Beautiful Beetles
by Nora Graf

As most of you are aware Arizona has lots and lots of insects. Most people are squeamish around them but sometimes their somewhat destructive (as pertains to your yard) capabilities should be forgotten, at least for a while, so you can stop and enjoy their beauty. The beetles are a remarkable family of beautiful creatures with some interesting habits and Arizona has some wonders.

The Glorious Beetle — Chrysina gloriosa

It is truly glorious. I have lived in Arizona most of my life and just saw these beetles for the first time a couple of years ago when I was working up in Jerome. They must have been particularly abundant that year as I even saw two of them. They look like the June beetle but they are lighter green in color and have amazing silvery stripes on them. Check out your juniper trees because that is where they hang out eating the leaves. This is a high-elevation insect and is well camouflaged so it might be awhile before you see one. The secret is that they can be found by using a black light especially after the monsoon starts. Some sources say that it is endangered, others say not so, but the best policy when it comes to the natural world is to leave it where you found it.

Iron Cross Beetle — Tegrodera aloga

It’s easy to see where the iron cross beetle acquired its name. The black cross against the bright yellow background is like a stop sign. Then there is the red head. Hard to mistake this beetle, it is one of the blister beetles that call Arizona home.

Blister beetles have big square heads and long legs. The bright colors are probably a warning to predators as they are poisonous. If disturbed, you may find they bleed from the knee joints and other body parts. Don’t disturb with an unprotected body part, though, as the chemicals can cause painful blisters. If swallowed they can cause damage to the digestive and urinary track, although you would prob-
You might see more of them than you want to. Since they can only feed on softer skinned fruits they thoroughly enjoy things like peaches, apricots, plums and grapes. The larvae can be found in manure, compost, thick mulch and heavy leaf litter, so it helps to keep your orchard clean of such things. While they are often seen flying, they are poor flyers, which is why you can run into one quite easily. They aren’t attacking; they just can’t seem to get out of your way. If you end up with one on you, DON’T PANIC, they are not dangerous. You just have to carefully disentangle them and send them on their way.

Rhinoceros Beetle—*Dynastes granti*

Native to Arizona and Utah this beetle is a lovely white to light sage green with brownish black spots. What you might notice first is a long horn, if it’s a male anyway. You will normally see it in August or September. It is one of the largest beetles in the United States, 2 to 3 inches long. Mostly nocturnal, they are attracted by lights and can be kept as a pet… if you’re interested, that is. You feed them peeled fruit and watered-down maple syrup. They only live about one year. The rhinoceros beetle can be found in many locations around the state. The beetles feed on tree sap by making a small wound in the tree but are not considered a destructive pest.

Travertine Beetles—*Lutrochus arizonicus*

Here’s an odd one for you. Not very attractive beetles but they have an interesting lifestyle. The travertine beetles are water beetles and are common in water sources that deposit travertine. They are small, so you might miss them—only 2-6 mm long and yellowish gold in color. They like fast moving water and feed on algae and wood. So for those who frequent travertine streams, keep on eye out for these little wonders. This beetle is not well researched and was only recently described by scientists in 1970 from specimens found in Yavapai county.

Inflated Beetles—*Cysteodemus armatus*

Inflated beetles are weird as they carry pockets of air under their wings to use as insulation. They do have a round puffball appearance. The elytra (one of the pair of hardened forewings that form a protective covering for the flight wings) is pitted and sometimes have white or yellow secretions. These secretions are toxic to predators. The young beetles are called triungulin. They are very tiny and after hatching find their way into underground chambers of soil-nesting bees. The young beetles latch onto developing bee grubs as ectoparasites. While chances are you won’t see them in Yavapai County, if you are in the Mojave and Colorado deserts, and maybe in the White Tank mountains near Phoenix, keep on eye out for them.

Figeater Beetle—*Cotinis mutabilis*

Everyone knows the figeater beetle. It’s the June beetle—it’s the beetle with the magnificent iridescent emerald green color. Even if you don’t like bugs you have to admire the color of this one. Unfortunately, if you have fruit trees you might see more of them than you want to. Since they can only feed on softer skinned fruits they thoroughly enjoy things like peaches, apricots, plums and grapes. The larvae can be found in manure, compost, thick mulch and heavy leaf litter, so it helps to keep your orchard clean of such things. While they are often seen flying, they are poor flyers, which is why you can run into one quite easily. They aren’t attacking; they just can’t seem to get out of your way. If you end up with one on you, DON’T PANIC, they are not dangerous. You just have to carefully disentangle them and send them on their way.

Master Blister Beetle—*Lyttia magister*

These are black and red beauties. The head, legs and prothorax are red while the remainder of the body is black. They like low-elevation deserts. This beetle can get as large as 1.3 inches long. The females lay eggs in the soil. When the larvae hatch they feed on insects, primarily in bee nests. Adults feed on flowers and leaves of the brittlebush plant. Brittlebush is a common desert plant. You can see them along roadsides as you drop in elevation towards Phoenix and they are used as a landscape plant in the Phoenix area.
Wild roses can be found in a lot of places in the United States and there is more than one species although most people, when they see them, just think ‘wild rose’. There are three to five (depending on the source) of wild roses in Arizona. Two of the roses listed in the “The Flora of Arizona” now seem to have been judged as the same species as *Rosa woodsii* or *fendleri* depending on whom you ask. The three (at least for now) confirmed species are different enough to tell apart easily.

The most abundant is *Rosa arizonica*, the Arizona Rose. This species grows to three feet tall. The flowers are pink with the petals being of uneven size. The flowers diameter is about 1 3/4 inch wide. It has yellow stamens and is fragrant. The fruits (hips) turn red when mature. The hips can be used for making wine, jams and jellies. The tops of the leaves are dark green, while the bottom is lighter. The plant blooms starting in May and the blooming season continues through July. This rose is found at elevations ranging from 4000 to 9000 feet along streams and small clearings in ponderosa forests. It likes partial shade. Of course it has thorns that are about 1/4 inch long and hooked. Wildlife will browse on the plants.

*Rosa fendleri* (*Rosa woodsii*) or the Fendler Rose or the Wood’s Rose has a confusing set of names, but what did Shakespeare say: “What’s in a name? That which we call a rose by any other name would smell as sweet.” This rose can grow up to seven feet tall. The flowers are pink with yellow stamens and are about 2 1/4 inch wide. The hip matures to red. The Rose blooms from June through August and grows in elevations ranging from 5500 to 9000 feet. It prefers roadsides, slopes and clearings in Ponderosa pine forests. Look out for short red thorns that are nearly straight.

*Rosa stellate*, the desert rose is a very prickly 2-foot shrub. It has velvety leaves. The flowers are a deep-rose-purple that are 2 1/2 inches in diameter. The plant blooms from June to September. The hips are dullish-red and corky so probably wouldn’t work for jellies. It has strong slender cream-colored prickles. Its native range includes Texas, New Mexico and Arizona. This rose prefers mountain canyons and dry, rocky places. One source said it would probably work well as a landscape plant for dryer areas.

The name of the plant is confusing; other sources have shown the name to be *Hesperhodos stellatus* or *Hesperhodos mirificus*, or *Rosa mirifica* among others.

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**Plant Propagation Workshop March 16**

Master Gardeners and friends are invited to the first “extra credit” MG event of 2013. The workshop is a thinly veiled push by the organizers of Monsoon Madness to initiate MGs to propagate plants for the big sale in July. Major topics covered are: Seed Starting, Plant Propagation by cuttings, layering and division.

The workshop will be highly interactive, with much group discussion encouraged in addition to formal presentations and demonstrations. Steve McIntyre, Guider of Seeds, will be joined by Sandy (the hat) Lundgren and Debbie (snipsnip) Allen. Everyone is encouraged to bring their comments and questions. All this and FREE SEEDS for those intrepid gardeners wanting to try growing from scratch. Bring a clumpy something to divide and share.

Plant Propagation Workshop, Saturday March 16, 9am to noon, Extension Meeting Room, Prescott. Contact Steve McIntyre, zpsteve@yahoo.com, 443-8547
Most kids have had the experience of dying Easter Eggs. In my day, we bought a little dyeing kit at the store. The powdered dyes were mixed with water and a bit of vinegar and we were ready to make a huge mess. Old newspapers were very useful back in the day and old clothes! It is still a fun activity. Did you know you can make your own dyes? Some of the plants that can be used aren't exactly available in March but you can save and dry material this summer in anticipation of next Easter. There are also a lot of things you have in your house right now that you can use. You are not always going to get the brilliant colors of the artificial dyes but you will get luminous pastels.

**How to dye eggs**

1. Place the eggs (fresh) in a single layer in a pan. Add water until the eggs are covered.
2. Add approximately one teaspoon of vinegar.
3. Add the natural dye. Use more dye material for more eggs or for a more intense color.
4. Bring water to a boil.
5. Reduce heat and simmer for 15 minutes.
6. If you are pleased with the color, remove the eggs from the liquid.
7. If you want more intensely colored eggs, temporarily remove the eggs from the liquid. Strain the dye through a coffee filter (unless you want speckled eggs). Cover the eggs with the filtered dye and let them remain in the refrigerator overnight.
8. Naturally colored eggs will not be glossy, but if you want a shiny appearance you can rub a bit of cooking oil onto the eggs once they are dry.

You can use fresh and frozen berries as 'paints', too. Simply crush the berries against dry boiled eggs. Try coloring on the eggs with crayons or wax pencils before boiling and dyeing them. Have fun!

**Bluish-Gray**

Blueberries: Mix 1 cup frozen blueberries with 1 cup water; bring to room temperature, and remove blueberries.

**Blue**

Red Cabbage: Cut 1/4 head of red cabbage into chunks and add to 4 cups boiling water. Stir in 2 Tbsp. vinegar. Let cool to room temperature and remove cabbage with a slotted spoon.

**Green**

Spinach leaves, boiled

**Purple**

Grape Juice

**Red**

Zinger Tea

**Greenish-Yellow**

Yellow Delicious Apple Peels (boiled): Peel the skin from 6 yellow apples. Simmer in 1-1/2 cups water for 20 minutes; strain. Add 2 tsp. white vinegar.

Fennel: Simmer 4 oz. chopped fennel tops in 1-1/2 cups of water for 20 minutes; strain. Add 2 tsp. white vinegar.

**Yellow**

Orange or Lemon Peels (boiled)

Onion skins: Take the skin of 6 yellow onions and simmer in 2 cups water for 15 minutes; strain. Add 3 tsp. white vinegar.

Cooked Carrots

Chili Powder

Paprika

**Orange**

Onion skins: Take the skin of 6 yellow onions and simmer in 2 cups water for 15 minutes; strain. Add 3 tsp. white vinegar.

Cooked Carrots

Chili Powder

Paprika

Faint Red-Orange

Paprika: Stir 2 Tbsp. paprika into 1 cup boiling water; add 2 tsp. white vinegar.

**Yellow**

Rich yellow: Simmer 4 oz. chopped carrot tops in 1-1/2 cups water for 15 minutes; strain. Add 2 tsp. white vinegar.

Mustard-yellow: Stir 2 Tbsp. turmeric into 1 cup boiling water; add 2 tsp. white vinegar.
Various shades: Steep 4 bags of chamomile or green tea in 1 cup boiling water for 5 minutes.
**Pale yellow:** Chop 4 oz. goldenrod and simmer in 2 cups water for 20 minutes; strain. Add 2 tsp. white vinegar.
**Faint yellow:** Simmer the peels of 6 oranges in 1-1/2 cups water for 20 minutes; strain. Add 2 tsp. vinegar.

**Pink**
**Faint pink:** Chop 4 oz. amaranth flowers and simmer in 2 cups water; strain. Add 2 tsp. white vinegar.
Simmer the skins from 6 avocados in 1-1/2 cup water for 20 minutes; strain. Add 2 tsp. white vinegar.
Mix 1 cup pickled beet juice and 1 tablespoon vinegar.

**Dark pink:** Cut 1 medium beet into chunks and add to 4 cups boiling water. Stir in 2 Tbsp. vinegar and let cool to room temperature; remove beets.
Cranberries or Juice
Raspberries

Red Grape Juice
Juice from Pickled Beets

**Red**
Lots of Red Onions Skins (boiled)
Canned Cherries with Juice
Pomegranate Juice
Raspberries

**Brown-Gold**
Dill seed: Simmer 2 Tbsp. dill seed in 1-cup water for 15 minutes; strain. Add 2 tsp. white vinegar.

**Brown**
Add 1 tablespoon vinegar to 1-cup strong coffee.
Instant Coffee
Black Walnut Shells (boiled)
Black Tea

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5th Annual Spring Planting Festival
March 16-24, 2013

“Growing Healthy Communities.”

Complete Calendar for Festival Week, event locations, times, and registration can be found at:

http://gardensforhumanity.org/events/spring-planting-festival-2013-overview.html

Opening EXPO @ West Sedona School  2:30 – 4 pm
Keynote address: Michael Meléndrez, renowned soil scientist, plant research specialist, and inventor

7 pm, Opening Concert @ Old Town Center for the Arts

Our Annual Spring Planting Festival provides, educational, cultural and practical activities that increase local food production, environmental stewardship, and a healthy, sustainable lifestyle.

When we use the term “healthy communities,” we mean personally, environmentally, economically, and spiritually. We realize that community connections, mutual support and traditions play a big role for all of us.

Coffee Talks: All week in Cafés throughout Sedona and the Verde Valley and workshops and events on a wide range of topics that contribute to healthy communities.

One of our original goals in starting the Spring Planting Festival was to stimulate an “agricultural renaissance” in Sedona and the Verde Valley. Along with this would be community building around local food and cultural celebration.
March, beautiful March. Winter is nearly over, the days should be wonderful and you can go out and plant if you want. (Higher elevations might have to wait a little longer) Early spring vegetables can go in. Peas, radishes, lettuce, spinach and later in the month start the root vegetables. All of these plants do very well in our gardens.

Some of the easiest plants to grow are the greens, lettuces, mustard greens, arugula, Chinese cabbages and spinach among them.

Some plants for early spring:
Swiss Chard—this plant should go through the summer and into next year before it goes to seed. It is a pretty plant whether you go with the old standby of the red or white or try “Bright Lights” which comes in a variety of bright pink to orange stems. It is great cooked in soups and stews.

You don’t hear about certain greens much but for the adventurous gardener try some mustard greens. As the temperatures warm the plant gets more pungent.

Dry land cress grows quickly and can be ready in two to four weeks. It has a nice spicy taste to it, making it a good addition to a leafy salad.

Arugula is easy to grow and has a nutty, peppery flavor. It can be used raw and cooked. The flavor can vary so you might want to try different varieties to find one to your taste.

Chinese cabbages grow well here. These are head types that are good for stir-fry and soups although it can be used in salads also.

Bok Choy is one of my favorites. It has a dark green leaf with a white succulent stem. I like it in stir-fry but the crunchy stem is nice chopped in fresh dishes.

Lettuce—There are thousands of varieties of lettuce out there. Everything from greens, chartreuse, reds, browns and combinations of all those. There are leaf types and heading types. Your garden can look like a festival if you want it to with just lettuces growing. I love growing lettuce, its easy beautiful and provides you with months of food.

Spinach—this is one of the old standbys but it’s still hard to beat its nutritional value. Try the younger, smaller leaves rather than waiting till it matures.

Pea shoots are not in most people’s radar but you can grow pea shoots for use in salads.

Later in the month, you can add carrots, turnips and beets in the mix. The turnip and beet greens can also be eaten.

Many of these can be planted in waves so you have an ongoing abundance of them. Having lettuce or pea shoots that are a ready to pick at the same time is the ideal situation. You want the ongoing adventure of week after week of going to the garden and discovering new delights.
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

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.

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Next Meeting

March 20, 6:30pm, Prescott

We’ll be showing portions of a DVD entitled Symphony of the Soil by Deborah Garcia.

Drawing from ancient knowledge and cutting edge science, this is an exploration of the miraculous substance soil. By understanding the elaborate relationships and mutuality between soil, water, the atmosphere, plants and animals, we come to appreciate the complex and dynamic nature of this precious resource. The film also examines our human relationship with soil, the use and misuse of soil in agriculture, deforestation and development, and the latest scientific research on soil’s key role in ameliorating the challenging environmental issues of our time. Symphony of the Soil is an intriguing presentation that highlights possibilities of healthy soil creating healthy plants creating healthy humans on a healthy planet.