

# Graham County Gardening Newsletter

March 2006

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## Managing Vertebrate Pests

By Marilyn Weaver, Master Gardener

Vertebrate animals (animals with a segmented spinal column) are divided into five classes. These are mammals, birds, fishes, reptiles and amphibians. For this purpose I will focus on the furry mammals that decimate our gardens, i.e. rabbits, squirrels, gophers, rats and the like.



There are many myths and home remedies relating to the control or eradication of these pests. Through the years I have tried several. **For starters, let me share with you what does NOT work.**

-Place a bowl of water at the edge of a planting bed. I found this just helps the critter wash down his meal.

-Mixing hot sauce in a spray bottle until the water turns pink and spraying the plant. This washes off during water or rain, and also repels butterflies and bees.

-Sprinkle blood meal among the plants. Organic and a good fertilizer, deters rabbits but attracts rats and other vermin.

-Soak beef liver in a bucket for 24 hours, strain and spray on vegetation. I haven't had the courage to try this because I can imagine coyotes, bobcats, buzzards and my dogs might find this irresistible.

-Commercial spray-on products tend to work for a while, but need frequent re-application, wash off and are expensive.

-Shooting. This requires being in the right place at the right time. In addition many towns and cities in Arizona have laws prohibiting the discharge of firearms within their limits. This often includes BB and pellet guns. In Arizona, it is illegal to discharge a firearm within ¼ mile of an occupied structure without the owner's or occupant's permission. If you do not live way out in the country, do not even consider this.



Another consideration is mammals that are protected by state and/or federal laws. Some common pest species are NOT protected and can be con-

trolled by legal means which meet the requirements and are authorized under Arizona Revised Statutes (ARS) Title 17, Section 239. In Arizona these species include Wood rats (Pack rats), Norway rats, house mice, ground squirrels, pocket gophers, Rock doves (pigeons), starlings, and English sparrows. If there is any doubt about the legal status of any vertebrate pest, contact the Arizona Game and Fish Department for advice.

**So what is an effective prevention for these marauders?**



The single most effective defense against rabbits is a perimeter fence such as chicken wire, placed a few inches  
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## Managing Vertebrate Pests (Cont. from page 1)

below ground level and high enough so the big jacks can't reach over. This is applicable for a single plant, young trees or a garden bed. For ground squirrels a tighter mesh fence works best. For plants in pots, which can be accessed by rabbits, squirrels, mice or rats, a sprinkle of chili powder is effective, but will need to be applied repeatedly. For bulbs, build a "cage" of chicken wire, place the bulbs inside the cage and bury the whole thing when planting. Gophers are by far the most difficult to control, if not impossible. Using poisons can be very dangerous to household and neighborhood pets. Gas cartridges should never be used under buildings or in close proximity to flammable materials. Carbon monoxide from a gasoline engine can be effective for pocket gophers and some other burrowing rodents, given the proper soil conditions. However, these offenders will eventually return. Learn to live with them.

Another line of defense is to plant vegetation that is offensive to rabbits. Following is a short list. They are compatible to our high desert climate.

Archillea (yellow flowered Cacti)  
Narcissus  
Marigold  
Santolina  
Gaillardia  
Yucca  
Apache Plume  
Caryopteris (Blue Mist Spirea)  
Agave  
Foxglove

Hyacinths  
Penstemons  
Salvia  
Tansy  
Zinnia  
Chrysothamnus (Rabbit Brush or Chamisa)  
Columbine  
Geraniums  
Oregano  
Peony  
Sedum  
Tritoma (Red Hot Poker)  
Russian Sage  
Sage  
Lavendar  
Locoweed  
Rosemary  
Thyme

For more extensive lists of rabbit, deer and javelina resistant plants, contact the Graham County Cooperative Extensions Office at 928-428-2611.

The reality is, however, no plant is completely critter proof. Hungry animals will browse on just about anything if there is little or no greenery available. The drought we are currently experiencing will force them into our yards and gardens. And who can blame them, with all those delectables right within reach?

Sources: The University of Arizona Mater Gardener Manual, The University of Arizona, College of Agriculture and Life Sciences, Cooperative Extension

Article contributed in response to a request from Betty Barney asking how to keep chipmunks, squirrels and rabbits out of the garden.

## Rooting Hormone

By Marilyn Weaver

All willows contain a natural rooting hormone. To make your own inexpensive rooting hormone, follow these easy steps.

Cut small willow branches (any species will work) 2 – 3 inches long.

Cover with water in an old pot you will not be using for anything else.

Bring the water ALMOST to a boil.

Steep for 12 hours.

Strain and discard cuttings.

Place liquid in an old milk jug, LABEL, and store in the refrigerator. This keeps indefinitely.

To prepare hardwood cuttings: Place new cuttings in a quart jar with approximately two cups of rooting hormone. Let stand overnight. Plant.

Thank you Marilyn!

## NOTICE!!!

The Master Gardeners regret to announce that there will not be a Home Garden Tour for the Spring of 2006.

However, we do hope to continue the tour in the Spring of 2007.

Please keep us on your list of events to attend in the future and we will see you then!

## Planting Time for Green Beans or Black Eyed Peas

If you like to eat green beans or black eyed peas and enjoy growing them in your garden, the first of July is the time to make a late planting. Beans do not pollinate well in the hot dry weather so they should be planted early in the

spring, March 1 or April 1, or late, July 1 to August 5. This insures the weather will be fairly mild when the beans are blooming. You can plant two types of string beans, either bush beans or pole beans. The pole beans need some type of trellis or support to climb on. Beans are very susceptible to salty alkali soils and will turn yellow rapidly because of iron chlorosis, so an application of or-

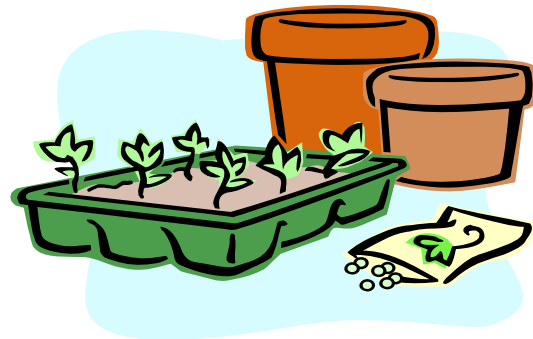
ganic material and nitrogen fertilizer pre-plant is important. If the leaves turn yellow, apply iron to the growing plant. Irrigate frequently but not too often in heavy clay soils. Too much fertilizer and water may cause too much vine growth and a light set of beans. Black eyed peas should be planted and grown just like green beans.

## In your March Garden!

- Fertilize fruit trees, shrubs, and vines. Water deeply. Pine trees require very little fertilizer, if any at all.
- Fertilize roses and water deeply.
- Prune frost-damaged branches as the new growth starts.
- Watch for weeds and remove while they are still small.
- Continue to plant carrots (through the 15<sup>th</sup>), beets, chard and radishes for succession planting.
- Begin planting bush beans March 1<sup>st</sup> and cantaloupe, corn, summer squash, sunflowers and watermelon after March 15<sup>th</sup>. Protect seedlings if frost is fore-

cast. Our average date of last frost is April 9.

- Tomato transplants can be set out (with protection) after March 15<sup>th</sup>.
- Plant ground covers, perennials and hardy vines. Some warm season annuals can be set out, although they may need protection from frosts.



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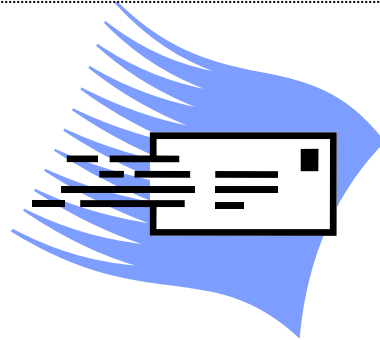
**Newsletter Editor** .....Dorine Chancellor

**Deadline for Newsletter mailing list extended!**

If you have not notified the Extension office and requested continuance of this newsletter, you still have more time. However, soon the time will finally end. Please respond in one of the following ways:

- 928-428-2611 (Office Telephone)
- 928-428-7023 (Office Fax)
- [dorinec@ag.arizona.edu](mailto:dorinec@ag.arizona.edu) (e-mail)

If you know of someone who is not receiving the newsletter but would like to, please call or e-mail to add their name to our list.



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