Hummingbirds

A couple of years ago I left a hummingbird feeder up later than normal because I kept seeing birds come to the feeder. So I refilled it and waited again for it to be abandoned as hummingbirds migrated south for the winter. That never happened. That first year there was one bird that came with regularity. Admittedly I don’t know if it was one hummingbird or multiple hummingbirds and I was only seeing one at a time. It was a mild winter so I didn’t really worry about it and the two of us welcomed spring together. The next winter the same thing happened but it was a lot colder with several bitterly cold nights when I didn’t know if the poor bird would survive, but there it was the next morning. It was actively flying about in weather that I could barely stand. So now I have feeders out year round. That one hummingbird has turned into at least two this winter.

This has been a cold winter so I have made sure there is plenty of unfrozen nectar available. There was one morning when a hummer started to feed and the poor thing must have been starving as it stayed for the longest time with its bill dipped into the nectar. All the activity this year prompted me to do an internet search on hummingbirds wintering over. It was rather surprising. Turns out it’s not that uncommon. The birds are now showing up or just staying in areas they haven’t before. In the east the ruby-throated hummingbirds have been seen in the winter. Even rufous hummingbirds have been spotted which is really unusual. In the east and midwest have the misfortune to really only have one hummingbird, the ruby-throated so the rufous is a real surprise. In the west they are seeing the Anna’s, Rufous and Black-chinned hummingbirds lingering through the winter. Most migrate to Mexico and south. I have been seeing Anna’s in Camp Verde. If you migrate to Phoenix in the winter you might meet up with Costa’s also.

It seems the rufous hummingbird is testing the waters of spending the winter in colder climes the most. Normally the bird summers in the high reaches of the Canadian Pacific coast and spends winters in lower Mexico. They spread out through the Rocky Mountain region and the southwest during the spring and fall. But more and more rufous have been spotted in the southeast and even some northeastern locales. These are very cold-hardy birds and considering summer in Alaska can be as cool as winter in Arizona maybe it shouldn’t be surprising. Rufous hummingbirds occasionally show up at my feeders in the spring and fall but I haven’t had one stay the winter yet. You can usually tell a rufous by its extremely...
Aggressive behavior to other birds. It does not like sharing. Yavapai County sees a number of hummingbirds either passing through or spending time. They include ones like the Magnificent and Calliope, which would be fairly rare, as its range does not include central Arizona. At least I would faint away if I saw one at my feeder. The most common one would be the Anna’s. I have a ton of these every year that come to my yard. I have also seen the black-chinned hummingbird and occasionally the Rufous.

There is some controversy about feeding hummingbirds. Feeders can spread disease so the key to safely feeding hummingbirds is cleanliness and frequent changing of the nectar. Below are the Audubon guidelines for feeders. To keep your hummingbirds alive and healthy, take the time to provide them with a healthy environment. One of the best ways to do that is to grow hummingbird-friendly flowers. As gardeners we should manage to do that!

From: http://kern.audubon.org/hummer_feeding.htm
Keep your feeders CLEAN, CLEAN, CLEAN!!!!
Putting out a feeder to attract hummingbirds, which need to feed frequently, especially during migration, is a very popular activity. However, using the wrong kinds of sugar solutions or leaving moldy feeders out can kill hummingbirds and their babies.

**Perfect Hummer Food Recipe:**
One part sugar to four parts water - stir until sugar is dissolved.

**Measure examples:**
One cup of sugar to four cups of water
3/4 cup sugar to 3 cups water
1/2 cup sugar to 2 cups of water.
Bring solution to a boil to kill bacteria and slow spoilage - allow to cool.

Fill feeders just enough for a day or two of use. Extra solution may be refrigerated if used within one week. If feeders are cleaned and filled with freshly made, hot water sugar solution every day, then it may not be necessary to bring the solution to a boil. If you plan to store solution for two or more days, boiling is a must.

Do not use: raw sugar, agave syrup, brown sugar, molasses, artificial sweeteners, or anything other than white sugar; these cause various problems for hummers. Adding red food-dye coloring is unnecessary. The red on a feeder is enough to attract hummers. DO NOT USE HONEY as this can kill hummingbirds.

**When to stop feeding:** Birds migrate based on instinct, weather and resource availability. Since the sugar water is a supplemental food and NOT the main food source for hummingbirds, they will leave when the insect population drops below what they need to survive. Do not leave hummingbird feeders up during hard freezes unless they are heated (use summer cleaning regimen for warmed nectar and cleaning feeder). If you still have hummingbirds coming to your feeder then by all means keep feeding them. As autumn changes to winter, depending on your area, the hummingbirds may disappear altogether or one or two may over winter as they do in many areas of California. Of course, you only need to put out a tablespoon or two per day when there is only one hummingbird present.

Recent research is pointing to delayed or even no migration due to winter-feeding. This may be a result of climate change or some anthropomorphic cause; we’ll keep you informed to the newest research. So, if you have lots of hummingbirds and feel like feeding them, then do so, just remember to follow the hummingbird recipe and keep your feeders clean.

If you live in a cold climate then make sure you remove the perches so the hummingbirds keep their metabolism up while feeding (they actually could get too cold and die from feeding while perched in winter).

**Feeders:** Choose feeders that are easy to clean. It is essential that the feeder comes apart so that you can clean all surfaces thoroughly.

**For reviews of hummingbird feeders, go to http://www.hummingbirds.net**

**Cleaning Feeders:** Change the sugar solution often. Clean and put only enough fresh sugar solution in your feeders to last one to two days in warm weather, or sooner if it looks cloudy or develops mold. Keeping feeders in the
shade slows down fermentation and mold growth. But, feeders placed in the sun are more easily seen and seem to attract more individual hummingbirds.

Use only vinegar and water to clean feeders. Soap or bleach traces left in feeders, even after thorough rinsing, can harm hummers. A specially designed sponge or brush can help. If you use bleach as a last resort, follow-up by cleaning the bleach out with a vinegar and water solution.

Ant & Bee Control: An ant moat above the feeder will drown most ants. You can also spray cooking oil around the hanger but this makes a sticky mess and will have to be repeated throughout the year. The best way to avoid bees is to deny them access to the syrup. Feeders built to be bee and wasp-proof have the syrup level too low for insects to reach, but easily in range of the shortest hummingbird tongue work. Keep the bee guards on your feeder at all times and don’t burp your feeders. If you are in an area where orioles pull off the bee guards or if bees or wasps persist, try moving the feeder, even just a few feet. If that doesn’t work, take the feeder down for a day, or until you stop seeing wasps looking for it. You’ll see hummingbirds looking for it, too, but they won’t give up nearly as soon as the wasps.

Ed. Note: Red feeders may help resist bee use. Anything yellow really attracts them. The problem is that bees figure it out. I have pure red feeders and the bees learned to use them eventually.

Hummingbirds you may see in Yavapai County

Broad-billed Hummingbird
Magnificent Hummingbird
Black-chinned Hummingbird
Anna’s Hummingbird
Costa’s Hummingbird
Calliope Hummingbird
Broad-tailed Hummingbird
Rufous Hummingbird
Allen’s Hummingbird

Sedona is home to the Hummingbird Society. They sponsor the Sedona Hummingbird Festival. The festival includes garden tours. Tickets are available starting April 1
http://www.hummingbirdssociety.org
http://www.hummingbirdssociety.org/festival.php
They have email newsletters available: http://www.hummingbirdssociety.org/index-inside.php?Newsletters=E-mail-newsletters-18

Monsoon Madness 2013 Roars Into Action In March

Monsoon Madness, our BIG plant and yard sale to the public may not be until July 13, but it got a great start in March. The kickoff event was the Plant Propagation Workshop held on March 16. Sandy Lundgren, Debbie Allen and Steve McIntyre rocked participants into a free-for-all exchange of ideas regarding propagation by division, cuttings and by seed. Sixty packs of free seed where distributed along with various berries, creeping foliage cuttings and hackings (plant divisions).

The second kickoff occurred the next week with the initial meeting of key Madness Committees. New this year will be an on-going series of non-stop demonstrations of various gardening activities.

Monsoon Madness only happens with volunteer participation. Mark your calendars for July 11, 12, 13, 15. There will be plenty of activities to join. YOU CAN START RIGHT NOW by dividing a “clumpy” favorite, starting perennial seeds or making cuttings and cloning your favorites to share and sell.

Info: Steve McIntyre, zpsteve@yahoo.com, 443-8547
Just moved here from Minnesota, Iowa or even Washington and you want to start a garden? First my sympathies; I’ve seen newcomers drop to their knees in tears when the last of their very expensive purchases crumble to dust. Here are some tips on how to cope.

1. Never, ever say: “but I grew it in (insert your previous location) and it did fine!” or “I had a great garden in (insert your previous location)” or “you can’t grow anything in this soil!” Never think of your previous location again—it will not help you here and it really annoys long-time Arizona gardeners.

2. Stop reading nearly every garden book or magazine on the market. You will never learn how to garden in Arizona by reading “Fine Gardening” magazine, even though the pictures are lovely, or nearly any book you find on Amazon.com’s “The Absolute Best Gardening Books” list except if you just plan to look at the pictures.

3. Stop buying peat moss as a soil supplement. To change your native soil, a pile the size of your house probably wouldn’t be enough.

4. Stop setting your garden timer for twenty minutes every day and expect your vegetable garden, your trees and shrubs and your grass to look good or even survive.

5. Stop thinking that without a fence you will be able to outwit the rabbits and the javelina.

6. Stop thinking you can grow all the same plants here that you grew in (insert your previous location here).

Now that I’ve told you what not to do, here are some things you can do and, yes, you can have a beautiful garden in Arizona; it will just be different from (insert your previous location here).

1. Reset your brain. The soil and climate are different from your previous location. Stop expecting them to be the same. Expect different results. Just the act of not comparing the two places will make your life happier.

2. There are books out there that can help you but make sure they have “Arizona” in the title or perhaps the word “desert.” The soils are different here; the climate is different and the plants you are going to be able to grow are different.

3. Arizona soils are really different than in the Midwest, the East Coast, the South and the Pacific Northwest. They are alkaline compared to acidic for the most part. So toss out the camellia and gardenia plans. They will grow here but need an incredible amount of care and probably will never grow as well as where you came from. The heat here also plays a role in soil nutrients. The heat and sun burn up much of the organic matter in the soil. Nitrogen is not as available and the alkalinity can cause some nutrients to be less available. A good soil analysis will help you with figuring out what your soil needs. Compost is one of the best choices you can make as a soil additive. But you will have to add a lot and often.

4. Watering!!! Folks, it doesn’t rain here a lot. It’s hot, the soil dries quickly….come on, you can’t really believe that 20 minutes of watering will keep everything healthy. Trees and shrubs need different amounts than grasses, which need different amounts than vegetables or perennials. Do not let an irrigation “expert” convince you that one size fits all and 20 minutes is enough for any of them. The story here is water less but longer. Deep watering is important, trees will need water to two to three feet deep while vegetables and perennials will need less than half that. Put in different irrigation zones so you can water according to the type of plant. Mulch, mulch, mulch and learn to do it properly to reduce watering needs and improve the life of your plants.

5. If you live in an area with javelina and rabbits I am sorry to inform you they will not go away just because you moved in and want to plant tulips. You may as well sprinkle candy on the floor and expect kids to not eat it. If you are serious about gardening you will need to fence everything you plant because truthfully there aren’t very many plants out there that javelina or rabbits won’t eat, especially if they are really hungry. You moved into their home; you better get used to sharing or you will need a fence.

6. The list of plants that you grew in (insert previous location here) that won’t grow in the desert is legion. But there is whole new list of plants that grow here that don’t grow in (insert previous location here.) Think of this place as a new adventure. Embrace the climate, the soils and the desertness of it all. You will be a lot happier here and with your garden.

7. If you have questions, call the Yavapai Master Gardeners for help. We are terrific gardeners and you can get local information. Read the gardening column in the local papers. It is good! Take the Master Gardener class; we need volunteers and you will learn a lot. Attend some of the gardening festivals, and conferences held in the area.

Enjoy the difference!
Master Gardeners take on Sharlot Hall Roses

Sharlot Hall Museum was visited early in March by a horde of pruning crazies. Crazy because many started pruning before the ice had melted. Indeed, there were patches of snow in the rose garden. The annual Master Gardener Sharlot Hall Rose Garden pruning bee brought out 20 MGs and friends to prune 257 roses in about three and a half hours according to Kathy MacCauley volunteer coordinator. As with all pruning chores, the payoff will be in the Summer. Next time you visit Sharlot Hall Museum pay special attention to the beautiful rose garden and think of those crazies pruning in March.

Iris Sale @ Prescott Farmers Market
Saturday May 11, 2013, 7:50 AM to 12:00 Noon.

Location: Yavapai College, 1100 East Sheldon Street, Performing Arts Parking Lot Prescott, Arizona. Prescott Area Iris Society (PAIS)

Join PAIS for our Farmers Market Iris Sale. Many beautiful potted iris available in single and bi colors. Proceeds used to support community service projects in the Prescott area.

Visit also the beautiful Wm. R. Dykes Medal Iris Gardens at the Yavapai College Sculpture Garden adjacent to the Farmers Market.

For information call Judy (928) 776-7217 or Dennis (623) 980-6627. Visit our web site at http://prescottirissociety.org.
Email: president@prescottirissociety.org

Kaleidoscope of Color 2013
Saturday, May 18, 2013. 10:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m.

The 14th annual Iris Exhibit, Kaleidoscope of Color 2013, sponsored by the Prescott Area Iris Society (PAIS), will feature an amazing variety of iris in all the colors of the rainbow. Come attend our free event and vote for your favorite iris. Enjoy the stunning displays of blooms and arrangements from local gardens. See planting and care demonstrations. Potted iris will also be on sale. Visit also the beautiful Wm. R. Dykes Medal Iris Gardens sponsored by PAIS located at the Yavapai Community College Sculpture Gardens.

For more information: Visit our web site at http://prescottirissociety.org
Contacts: Carolyn (928) 778-1551 or Dennis (623) 980-6627
Email: president@prescottirissociety.org

Kaleidoscope of Color event location: Mortimer’s Nursery, 3166 Willow Creek Road, Prescott, Arizona.
Some of the great memories of my childhood are traveling from the desert to visit the great ponderosa pine forests of Arizona. When you were a desert kid it is kind of a magical experience. I even remember the first time I got close and personal and smelled the bark. I still smell the trees to get that wonderful scent of vanilla. Most people coming to Arizona for the first time seem to think of Arizona as looking something like the Sahara Desert. They are genuinely surprised when they find out we are a rugged country with an astonishing abundance of pine trees. Arizona has one of the largest stands of ponderosa in the country and is known for its pure stands of ponderosa covering thousands of acres.

In various parts of the world ponderosa is also known as blackjack pine, bull pine or western yellow pine. It is native to western North American but can be found throughout the temperate world. I wrote an article on David Douglas, plant explorer, awhile back and he is the one who first described the tree in 1826. It is also the state tree of Montana. (Just so you know, Arizona's state tree is the paloverde.)

The distinctive bark of the ponderosa is one of its defining characteristics on mature trees. It is a cinnamon red with black crevices. On young trees it is gray to black and scaly without the deep crevices. As it matures the bark can thicken up to four inches and it splits into large flat yellowish-brown plates with deep furrows between them. Older trees can be very yellow, which is where the name yellow pine comes from.

It has long needles that can have two to four, sometimes five needles per bunch depending on the subspecies. They are dark to yellow-green and about six to seven inches in length. The needles grow for about five years and then they drop.

Ponderosa flower in the spring. They produce both male and female flowers. The male cones are small and yellowish, appearing in clusters. The female cones are about 4 inches long when mature. The tips of the cone scales have sharp out curved prickles, which are noticed pretty quickly when picked up. The cones mature over two growing seasons. They may look similar to Jeffrey pine but the cones of ponderosa are prickly when handled while Jeffrey's are not.

Depending on the growing conditions the tree averages 100 to 160 feet and is two to four feet in diameter. It generally has a deep taproot, which helps it get through drought and protects it against being toppled by the wind.

The largest ponderosa pine on the National Regis-
April MG Meeting  
April 17, 6:30pm, Camp Verde

Dr. Michael R. Wagner is Regent’s Professor of International Forestry and Coordinator of International Programs at the School of Forestry, Northern Arizona University Flagstaff (NAU), Arizona. A Regent’s Professor is the highest rank within the Arizona University system and is granted to only 2% of the entire faculty. During his academic career he authored or edited six books, 10 book chapters, four symposia proceedings, 107 peer reviewed journal articles, and 33 technical publications.

Dr. Wagner has made substantial contributions to forestry education both domestically and abroad. In addition to his role in teaching conventional university courses, Dr. Wagner has played a substantial and lead role in the internationalization of the forestry curriculum at NAU School of Forestry.

From (2003-2005) he was a member and Chair of the World Forestry Committee. His extensive professional experience and travel in Africa, that includes over 20 countries, provides Dr. Wagner with a unique understanding of the cultural context of forestry capacity building in Africa.

Searching the MG Newsletter on the Extension Website

Trying to find something in the back issues of Yavapai Gardens has always been difficult. There is a partial index available. Steve Moody has figured out a way to do it and it works better than the U of AZ’s CALS search engine.

Go to: http://www.arizona.edu/search/google

In the search window type in: “Yavapai Gardens” (including the quotes) and the topic you are looking for. For example:

"Yavapai Gardens" tomato blight

The search engine retrieves all the issues with tomato blight information.

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.

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

Issued in furtherance of Cooperative Extension work, acts of May 8 and June 30, 1914, in cooperation with the U.S. Department of Agriculture, Jeffrey C. Silvertooth, Associate Dean & Director, Economic Development & Extension, College of Agriculture and Life Sciences, The University of Arizona. The University of Arizona is an equal opportunity, affirmative action institution. The University does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, religion, sex, national origin, age, disability, veteran status, or sexual orientation in its programs and activities.
The meeting site has changed back to the Superior Court Building off of Hwy 260 in Camp Verde.

2840 N. Commonwealth Dr.

Next Meeting

April 17, 6:30pm, Camp Verde

“Urban Forest Health” will cover benefits of urban forests, insect and disease pests on urban trees, and mitigating urban pest problems including tree species selection and care.

Dr. Michael R. Wagner is Regent’s Professor of International Forestry and Coordinator of International Programs at the School of Forestry, Northern Arizona University Flagstaff