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Graham County Gardening Newsletter

January 2006

Ten Steps to a Successful Garden

Have the seed catalogs started to arrive in your mailbox? Is your ground ready? Now is the time to prepare. Also, now that the leaves have fallen, are you crushing and using them for soil mulch? If you don't want the leaves, your neighbor gardener might want them. The following information is from a University of Arizona, College of Agriculture, Cooperative Extension Service Publication, No. Q95. The full pamphlet is available at the Extension Office in Solomon by calling at 428-2611 or picking up in person.

The ten steps are:

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| Select a good location | Plant your vegetables properly |
| Plan your garden layout | Irrigate with care |
| Grow recommended varieties | Control weeds |
| Obtain good seed, plants, equipment and supplies | Be prepared for pests and problems |
| Prepare and care for the soil properly | Harvest at peak quality |

The fifth step is Prepare and Care for the Soil Properly.

Soil contains nutrients and water for plants. If these materials are limited or if the soil is compact or hard and crusty when dry, and water-soaked and sticky when wet, plants will not grow and develop properly. To maintain and improve soil conditions, mix organic matter and fertilizers into the soil before planting, and prepare and cultivate the soil when dry or slightly moist (never when wet).


Organic matter makes the soil loose and easy to work and improves water-holding capacity, drainage and aeration. Manure, compost, peat moss and leaf mulch are materials commonly used. Composted manure is easy to use and is relatively free of weed seeds. Apply a layer 2 to 3 inches thick on the garden area about 1 to 2 months before planting. Work it into the top 10 – 12 inches of soil. A thorough watering of soil at this time helps leach harmful salts from the zone where the roots will be. If poultry manures are used, apply them at half rate.

A fertilizer containing both nitrogen and phosphorus, when applied before planting, will benefit most garden crops. Although soils vary in fertility, a typical fertilizer application would be 1 to 2 lb. of 16-20-0 (ammonium phosphate) per 100 square feet spread evenly over the soil. Also, 3 to 5 lb. of sulfur per 100 square feet on the same area may be added. These materials should be plowed, rototilled or spaded into the top 6 to 8 inches of soil shortly before planting.

In preparing the seedbed, do not work the soil when it is too wet. Wait for it to dry sufficiently to crumble in your hands. Plow, spade or rototill to a depth of 8 to 12 inches if practical. Level area by raking. Then make raised beds if using furrow irrigation.

During the growing season, fertilizers may be needed. Apply band of fertilizer in the soil about 4 inches to the side of the plant and at a depth of 3 inches, or spread fertilizer on soil surface about 4 inches from the plant and water it in. Side-dressings of nitrogen are made this way, but too much fertilizer too close will injure plant roots.

For more detailed information on gardening call the Safford Ag Center at 928-428-2432 or Graham County Cooperative Extension Office at 928-428-2611.



Randall Norton, Ph.D.
Extension Agriculture Agent

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Speakers at Gardening and Landscaping Conference February 25

Rob Call

Rob began as Associate Extension Agent Horticulture, Cochise County Cooperative Extension in 1991. He coordinates and manages urban horticulture programs and volunteers in Cochise County. In addition he teaches and administers research based horticulture education programs for commercial producers of fruit, nut and vegetable crops.

As we know, the Willcox area is noted for its nut and fruit production as well as the greenhouses where tomatoes are grown. Rob assists growers with on-going problems and production. He also writes a column for the Cochise County Master Gardener Newsletter, High on the Desert.

Rob has assisted us in the past in Graham County by teaching the Master Gardener class.

If you want to learn more about pruning and grafting from a person with extensive experience, attend Rob's presentation at the Gardening and Landscaping Conference on February 25.

Randy Norton

Randy is an Arizona native growing up in our neighboring community of Duncan on a cotton and small grains farm. He holds three degrees from the U of A with emphasis on crop sciences, then soil chemistry/fertility and finally his Ph.D. in 2000 with an emphasis on soil fertility and chemistry.

He serves Graham County as the U of A Cooperative County Extension Agent for Agriculture and Natural Resources. In January of 2005, he took the responsibilities at the Safford Agricultural Center as the Resident Director and was promoted to Assistant Regional Extension Specialist in the Department of Soil, Water and Environmental Sciences.

In the absence of an urban horticulture specialist, Randy serves the Master Gardeners Association and all others who raise gardening questions. We are most fortunate to have his assistance and look forward to his presentation at the Gardening and Landscaping Conference in February on the identifying insects and how to effectively manage their populations.

Other Conference Speakers will be profiled in the February Newsletter.

We have obtained speakers with experience in the topic that they will be presenting. We hope you will join us for a day of learning, networking and fun.

A Few Simple Rules Need to be followed in Seeding:

(From Ten Steps to a Successful Vegetable Garden publication referenced on front page)

Mark out straight rows to make your garden attractive and to make cultivation, insect control and harvesting easier. To mark a row, drive two stakes into the ground at each end of the garden and draw a string tightly between them. Shallow furrows, suitable for small seed, can be made by drawing a hoe handle along the line indicated by the string. For deeper furrows, use the corner of the hoe blade. Use correct spacing between rows.

Space seeds properly in the row. The number of seeds to sow per foot or hill is suggested in How to Plant. Space the seeds uniformly. Small seeds sometimes can be handled better if they are mixed with dry, pulverized soil and then spread.

Plant at proper depth. A general rule to follow is to place the seed at a depth about four times the diameter of the seed. Cover small seeds such as carrots and lettuce with no more than ¼ to ½ inch of soil. Place large seeds such as corn, beans, and peas 1 to 2 inches deep. In sandy soils plant the seeds somewhat deeper.

Cover seeds and firm the soil over them by gently tamping the soil with your hands or the flat back of your hoe. This prevents rain or sprinkler water from washing away the seeds.

Irrigate by sprinkling soil surface lightly. When using furrow irrigation, hold water until moisture moves across seed row. Seeds need moisture to germinate. Water often enough to prevent crusting and drying around the seed. After plants emerge, watering should be less often but deeper.

Thin to the desirable number of plants as soon as the plants are established. Remove the weaker plants. Do not wait too long before thinning or injury will result from crowding and disturbing the remaining plants.

A copy of the complete publication, Ten Steps to a Successful Vegetable Garden, provides detailed information on each step.

FUTURE NEWSLETTERS

What topics would you like to see in the February, March and April newsletters?

E-mail dorinec@ag.arizona.edu or leave message at Extension Office--428-2611.

Do you have an article that you would like to contribute?

REGISTER NOW!!

FOR

**GARDENING AND LANDSCAPING
CLASS**

#1756 AGR 230 T 6 – 8:50 p.m. SC9
Eastern Arizona College

Instructor: Randall Norton, Ph.D. Resident
Director, Safford Agricultural Center, The
University of Arizona, Graham County
Cooperative Extension

First Class: Tuesday, Jan. 17, 6:00 p.m.
Book available at first class meeting.

Topics: pruning, diagnosing plant
problems, fruit tree cultivation, vegetable
gardening, lawn care, plant propagation,
greenhouse productions and design,
landscape design plus more.

For more information, call: 428-2432

CONTINUED NOTICE!

If you wish to continue to receive this
newsletter, you must respond to the
Cooperative Extension Office by January
15, 2006.

You may do this in several ways:

928-428-2611 (Office Telephone)
928-428-7023 (office Fax)
dorinec@ag.arizona.edu (E-Mail)

or mailing your address information to the
Graham County Cooperative Extension,
P. O. Box 127, Solomon, AZ 85551.

Name _____

Box or Street _____

City _____ State _____ ZIP _____

_____ e-mail

In the January Garden

- Continue to add compost and manure to garden beds as they become vacant.
- Mulch to keep winter weeds down and to conserve moisture.
- Plant head lettuce through the 15th of the month.
- Plant asparagus, beets, cabbage (plants), carrots, chard, kale, leaf lettuce, green bunching onions, peas, and spinach all month.
- Tomato and pepper seeds may be started indoors after January 10th.
- Set out perennials and cool season annuals, such as alyssum, calendula, chrysanthemums, dianthus, daisies, larkspur, pansies, snapdragons, stocks, and violas.
- Start to plant bare rooted trees, roses, grapes and cane berries.
- Begin pruning deciduous trees and shrubs.
- Between rains, irrigate deep-rooted plants, such as trees, occasionally, but thoroughly. Once a month is usually sufficient for trees and many shrubs. Shallow-rooted plants require water more often (every 2 – 3 weeks).
- Don't forget that dormant Bermuda grass lawns still need to be watered once a month.

HAPPY NEW YEAR!

**LOOK INSIDE!!
FOR
FEBRUARY 25
2ND ANNUAL GARDENING AND LANDSCAPING
CONFERENCE**

REGISTRATION AND PROGRAM INSERT

PLAN TO ATTEND!!

REGISTER NOW!!

Persons with a disability may request accommodation, such as a sign language interpreter, by contacting U of A Graham County Cooperative Extension

Graham County Cooperative Extension
P. O. Box 127
2100 South Bowie Ave
Solomon, AZ 85551