. Most of the expenses for Monsoon Madness two are one time only, creating the banners and signs.

There were 37 Master Gardeners who helped make the sale run smoothly on Friday and 64 on Saturday. Providing growing information was a unique feature of our sale. We should count the number of questions next year. There were many.

Other details were the music provided by Bill Morris with some harmony added by Jeff Schalau. I know the plants loved to hear his soothing voice while they waited for new owners.

The consensus among the Master Gardeners was “What a great day. Thanks to all of you for making Monsoon Madness two a great success.” Monsoon Madness three will be better than ever.
**MG Association News**

August 19th Prescott – “Gardening Journaling” Cynthia Cartier-Roberts and “The History & Mystery of Plant Names” Bob Burke

September 12th - Mortimer Nursery Autumn Outreach Fair

September 16th Cottonwood “Winter Vegetable Gardening with Extension into Spring Veggie Gardening”, Presenter Jay Fleishman

Sept 18 & 19 - Arizona Highlands Garden Conference Flagstaff

Sept 18, Friday Tours and Sept 19, Saturday Conference

Sept 30th - Oct 4th – Yavapai County Fair Produce Check In & Judging

October 1st thru 4th - Yavapai County Fair

Oct 10th - Prescott Goldwater Lake “MG Recognition Awards & Picnic”

October 10th Master Gardener Picnic Goldwater Lake Prescott

November 18th Cottonwood – “Growing & Cooking with Herbs” Presenter. Serve Snacks made with herbs as refreshments

December – No Meeting

January 2010- Cindy Scott from Underwood Garden Heirloom Seeds “Heirloom Seed, What Are They and How to Gather & Save Seeds”

**Highlands Center Plant Sale**

Master Gardeners will staff an information table at the Aug 29th sale. Contact Lynn Hazlewood,

**Congratulations**

*The following MGs have completed their first 50 hours.*

Perla Stice, mentor Jan Billiam
Kirby Hughes, mentor Tom Watkins
Tom Konzem, Herdis MacLellan

FROM THE EDITOR: Please send or email articles and announcements to the address below. All articles must be in my hands by the 10th of the month. Short announcements (no more than 2 or 3 lines) will be accepted until the 25th.

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A double header for August! Cynthia Cartier Roberts will share her practice of garden journaling. She’ll cover why it’s a good thing to do; what to include when you journal; and various ways to garden journal.

The 2nd half of the program will feature Bob Burke who will share his interest in botanical plant names and their pronunciation.