



Cooperative Extension Graham County

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Graham County Gardening Newsletter

July 2000

From Between the Rows!!

Things are moving along at the farm. The last of the lettuce has been harvested and the carrots will be harvested soon. Some of the tomatoes are suffering from curly top virus but overall are looking good. The peppers,... well let's not talk about the peppers. Melons, watermelons and pumpkins are doing great and the varieties need to be separated from each other every few days.

The Boys and Girls Club has started sending a gardening group to the farm on Friday afternoons. They have their own garden plot to care for and have offered to help with any chores that need to be done. We're working on list of activities right now.

The greenhouse cooler has called it quits so we are temporarily shutting down the greenhouse. We hope to have it up and running better than ever by fall. Our new tables have been assembled and are just waiting to be filled with plants.

See you at roll call -

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

Curly Top Virus in Tomatoes and Peppers

After you have worked hard to get beautiful tomato plants growing and starting to set fruit, you are going to feel discouragement and disappointment when you see some of the plants turn yellow and start to die. This is probably caused by a disease called curly top virus. Infected plants show a yellowing of the foliage, the leaves curl or roll up and twist and the tomato plant dies within a few days. This curly top disease will also affect pepper and squash plants.

The curly top virus is spread by an insect called a leafhopper. The disease overwinters on weeds and other plants. The leafhoppers feed on the weeds and then move to the tomatoes, spreading the disease.

If you see a tomato plant turn yellow and start to die, you should immediately pull the plant up and destroy it. There is no good control. A few resistant varieties are being developed, such as Columbia tomato. Planting tomatoes and peppers in partial shade or caging or shading plants with a fine mesh material sometimes helps, because the leafhopper does not like shade, but prefers full sun.

from the files of Ron Cluff, former Graham County Extension Agent

**** NO JULY MEETING ****

Start a second summer garden instead

August Gardening Meeting

Coming August 1 from 6:00-9:00pm will be a 3-hour lawn clinic. It will be held on our regular meeting night, but we will begin an hour earlier. Dr. Dave Kopec, Extension Specialist in Turfgrass Management for the University of Arizona will educate us on lawns. He has a PhD in Turf Science from the University of Nebraska and has worked for the U of A since 1985. He will cover grass identification, grass selection, mowing, fertilizing, cultivation and problem solving techniques. If you have a lawn, or want to have a lawn, you won't want to miss this workshop.

In the July Garden:

- * Plant winter squash, corn, black-eyed peas, cucumbers and radishes all month.
- * Plant sunflowers, summer squash, watermelon and pumpkins (planting now will give you Halloween pumpkins) through the 15th of the month.
- * Plant beans, broccoli, Brussel sprouts, cabbage, carrots, cauliflower, kohlrabi and from July 15th on.
- * Set out annuals such as cosmos, coreopsis, marigolds, salvia, verbena, vinca rosea and zinnias.
- * Treat chlorosis in plants with iron chelate. Chlorosis shows up as yellowing of new growth between the green veins.
- * Pepper, cucumber, squash and tomato plants need even soil moisture to prevent blossom end rot. Black or brown leathery patches develop on the blossom end of the fruit. Uneven moisture levels cause a calcium deficiency in the fruits. Keep evenly watered and put mulch around the plants to hold moisture.
- * Watch for signs of curly top virus in tomatoes, melons and cucumbers. The leaves of the affected plant curl upwards and the plant will be stunted. Remove and destroy (do not compost) affected plants.
- * Pollination often suffers when temperatures are high. Bell peppers, tomatoes and squash are most commonly affected. Flowers dry up and fall off, leaving no developing fruit. Keep plants watered and healthy and fruit production will resume when the temperatures drop.
- * Fertilize lawns monthly through the summer.
- * Bermuda grass needs to be watered about every 3 days during the heat of the summer. If you notice sizable wilted patches of dull, blue-green grass that does not spring back after being walked on, it is time to water. Give lawns special attention where tree roots compete for moisture.
- * Blast off aphids, thrips and mites with a stream of water from your hose or insecticidal soap.
- * Cut back chrysanthemums to about 8" high or pinch back smaller plants in July 1 and again August 1 to encourage bushier plants and more flowers in the fall.
- * Feed roses after each bloom cycle.
- * Mulch plants with 3-4 inches of organic matter for weed control and moisture retention.
- * Continue to deadhead spent blossoms to promote more flowers.
- * Continue to deep water trees and shrubs through the heat of the summer.
- * Make sure apricot trees get enough water to carry them through their fruiting.
- * Keep watching for grapeleaf skeletonizers.

4-H/Boys and Girls Connection

Allison Stiles, Program Director of the Boys and girls Club, recently approached us about developing a gardening program for the youth in their club. After a brainstorming session, we were all excited about the seemingly endless possibilities. To get the ball rolling, we donated the extra tomato and pepper plants in our greenhouse to the club.

The plants were transplanted by the children from their small cells into 6-packs and cared for at the Boys and Girls Club. The children came out to the Safford Agricultural Center for a tour of the farm and the projects in progress.

The children harvested wheat from one of the fields and ground it into flour. The flour was taken back to the Club to be turned into bread or muffins during a cooking class. A special thank you to Eddie Carpenter for the use of his milling machine. The following week the children got dirty and lovingly set out their tomatoes and peppers into a garden plot assigned to them at the Ag Center. The eager gardeners were featured on the front page of the Eastern Arizona Courier, June 28 edition. We will continue to provide assistance and activities for the group during the summer.

If anyone else is interested in helping out an hour or two a week with this fun project, call either the Cooperative Extension Office or the Boys and Girls Club.

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Winter Gardens

If you want to try a winter garden and grow some of the cool season vegetables, now is the time to plant or at least start to make plans to put in a winter garden.

I know it may be difficult to think about a winter garden when the daytime temperatures are over 100 degrees, but the planting dates for growing most winter garden items is from July 15th to September 1st for this area. Vegetables such as broccoli, Brussel sprouts, cabbage cauliflower and winter squash can be seeded starting in July.

Many gardeners will start the seedlings in flats or small containers or seed beds in cooler protected locations away from the direct heat. It will take from 6 to 10 weeks to grow good thrifty transplants. When the plants are 4 to 6 inches in height, set them out in a garden row just as you would tomatoes or peppers in the spring.

Prepare a good spot in your garden and be ready to plant a winter garden if you plan to purchase transplants in the early fall. From the files of Ron Cluff, former Graham County Extension Agent

Harvesting Cantaloupe and Watermelon

During this time of year I receive questions on when is the right time to harvest cantaloupe and watermelon and how can you determine when they are ripe so you don't pick the melons when they are still green. Cantaloupe is the easiest to judge ripeness. The veins on the skin of the fruit become more prominent as the melon turns from green to golden. When it is ready to harvest it slips or detaches from the stalk when you pick it up and pull gently. If you have to tug to pick the cantaloupe it is still green.

When watermelons are ripe, the underside of the melon will turn from white to creamy yellow where it touches the ground. The color of the watermelon will turn from a shiny green to a dull color. It will make a dull thud when hit with the palm of the hand.

Also, watermelons have little tendrils or curly cues all along their vines. These tendrils can be used as ripeness indicators, If the first and second tendrils from where the fruit is attached are dried up and brown, usually the watermelon is ripe.

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

Farmers Market Coming in August!!

The idea of a Farmers Market was brought before the Safford City Council this week and was given a green light. The market will be held at Firth Park on Saturdays starting in August. Watch for more information. If you are interested in helping plan and coordinate this project, contact Mindy Marks at "Good Medicine" health store at 419 Main Street in Safford (428-6528).

Volunteers -

Congratulations, Diana Dieter!!! Diana has completed her service hours and is now a Certified Master Gardener. Many of her hours were obtained through her work as a 4-H leader of the Gardening Geckos and the Southside Seedlings. This brings our total of Certified Master Gardeners in our area to 8. There are other Associate Master Gardeners working hard and are not far behind Diana.

Just a reminder, each year after initial certification, Master Gardeners must complete and submit documentation of 25 hours of volunteer service and 12 hours of approved continuing education. The Master Gardener year runs from January 1 to December 31. Hopefully, those of you who were certified last year have half of your recertification for this year!

A special thanks to Jacob Neff for his presentation of "Building a Backyard Water Garden" at our last meeting. The feedback has been very positive. We know of at least 3 people that were convinced to include a pond in their landscaping plans. Jacob not only provided an entertaining and educational program but also hosted the refreshment table. What a package deal for those who attended!

Karla Hughes helped us in the fields (and recruited help one day!) and started entering data into the computer. Thank you.

Thanks go to Brenda Walker for her help with the final lettuce harvest.

Upcoming Events

No July Master Gardener Meeting - Plant a big garden instead!

July 18 August newsletter deadline

Aug 1 Master Gardener Workshop, Dr. Dave Kopec,
U of A Turf Specialist, "Lawn Care", 6:00 - 9:00 p.m.

Master Gardeners Meeting

No July Meeting

Happy Fourth of July!

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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