

Upcoming Events

Dec. 5 Master Gardener Meeting, Care and Planting of Live Christmas Trees, Jack Cooper, 7:00pm, Safford City/Graham County Public Library, PD Room

Certified Master Gardeners meet at 5:30-6:30pm

Dec. 18 January newsletter deadline

Jan. 2, 2001 Master Gardener Meeting, "Propagating Roses", Mike Fernandez, 7:00 p.m., Safford City/Graham County Public Library, PD Room

Jan. 16 Gardening and Landscape class begins at EAC

Jan. 27 Pruning and Care of Woody Plants Demonstration



Master Gardeners Meeting December 5, 2000 7:00 p.m. "Live Christmas Trees"

Persons with a disability may request a reasonable accommodation, such as a sign language interpreter, by contacting U of A Graham County Cooperative Extension at 520-428-2611. Requests should be made as early as possible to allow time to arrange the accommodation.

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U.S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE
THE UNIVERSITY OF ARIZONA
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GRAHAM COUNTY GARDENING

December 2000

From The Dirt Clods!!


Our fall garden is growing well. As the cooler weather sets in we start to move inside and think about indoor gardening. There are lots of opportunities for volunteer hours for anyone who wants to help get the greenhouse up and going. Just around the corner we'll be planting seeds for our hot weather crops. Ruth Anne is now in the process of contacting seed companies for next summer's trials. If you like the crisp air, we still have opportunities outside also. Our tomato stakes need to be pulled up and placed in the peas, lettuce needs thinning, and some crops are almost ready to harvest. Don't forget one of the benefits of helping harvest food is dividing it up among the harvesters!! We are still looking for someone to help with the volunteer call list as opportunities come up.

Remember all volunteer hours our wonderful volunteers accomplished in the year 2000 are due to us by January 2nd. This is required for those working for Master Gardener certification or re-certification but we would also like to know what you have done even if you weren't working towards certification. We need to

include everyone's hours in our January Reports.

Don't forget Certified Master Gardeners have their business meeting before the public presentation at 5:30 - 6:30. Please bring \$5 to cover dinner.

Lee Clark discovered a grant for Arid Lands Demonstration Projects on the internet. It seemed made for our environmental trail vision for SAC. The problem was the due date was only 2 weeks away. And Lee was out of town the first week. With **Dorine Chancellor** heading the project, we hammered out a grant proposal in a week's time. Lee added his magic when he returned and delivered it just in time to meet the deadline. We will find out next spring the results of our work. If our proposal is accepted, we may have up \$75,000 to begin our project. Whatever the outcome, we learned a lot about grant writing and will use this knowledge to apply for other grants. Many, many thanks to Dorine. We could not have done it without her.

Thanks to **Perri Williams** for donating some of his gourmet garlic varieties for our homeowner test trials; to **Patricia** and **Gail Jones** for "weathering" the wind and the rain at the Master Gardener booth at the City of  Festival; to **Doris Hommel** for arranging our alternative meeting place for last month's presentation, along with **Perri Larson** and **Sue Martin** who pitched in at the last minute to present a program on the conference they attended. Hope you're feeling better, Mike! We are looking forward to your rose presentation in January. **Gail Jones** was hostess in October and **Perri Larson** was hostess in November for our monthly presentation. We really appreciate those who are so good about helping us!!!!

From your Friendly Horticulture Technicians and Master Gardeners
Ruth Anne Neff & Sue Martin

Lee J. Clark
Safford Agricultural Center

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fff December Gardening Meeting fff

This month's topic will be "Caring For Live Christmas Trees and Other Seasonal Gift Plants". The guest speaker will be Jack Cooper of Cooper's Nursery in Pima. Jack has been in the nursery business for over 27 years growing a variety of trees, shrubs and landscape plants. Jack is also donating seedlings as well as providing educational information for all who attend. Additional tips and handouts on other seasonal gifts such as ornamental peppers, and poinsettias will be available. We apologize for the last minute change of topics last month. We have rescheduled Mike Fernandez' presentation on "Propagating Roses" for our January 2, 2001 presentation.

In the December Garden:

- C **Prune to remove dead or diseased limbs but save heavy pruning until plants are fully dormant**
- C **Add compost and manure to garden beds as they become vacant**
- C **Spray horticultural oil on fruit and nut trees to smother overwintering pests.**
- C **Direct seed alyssum, sweet peas, and spring wild flowers in the garden.**
- C **Set out perennials and cool season annuals, such as, calendula, chrysanthemums, dianthus, daisies, larkspur, pansies, snapdragons, stocks, and violas.**
- C **If you buy spring bulbs such as iris, tulips, daffodils, crocus, and hyacinth plant immediately.**
- C **Pre-emergent herbicides can still be applied during early this month for winter annual weed control. Follow package directions carefully.**
- C **Start to plant bare rooted trees, roses, grapes and cane berries later in the month.**
- C **When frost is predicted, protect citrus and other tender plants with cloth, burlap, sheets of plastic. Make sure to suspend them so they don't hang on the leaves. Remove or open**

coverings in the mornings. Wrap young citrus trunks with burlap.

Between rain, irrigate deep rooted plants occasionally, but thoroughly. Shallow-rooted plants require water more often.

We have a new Extension Agent!

Randy Norton has been selected to fill the vacant Graham County Cooperative Extension Agriculture Agent position. He will officially begin January 2. Randy is from Duncan, Az., and attended EAC before transferring to the University of Arizona, where he has been since 1991. He received a Bachelor's degree in Plant Science in 1993 and finished his Masters' Degree in Soil Science in 1996. He just recently completed the requirements for a Ph.D. in Soil Chemistry/ Soil Fertility. He is currently teaching at the U of A. Randy will be the instructor for the Gardening and Landscaping class at EAC this spring. We are looking forward to having Randy on board.

When To Harvest Pecans

Pecans harvested and eaten too early can give you a stomachache just like eating green fruit. Mature pecans will lose their bright green color and turn brown. The husks will begin to split and open at the sutures. Frost will have a bearing on the speed of this process. As soon as the husks are open the nuts can be knocked from the limbs or you can hire a mechanical harvester to shake the nuts from the tree. Some people leave the nuts on the tree to fall naturally and use them as they fall.

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Gardening and Landscaping Class

The Gardening and Landscaping class will be taught again Spring Semester 2001 at EAC. You may register for it at any time now. The course number is 1727. It will be held on Tuesday evenings from 6:00 to 9:00 p.m. This class meets the requirements of the U of A Master Gardener Program and also provides novice or advanced gardeners and landscape designers with up-to-date techniques and ideas. The course will be fun and dynamic and meet the needs of the hobbyist or serious gardener. Conventional and organic gardening principles will be taught. Randy Norton, our new Extension Agent, will be the instructor. We will also bring in local and university specialists to cover individual topics. Some of the topics to be covered include pruning, insects, diseases, vegetables, landscaping, lawns, houseplants and xeriscaping.

Mistletoe: Friend or Foe Mistletoe is part of Christmas tradition for many people, however, there is an unpleasant side to mistletoe. It is a parasite that attaches itself to growing trees and can be harmful and even kill trees. Trees in the Graham County area that are especially susceptible to mistletoe infestations include the cottonwood, poplar, ash, mesquite and sometimes the pecan. In late fall mistletoe produces white translucent berries that are poisonous to people, pets and livestock. Mistletoe is usually spread by birds. They carry the sticky seeds in their beaks or excrete them after eating the berries. Mistletoe should be removed from trees that have heavy infestation. This removal process can be a big job because if you just break the mistletoe from the limb it will grow back. A major pruning job, taking most of the top growth off is a drastic method of control. Small infected limbs can be pruned out. When you break mistletoe from a large limb you should use a knife or hatchet to remove a chip at the point of attachment. Also, wrapping 3 to 6 mill thick black plastic around the scar and taping with black electrical

tape will prevent regrowth in that spot.

From the files of Ron Cluff, Former Graham County Extension Agent

PLEASE PRUNE PROPERLY!!!!

As the leaves are falling I have already seen people topping off and drastically cutting on trees. True, the leaves falling are the start of colder weather *BUT* it is recommended that you wait to prune the trees until winter. If you decide to prune anyway, please use proper techniques. Proper pruning is not as difficult as most people make it out to be.

One of the most misunderstood pruning practices is the topping of the trees. Topping is the taking the top off of trees, most commonly mulberry trees, leaving large stubs. The practice of topping puts a great deal of stress on the trees. When we remove more than 30% of the limbs the root system is forced to use large amounts of its reserved energy to replace the removed limbs and leaves. Repeated topping drains the root system until it becomes weak and dies. The masses of new sprouts are weakly attached so there is danger of breaking limbs. Broken limbs are not only hazardous, but also open up wounds for insects and diseases to move in and weaken the tree further. This will also require more fertilizer and moisture to keep them from becoming further stressed during drought periods.

Trees that need maintenance can be pruned without topping. Remove dead and diseased branches. If it is necessary to lower the height of a tree, remove the upper branches where they originate from another branch, leaving lower branches in place. Limbs that are interfering with utility wires should be pruned so that the remaining limbs are untopped and angle away from the wires. Cuts should leave a smooth surface with no jagged edges or torn bark. Do not make flush cuts or leave large stubs. Cut up to the branch collar, the swelling at the base of each branch that contains the tissue necessary to heal the wound quickly and completely.

The natural spreading shape is much more pleasant than a "pom pom" look. Trees that have been properly pruned will require less frequent care.

Still not sure? The Uof A Graham County Extension Office provides an annual pruning demonstration. This year's will be January 27, 2001. Specialists from the university will be present.