MG Association Meeting, Wednesday, Mar 17, Cottonwood. 6:30pm, See address page.

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, Mar 31, 5:30pm, Cottonwood Public Safety building, Linda Smith at 928-567-7470

Check out the new MG blog. More garden information, events and pictures. http://yavapaigardener.blogspot.com

Table of Contents
On the Road . . . 1
Gardening Trends . . . 2
Pecan & Wine Festival . . . 3
The Odd & Unusual . . . 4
Andy Groseta . . . 5
To Do List . . . 6
Gardening News . . . 6
Master Gardener News . . . 7

On the Road
by Nora Graf

The story of food and what and why we eat what we do today is complicated. These stories are fraught with drama, exotic travel, the end and beginning of kingdoms and sometimes skeptical public. Even today the journey goes on.

A European nation existed on a product of Peru and then nearly died because of it. The Incas living in the Andes Mountains cultivated several hundred varieties of potatoes adapted to a myriad of conditions. When the Spanish conquistadors came to conquer they were exposed to a huge variety of never-before-seen foods. The potato was one. It was one that proved a good staple to feed sailors on long trips and so was introduced to Europe from returning ships. By 1670 it was being grown in Spain. The story gets murky, however, in how the potato made it into Europe. Some credit Sir Francis Drake, some Sir Walter Raleigh and some with potatoes floating ashore after a ship of the Spanish Armada wrecked off the shore of Ireland. From there it travelled to other European countries. Russia was one of the last countries to adopt it but became one of the largest producers of potatoes. Whatever the truth, the potato became the main source of food to the Irish. Actually, potatoes were nearly the only source. When potatoes were infected with blight, causing a catastrophic failure, it marked the death of millions and a massive immigration of the living.

I had the good fortune of growing up eating chilies, as the Southwest is the home (sort of) of chilies although not the ones we eat today. The Hungarians with their goulash and even the Chinese and Thai’s, are latecomers to the chile because for them it all started with Christopher Columbus’s journeys. He may not have found the spice lands but he found the chile in the Caribbean. Unfortunately he called them peppers because that was what he was seeking and confused the issue even today (peppers vs. chiles). He carried the “peppers” back to Europe with him. The chile exploded as a food crop. So much so that many people believe the chile is native to India or China, but no, it belongs to the New World. There is some disagreement about where all this actually started but today botanists believe the chile first came from Brazil. The chile seed is transported by birds, who really enjoy eating them, gradually dispersing the seeds through their droppings over large areas of South America and into North America. By the time Europeans arrived in the new world, the chile had spread to Mexico and the southern US. There are five major domesticated forms and oddly enough the
The Google search engine came up with an interesting look at trends that occur in any given year. Google calculates how many times any news item has been searched and gives us the most googled items. Sherlock Holmes would approve. If it doesn’t show trends, it should certainly show what topics are most popular. So naturally I had to search Gardening on Google trends.

The first article was entitled “Push is on to Green up the Gardening Industry” and appeared in the Orlando Sentinel on May 11, 2009. The story was about growers, big-box stores, manufacturers and garden centers being under pressure from more environmentally conscious consumers. What has consumers fuming? Pots. Plastic pots, flats and trays that can’t be recycled. Most of them don’t have a stamp that indicates they are recyclable, and the garden centers won’t take them back. Most end up thrown in the garbage. The article went on to note, that though it doesn’t help now, there are small indications that the horticultural industry may be starting to respond to the frustration of customers who try to live a greener life but find it’s surprisingly hard to be a greener gardener. Growers, big-box stores, manufacturers and garden centers are under pressure not just from more environmentally conscious consumers, but from the zooming prices of oil and natural gas -- the raw materials of plastics. Though a substantial proportion of the plastic resin that goes into the larger, sturdy pots is recycled from other sources, not much of that gets reused or recycled again. Most goes to landfills.

The second story “Gardening – The 1950s Live again with a Push Mower”, appearing in the Reading Evening Post (June 12, 2009) was a British article that extolled the virtues of using a push mower on your lawn. Personally I would rather grow grass or shrubs that didn’t need mowing. However, for the lawn lovers all over the world, this may be the beginning of a new trend.

The third story: “Peter Snell gives Kids Gardening Tips” (Stuff.co.nz, August 12, 2009) was interesting. Peter Snell, the Kiwi running legend and winner of three Olympic gold medals, is back in New Zealand to open a new garden at Sacred Heart Primary School in Petone. He has been involved with the Ka Pai Kai scheme to promote healthy eating at Sacred Heart since it began last year. Pupils will grow their own vegetables in the garden and learn about the benefits of exercise and eating vegetables. Great idea and a future trend we need to see happen.

Be sure to check out Google Trends (just google it) and see what interesting items you can find to capture your interest and imagination. Under gardening, you will find other interesting news items about the new veggie garden on the White House lawn and something called Guerrilla Gardening.
Although its future was doubtful earlier when the Camp Verde City Council decided not to fund it, the annual Pecan, Wine and Antiques Festival was a success for the tenth year. The event was February 12-14 at the Camp Verde Community Center. The festival featured antique dealers, wine tasting and educational booths, including the Yavapai County Cooperative Extension Service. A portion of the festival ticket price was donated to the Citizens Committee for a Camp Verde Library, a nonprofit group raising funds for a new library.

A chance to taste Arizona wines was the big attraction for many festival goers. Because of its high desert geography, Arizona is getting national media attention as the next big thing in the wine industry. The state’s vintners for the most part now produce decent, drinkable wines and some are producing small quantities that truly express their vineyards’ unique sense of place or “terroir.” But “Verde Valley terroir” was not being poured at the Pecan Festival. Local wineries in the Verde Valley/Oak Creek/Jerome area mostly use grapes grown in Cochise County (Willcox area) or California, where land is cheaper, agricultural infrastructure is better developed and conditions are more favorable for production grape growing. Granite Creek Vineyard in Chino Valley was the only winery at the festival that poured wine made entirely from its own central Arizona grapes. But frankly, deep philosophical debate about “terroir” was not the point of the Pecan, Wine and Antique Festival. People were there to enjoy the cheap and cheerful table wines being poured, get to know the vintners, and if they want to try the good stuff, they can go directly to the winery.

For other folks, the festival was all about pecans. Pecans do very well in the Verde Valley, where several hundred trees provide the makings for pecan pies, pecan cookies, pecans in the shell, pecans out of the shell, flavored pecans and fried pecans. Unfortunately, two badly timed freezes seriously harmed much of the crop this past year and only the ravens were able to enjoy the blackened nuts hanging from the trees. This resulted in fewer varieties being entered in the pecan judging on Friday: only Stuart, Success, Wichita and Pawnee were shown. No one entered a Burkett pecan, which is a common variety in the Verde Valley.

Who knew that pecan varieties could be so different? Some varieties have higher oil content, some varieties come out of the shell easier, and some varieties have bigger nut meats. For example, this year’s Pecan Festival grand prize winning variety, Wichita, has a high percent kernel (weight of nut meat compared to total nut and shell weight) but the kernels come out of the shell in small pieces. The reserve grand prize winning variety, Simpson, had smaller percent kernel, but each nut came out of the shell intact. When buying pecans in the shell from the grower, it pays to ask what variety it is! But no matter what variety, the trick to extracting the kernel from the shell is to pop the entire nut in boiling water for a few minutes, then drain. The heat creates a bit of pressure inside the shell which helps to break it open. It will also make the nut meat slightly less brittle, increasing the chances of getting it out whole.

Master Gardeners staffed the Yavapai County Cooperative Extension Service table and also helped with the pecan judging. Thank you to John Burton, Paul and Barbara Schnur, Larry Anderson, Sally Berkshire, Lynn Becker, Jackie Rizzo, Linda Scheerer, Susan Brook, Christi Armer, Toni Coon, Jean O’Laughlin, Jackie Haggerty, Jack Burton, Lisa Gerber, and Judy Cowan.

As always, they answered lots of questions about wildflowers and garden flowers, vegetables, insects, pecan and grape growing and soil testing. But most of all, they shared their own horticultural successes and failures and listened to the stories of other gardeners. And that’s what the Pecan, Wine and Antique Festival is all about—celebrating our horticultural heritage and deepening the connection of people to their land.
It’s easy to continue with tried and true winners in our garden. I always like to leave space though for something new. If I was able to garden this spring these oddities or forgotten-about plants might be fun to try:

**Black Mexican sweet corn**, also known as Mexican Sweet or Black Iroquois. In spite of its name it apparently came out of upper New York and was introduced in 1864. According to one source the Mexican part of the name may have been a marketing ploy. It was probably a mutation derived from Iroquois “black puckor” sweet corn. The mutation shifted it from the starchy end of the spectrum to the sweet. The kernels are white at the milk stage and change to blue-black in later stages. Good flavor but harvest several days before the kernels show their color to several days afterward. This happens quickly so your window for good corn is very limited. If it’s a little past its prime it can still be used in corn soup or corn pudding and can even be ground for corn meal.

Southern Exposure Seeds
gardens@southernexposure.com
P.O. Box 460,
Mineral, VA 23117
540-894-9480

Other corn varieties you might want to try: Red Martian, (available through Park Seed) deep red in color and sweet to boot. Boiling will change the color so steam them instead. Out of this world corn! Another variety is Oaxacan green dent corn (available through several sources). Not a sweet corn, but one used for conmeal. It is a beautiful green color. It was grown by the Zapotecs of southern Mexico and used in making tamales.

**Damon Wise’s Pan-Roasted Salsify**

4 large salsify roots
Juice from 1 lemon
1 teaspoon black peppercorns
5 sprigs thyme
1 bay leaf
1 teaspoon coriander seeds
1–2 tablespoons extra-virgin olive oil
1 tablespoon unsalted butter
Kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper, to taste

(1) Peel the salsify and place in a shallow pan with water to cover, lemon juice, black pepper, 3 sprigs of thyme, bay leaf, coriander, and salt to taste. Bring to a simmer and cook until tender. (2) Remove salsify from liquid and, once cooled, cut into small pieces (batons) of equal size. Heat sauté pan over medium heat and add olive oil. (3) Add salsify and season with salt and pepper. Cook until golden brown. Add the butter and the remaining sprigs of thyme and toss until the butter foams. Remove from heat and transfer to paper towels. Serve immediately.

http://www.victoryseeds.com
Victory Seed Company
P.O. Box 192 - Molalla, Oregon 97038
(503) 829-3126 [voicemail and fax order line]

**Romanesco broccoli** (also known as Roman Cauliflower)

As you can tell by its names it has a foot in two camps, broccoli and cauliflower. Don’t really think it matters because it should be grown for its amazing appearance. Gosh, you have to be a mathematician to really under-

**Salsify** is sometimes called the oyster plant because it is said to taste somewhat like oysters. Also known as goat’s beard. There are a number of common wildflowers that go by the name of salsify, so don’t get them confused. The vegetable is purple salsify, *Tragopogon porrofolius*. They have grass-like leaves, a taproot and milky sap. Originally from Europe and Asia they have been introduced and spread in North America. Their seeds resemble dandelion seeds. Young shoots can be eaten as well as young leaves. The roots can be cubed and used in soups and stews, also creamed, mashed, boiled or seamed.
stand its look. It’s described in terms like logarithmic spiral and fractals. Truly a vegetable a math-freak can love. For those that don’t know what a fractal is, here is a description: patterns of themselves ad infinitum, or at least until some limit where the similarity breaks down due to the granularity of the underlying material.

For the non-mathematician—prepare it like conventional broccoli—don’t overcook! It was known in 16th century Italy. Treat like a winter vegetable in terms of planting and harvesting and it likes alkaline soil. It’s not often you can grow and eat a beautiful fractal although they are not uncommon in nature, so give it a try.

Sunchokes, Jerusalem artichokes or sunroot are some of the names of this overlooked vegetable. It is a member of the sunflower family, native to the United States. The tubers vaguely resemble ginger root but have a crisp texture. But they don’t come from Jerusalem nor are they artichokes. The artichoke part comes from the taste which is said to be similar to an artichoke. They were cultivated by Indians long before Europeans arrived in North America. They will grow in our area but the downside is they have been known to aggressively spread. Another odd fact: in Europe they were sometimes avoided because people thought they could get leprosy from them because the tubers were similar looking to leprous fingers.

I’ve written about Kohl-rabi before but apparently no one read it because it’s still a neglected vegetable. One of the many cultivars of cabbage, it doesn’t look anything like cabbage. It sports a bulbous stem, something like a baseball with stem below and leaves above. It has a mild and sweet flavor similar to cabbage and raw it is crisp, juicy and sweet. Pick them on the small size. As they grow larger the texture gets woody. Apparently they like it in Kashmir where it is one of the most commonly eaten vegetables. Get with the program, try kohl-rabi.

See another odd vegetable on the Yavapai Gardener blog: http://yavapaigardener.blogspot.

March 17 Speaker
Andy Groseta

Program: History of Ranching in the Verde Valley, Irrigation Ditches

Andy Groseta is a third-generation cattleman from Cottonwood, Arizona. His family is one of the pioneer mining and ranching families that settled in north central Arizona. Andy’s family ranching operation has included the Pine Creek Ranch, a stocker ranch, located north of Williams, Arizona, which was owned and operated by the family from 1980-2000; and, the W Dart Ranch, a cow/calf operation headquartered in Cottonwood, Arizona, that has been in business in the Verde Valley since 1922.

Since 1983, Groseta has been a partner in Headquarters West, Ltd., a statewide agribusiness firm specializing in farm and ranch brokerage, appraisals, management and consulting. Groseta has managed ranch properties throughout northern Arizona.

Groseta is a 1972 graduate of the University of Arizona with a B.S. in Agricultural Education and Animal Science and he received a Master’s Degree in Agricultural Education in 1978.

He is Immediate Past President of the National Cattlemen’s Beef Association. He has served as Chairman of the University of Arizona Yavapai County Cooperative Extension Advisory Board and presently he serves on the school board of Mingus Union High School. Also, he is Past Chairman of the Catholic Community Foundation; and is past Chairman of Northern Arizona Healthcare. Also, he has served on the Arizona Department of Water Resources Advisory Board; Verde Watershed Association “Charter Board Member;” and former member of Yavapai County’s Water Advisory Committee (WAC); representing Yavapai County District 3. In addition, he is President of the Cottonwood Ditch Association and is 1st Vice President of the Arizona Cattle Growers Association. He has been and is involved in other agricultural organizations.
**MARCH: THINGS TO DO THIS MONTH:**
PRESCOTT, PRESCOTT VALLEY & CHINO VALLEY

* Prune roses
* Cut ornamental grasses back to new growth
* Apply dormant oil before leaf emergence
* Clean up frost-damaged/dead parts of perennials
* Plant wildflower seeds 1 month before last hard frost
* Sow seeds of perennials that germinate in cold temperatures & cool weather annuals outdoors
* Fertilize iris and day lilies
* Water as needed to supplement precipitation

SEDONA, COTTONWOOD & VERDE VALLEY
* See above AND:
* Fertilizer cool-season grasses
* Apply dormant oil before leaf emergence on deciduous trees & shrubs
* Remove weeds before they go to seed
* Divide & replant summer & fall bloom perennials now through April
* Plant gladiolus corms & deciduous ornamentals including grasses
* Plant spring annuals and cool season veggie crops
* Start warm season veggies indoors
* Fertilize established roses as growth begins
(for more information see Extension bulletins #27 & 74)

**APRIL: THINGS TO DO THIS MONTH:**
PRESCOTT, PRESCOTT VALLEY & CHINO VALLEY

* Fertilize roses as leaves emerge
* Fertilizer cool-season grasses & perennials
* Replenish mulch
* Remove weeds
* Watch for insects like aphids & white flies
* Deep water trees & shrubs as needed
* Continue to protect tender plants from frost as necessary

SEDONA, COTTONWOOD & VERDE VALLEY
* See above AND:
* Adjust irrigation for warmer temperatures & plant growth
* Prune to remove winter damage
* Fertilize deciduous fruit trees when they leaf out
(for more information see Extension bulletins #27 & 74)

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**Gardening News**

This is hard for me to imagine but in England someone was selling baby carrot plants vs. just using seed. Considering carrot seeds seem to sprout with wild abandon, I'm not sure the reason why anyone would be buying expensive plants when a packet of seeds is pretty cheap in comparison. (they sold for 1.09 pounds each. Current conversion means those little plants cost $1.62 each.) Anyway it seems to have brewed a argument on why people garden and what was the point of gardening. Who would of thought. I guess for beginning gardeners or the timid perhaps it might be a good way to start but buying seeds is a much better value and they do sprout like crazy around here. Yeh, I know you have to thin them, but thats part of gardening or are you gardening for some some other philosophical reason?

The Virginia Cooperative Extension Service is threatened with closure by budget cuts by the Virginia legislature. Lets hope that doesn’t happen here. A sad day!

This comes under the heading of you learn something new everyday. Did you know that a Split Leaf Philodendron is not really a philodendron? Its actual genus is Monstera. Before you get to excited about this news, Monstera is a close relative to Philadendron. Just want to point out this is another example of why it is a good idea to learn the latin names of plants. Sometimes you might not get what you ask for. The other part of the Monstera name is deliciosa because its fruits are considered a tropical delicacy. Heck, I’ve never seen one with its unique flowers, let alone seen or taste their fruit.
**MG News**

**Congratulations! on reaching 50 hours of service**

Marcia Benjamin—mentor Sherry Howard
Margo Christensen—mentor Sherry Morton
Toni Coon—mentor Carol Ekeland
Toni Wackerly—mentor Bobbie Jo Gooslin
Matt Lukaszewski—mentor Tom Watkins

**MG Garden Tour will be held on June 5th in the Verde area.**

**Monsoon Madness**
Ken Earls is the chair for this year’s Monsoon Madness Plant and Yard Sale, to be held on July 12th at the Prescott Extension Office. Looking for a co-chair to work with him. Contact Ken, ken_earls@msn.com (underscore after ken)

**MG Information Tables**
Volunteers needed to staff MG information tables at Prescott College Earth Day on April 22nd and Highlands Center Plant Sale on May 1st. Contact Lynn Hazlewood, klwoodz@cableone.net, 277-4268.

**Farmers Markets**
Still need chairs for the Camp Verde and Sedona Farmers Mkt MG information tables. Contact Joy Kimmel, azjoy@cableone.net, 639-1705.


**Garden Sales**

March 20-21—Garden Sale at Thono Chul Botanical Garden, Tucson www.tohonochulpark.org


**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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MG Association Meeting
March 17, 6:30pm

Program: History of Ranching in the Verde Valley, Irrigation Ditches

Speaker: Andy Groseta (Groseta Ranches 634-4333)

www.wdartranch.com Website of Groseta Ranches, History, Production Practices, etc.