Events & Activities

MG Association Meeting, Wednesday, April 20 6:30pm, Camp Verde

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 Janet Regner at 602-370-4836 or email her at jkregner@aol.com

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

Table of Contents

Native Plant Website . . . 1
Garden Tips & Calendar . . . 2
Javelina . . . 3
Meet a Master Gardener . . . 4
Butterflies . . . 5
Skunks . . . 6

What Plant is That?
Yavapai County Native and Naturalized Plant Website
By Susan Brook

Have you ever been stumped when your neighbor brings you a wildflower and wants to know what it is? Have you ever wished you could name all the plants you see on your hikes? Or would you like to use more native plants in your landscape? You can get help with all these questions by clicking on the Yavapai County Native and Naturalized Plant website: http://cals.arizona.edu/yavapaiplants

The website contains photos and descriptions of many of the common native and naturalized cacti, shrubs, succulents, trees, vines and grasses found in Yavapai County.

According to Mary Barnes, the original purpose of the website was to help Master Gardener phone volunteers identify plants that people bring in to the office. There are many field guides and floras, but none that are focused strictly on this area.

Dr. Charlie Johnson chaired the first meeting in July 2007. When his new dermatology practice became busy, Sue Smith took over in October. “Sue’s enthusiasm for hiking, photography and native plants, and her organization, leadership and programming skills have resulted in a wonderful product – much bigger and better than I ever imagined,” said Mary.

The initial concept was to create a CD, with photos of different parts of the plants, in different seasons. As things progressed the team realized this would be an on-going project, and the CDs would need to be frequently updated. The challenge then became how to search and present the information. Putting the information on the web made more sense – it could reach a larger audience and everyone would have access to the most current information.

The team decided upon a database backend with photos and descriptive and searchable fields for each plant species accessed by a web interface.

The original focus was on species found at 4500’ and higher elevations of Yavapai County. However, many of those plants are also in the Verde area, so the database is more a Yavapai County database. The first release of the website was in 2009 and included trees, shrubs and succulents. The end of 2009 added Grasses. Efforts in 2010 focused on preparing data on forbs. Over time, the website will be expanded to include more Sonoran desert plant community species found at lower elevations of Yavapai County.

The next major release (2.0) is targeted for early June. Forbs will
be added to the database. The search on woody plants will be enhanced to include icons that help users narrow down their search by such things as leaf shape and flower shape, and it will include larger thumbnail photos. Mary recently asked for Master Gardeners to help with beta testing in May. They will be asked to follow specific test cases to ensure the 2.0 release is of the highest quality when it is installed in June.

The project team can always use more researchers and photographers. After the current work on forbs and a few other features are completed, the team’s efforts will expand to the Verde area. Sue Smith maintains a list of those plants for which photos are needed. If Master Gardeners want to take pictures, they should contact Sue so they know the criteria for taking and submitting photos. The team needs photos of different parts of the plant in different seasons, and has a review/selection process to select the best shots. In addition to taking photos, volunteers are needed to research information on each plant and enter the information in the test database. There are guidelines for performing the research and entering the results in the database.

It has taken a team of dedicated volunteers to keep this project moving ahead. Sue Smith is the team leader, as well as website and database developer. Mary Barnes, Pam Bowman, Kirby Hughes, Dr. Charles Johnson, Doug McMillan, Bev Turnbull and Janet Schieber have helped with researching, documenting, editing and testing. Max Licher, Sedona botanist, provided assistance in plant identification. Jeff Schalau provided support and guidance to the project team. John Kava, Research Specialist at the V Bar V Ranch, researched and documented grass data. He also provided assistance identifying grasses. Contributing photographers include the people listed above, as well as Wally Anderson, Marv Mazur and Ginny Shugars.

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### Garden Tips

#### Pot Repair

You can repair clay pots that have cracked. (not broken) Clean the pot, scrubbing along the crack line. Let dry. Cut a piece of plastic window screen large enough to cover the crack, about 2 inches wide by the depth of the pot. Spread a contact sealant (for example, Goop) along the crack on the inside of the pot. Then imbed the the screen into the sealant. Once the sealant is dry spread another coat over the screen.

#### Tiny Seeds

One of the toughest things to do is get tiny little seeds to go where you want them to when you plant. One way to do it is to take a piece of cotton string and wet it thoroughly. Place the seeds in a bowl and drag the wet string through the seeds. They will stick to the string and you can plant them right in the garden with the string. The cotton string will not affect germination and will rot away.

*From Fine Gardening Magazine*

#### April Gardening

For the adventurous, plant tomatoes late this month. It’s hard to resist what’s showing up in the stores. Beware though, April is known to have frosts especially in higher elevations. If you do give it a shot, make sure they have protection. Latest spring frost dates for Yavapai County are mid-May.

Temps are getting higher, so if you haven’t been, start watering trees, shrubs and lawns.

Start summer vegetable and flower seeds inside.

You can still plant roses.

Plant cool season vegetables.

Transplant perennials in April and May.

If you haven’t done it yet, hurry up and get your fruit trees and roses pruned.
It wasn’t that long ago that you rarely saw javelina this far north but today they are an integral part of the local community—to the misfortune of many gardeners. There are really only two ways to deal with them, enjoy them and let them roam or fence them out. Javelina are omnivores —basically they will eat just about anything. Not only do they eat just about everything, they tear up those things they don’t want to eat.

Javelina are pig-like but are not true pigs. Although that fact is pretty irrelevant when they are rooting up your garden. They tend to travel in large packs although you will sometimes see solitary ones. The groups are generally mixed ages and sexes. Javelina can be very aggressive, especially if babies are present. STAY AWAY from them, they are not pets! If they feel threatened the hair on their neck will rise up into a thick mane, they may snap their teeth with a “clacking” sound or give a barking cough. This means stay away—they mean it. They prefer to run when they perceive danger— but not always.

You might also smell them; they emit a very musky odor especially when threatened. You might smell them before you see them. Without the benefit of our gardens javelina will eat prickly pear cactus pads, any fruit and roots of plants and even insects, lizards, mice, worms, grubs and even the young or eggs of ground-nesting birds. They are wide-ranging foragers. The babies are born in the summer. Litters are usually two but can go up to six. Adults live 15 to 20 years.

They are attracted to our gardens because of the green and tasty vegetation and water or food left out for pets. If you don’t want to fence your yard there are some things that you can do to make your place less attractive.

Don’t leave any pet food outside. If you feed pets outdoors, pick up any leftover food once they are done eating. Make sure you have secure garbage cans; not only do you want to limit availability of food, you need to eliminate the odors. Keep the area under bird feeders clean. Fence any plants you don’t want them to eat. Electric fences work well in keeping them out. Close off access to bird pens and underneath trailers or houses. Don’t leave any water around, especially during drought periods. Plant native plants and not lush, green pretty things; do not plant tulips (it’s javelina candy).

Surprisingly there are some things you can plant that they won’t eat, among them daffodils and iris. Other possibilities include butterfly bush (buddleia), chili peppers, chrysanthemum, cucumbers, dahlias, eggplant, gladiola, hens and chicks, larkspurs, marigolds, pansies, petunias, red hot poker, rosemary, sage, santolina, snapdragons, zinnias. Shrubs include deerbrush (Canothus spp.), Fir trees, junipers (both shrubs and trees), manzanita, mountain mahogany, oaks, pine trees, roses, shrub live oak, silk tassel and skunkbush. No guarantees but they are some of the better choices.

You can and should discourage them. Yell and throw rocks at them (from a safe place) to discourage them. They will soon learn that your house is an unfriendly place. Encourage your neighbors to do it also. What you can’t do is kill or injure the animals. They are protected by Arizona law as a game animal. You have a legal right to use all reasonable ways to protect your property except for capturing, injuring or killing of the animal. It is your responsibility to keep them out, not that of the game and fish department.

This activity is NOT recommended!!
I had the privilege of growing up on a farm a few miles west of Kearney, Nebraska in the heart of the central flyway of the United States. Spring was announced by the arrival of sandhill cranes and fall by the sound of geese flying overhead as they headed South. We raised corn, alfalfa and Hereford cattle.

I was given responsibilities at an early age. By the age of ten I was feeding orphan calves, setting irrigation tubes, and the primary vegetable gardener for the family. I fell in love with vegetable gardening at the age of 6 when I planted my first radish seeds. I grew most of the vegetables that we ate fresh, frozen or canned. We were very dependent on the bounty of the garden. We had beautiful sandy loam as our farm was in the flood plain of the Platte River. I was a 4-H member 12 years where I completed projects in sewing, vegetables, cooking, rabbits, insects, and beef cattle. I had the honor of being the 4-H vegetable gardener of the year for Buffalo County when I was in high school.

My early school days were at Alfalfa Center School, a one-room elementary school. Upon completion of 6th grade we were transferred to what we called “town” school to complete our high school education. I graduated from the University of Nebraska at Kearney with a B.S. Biology and a B.S. in Psychology in 1975.

My professional career started with a research position at the University of Nebraska in Omaha, Nebraska. I was a research biologist in the cancer research center and later in the genetics lab. In 1978 I moved to San Jose, California where I returned to school and earned a B.S. in Computer Science. I worked in Information Technology until 2000, completing this career at eBay. I returned to school once again and earned a high school teaching credential for biology and mathematics. I taught for 4 years before we retired to Prescott.

My primary interest in gardening was growing vegetables until I moved to California. There I added fruit, perennial flowers, and native flowers to my garden. The challenges here were too much fog and adobe soils. I had great success with nectarines, peaches, blackberries, and tomatoes.

My gardening interests in Prescott still include growing vegetables, fruit, and perennials. I have become very interested in growing xeric perennials, shrubs and bunch grasses. I love to find new penstemon species to add to my garden. My greatest gardening challenges in Prescott have been learning about our soil deficiencies, how to water and where to get xeric and native plants. If I was to pretend to be new to the Prescott area I would want to understand our soils, water challenges, climate, and availability of xeric species before selecting where I live and before planting one thing in my landscape.

I discovered the Master Gardener program while strolling the Prescott farmers market. I completed the program in 2007 to increase my knowledge of how to tackle gardening challenges in Prescott and to give myself opportunities to volunteer in the community.

My first volunteer position as a Master Gardener was in the habitat at Coyote Springs Elementary School in Prescott Valley. I work with first graders who are the “Tree Tenders” for the habitat. This is an award-winning program developed by Lisa Packard of the Highlands Center for Natural History, which teaches children on site at their school about the natural world. I also volunteer at the twice-a-year native plant sales at the Highlands Center for Natural History.

I became involved in the Yavapai County plant identification project in the summer of 2007. The goal of the project was to provide a tool for master gardeners and the community to identify plants in Yavapai County. I was drawn to the project because of my interest in hiking, native plants and photography. Later I also became the lead for the team and the web guru.

Recently I became trained as a “Budding Botanist” through the Plant Atlas Project of Arizona. I have been helping as a volunteer collecting herbarium specimens and recording data for entry into the Southwest Environmental Information Network (SEINet) website. SEINet is a suite of data access technologies that provides plant information for Arizona State University and other partners within the Southwest. I see this project as a direct extension of the work I am doing to document plants in Yavapai County.

When I am not working with plants I enjoy landscape photography, hiking, softball and traveling to natural places.
The conundrum with butterflies is that they are beautiful at one point but can be destructive at another. Flitting around your garden they are a delight but when the caterpillars are eating up the plants in your garden it's a whole different matter, so you have to choose to some degree to accept the damage to promote the butterflies. (Moths too! While we don’t see them as often and maybe they aren’t as splashy as their cousins, they can be good pollinators and serve a purpose in the ecosystem. They are also beautiful in a drabber, less colorful way!)

The eggs are the first stage in butterflies' lives. This phase lasts about 10 days. Eggs are laid on the stems and leaves of plants and the butterflies can be quite specific on which plant they choose because when they hatch it is going to be the plant the larva (or caterpillar) eats.

The monarch is a familiar example, as most of us know, it requires milkweed plants for the larva to survive. This is of course the bad part as the caterpillars can decimate a plant. Once the caterpillar has fed and grown enough it goes into the chrysalis stage. This is the stage the caterpillar becomes a butterfly and takes 10 to 14 days. At the end of the chrysalis stage the butterfly emerges and starts the process over.

Butterflies may feed on different plants and may lay their eggs on other plants, and this is the key to have them keep coming back year after year. They need feeding sources for adults and feeding sources for the caterpillar. Diversity matters for butterflies. Plants like butterfly weed (a milkweed), different herbs if you leave them to flower will attract butterflies. Dill, fennel and other members of the carrot family attract swallowtails. Bronze fennel seems to be especially good at attracting them.

If you are planning a butterfly garden you want a succession of blooms throughout the growing season. Do your research and plot out the flowering seasons of the plants so something will always be in bloom. Yarrow is a good plant as it blooms a long time; others, depending on your zone. Monarda, anise hyssop, coreopsis, lavender, sedum, and verbena are all butterfly friendly. The beautiful tiger swallowtail butterfly requires leaf shelter as found in trees.

The Painted lady butterfly likes thistle plants and sometimes borage. The black swallowtail likes carrots, dill and parsley. You need to let them flower, though. Worth it to see black swallowtails! Below is a list of some of the plants that will attract butterflies.

Rotting fruit will bring them in also. Puree brown bananas and add beer or wine, honey or molasses to them. You can smear it on a plate, tree trunk, rock or fence post. You can also soak a sponge with the mixture and hang it up. Sugar water (10 parts water to 1 part sugar) can be placed in a saucer with a yellow or red plastic scrubber. This is good for early spring and fall when nectar flowers may be limited. If you have livestock, their manure can also be a powerful attractant. Just don’t bring it too close to the house!

Water will also attract them,—actually it’s more the mud—but scoop out a shallow depression in the ground. Place some sort of barrier (pond liner works) down, fill the depression with sand and fill with water. Since salts attract them, you can add some manure to the puddle or even just some table salt.

Do not use insecticides or herbicides in a butterfly garden. If you have a good variety of plants you shouldn’t need to; native predators will help balance the plant-eating insects so, while you may see some damage, it shouldn’t be devastating. Mountain States Nursery (not a retail nursery) has a Butterfly plant list, with many suggestions appropriate for our climate. It does have information on whether it is a larval or adult food source but does not list the bloom time. Go to: http://www.mswn.com/index2.htm

Butterfly plants: Penstemons, Monarda, Catmint, Columbine, Coral bells, Daylilies, Larkspur, Yuccas, Nicotiana, Foxglove, Lilies, Petunias, Kniphofia, some sages, Scarlet trumpet honeysuckles, Verbena
You have probably already seen wildlife moving around more than usual. For many, spring is mating season or when babies are born. Finding a bunch of cute rabbits could be thrilling. Finding a batch of skunks less so. The good news is that skunks are a bit more reclusive than javelinas but they are around. You may notice their smell, if nothing else. I live in the middle of Camp Verde, and since I have moved in there have always been skunks wandering around.

While they are unpleasant smelling and they can really mess with dogs, they are not really a garden problem. In fact they do a good job of eating many insects. The other unfortunate thing is they don’t scare easily or not at all and can be a problem in some areas, especially if you have pets. They are mostly nocturnal so you may smell them more than you see them. They can be somewhat destructive, as they will dig to find grubs and other goodies. There were skunks up at Jerome State Park and in the morning it wasn’t unusual to find divots of grass where they had been digging.

Babies are born May thru July. If you don’t want a litter of skunks in your yard you need to minimize the den sites available. Seal off holes under the house and other buildings. Cover the openings with chicken wire or sheet metal or fill them permanently with concrete. Get rid of junk piles and even woodpiles. Do not leave pet food or bird food out. Gardens need to be fenced. Shut off lights to keep from attracting insects, which skunks like to eat.

Skunks can carry rabies, so you don’t want them hanging around close by. If they have found a den site in your yard, it is best to trap and remove. You can do this yourself or there are companies/people who will do it for a fee. I don’t know of any government agencies in the county that will do it for you; they will likely refer you to private companies. You can trap them yourself but you might check with Arizona Game and Fish for their recommendations. If you aren’t comfortable dealing with a skunk it’s best to call a professional. You may read about skunk repellants but none of them work, so don’t waste your money. You could try putting a light into a den and increase activity around it and that might get it to move out. On the other hand, if you have taken care to skunk-proof your home and keep the dogs away from them, they provide a valuable service in the natural world. Maybe you can just watch them amble through your yard.

There are three species in Yavapai County. The most common is the striped skunk (Mephitis mephitis). It has glossy black fur except for prominent, lateral stripes of white down its back. It is about the size of a cat, averaging about 8 pounds. (It just looks bigger because we are afraid of them!) The front feet are larger than the back and have large claws for digging.

The spotted skunk (Spilogale putorium) is smaller than the striped skunk but more weasel-like. It has white pots and short, broken white strips in its black coat.

The hog-nosed skunk (Conepatus leuconotus) is famous for its long snout. The snout is hairless for about one inch on top. The entire back and tail are white with the lower sides and belly being black.
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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Change of Plans for the Highlands Garden Conference. It will be held at the Prescott Resort instead of in Camp Verde. The date remains the same. October 22.
Next Meeting
April 20
Camp Verde
Superior Court building

The speaker will be Joshua Loveall who owns Joshua Tree and Landscape with several offices in the Verde Valley and Sedona. He will be speaking on landscape design. Topics covered will be: design elements to consider, how to re-do your existing landscape, and plant ideas including natives.