

# Yavapai Gardens

Feb 2002

Master Gardener Newsletter

## Events & Activities

**MG Association Meeting, Wed, Mar 19.** The Guest speaker for the March meeting will Mr. Jason Lavelle. Mr. Lavelle is in charge of operations for the Arizona Botanical Gardens in Clarkdale. Mr. Lavelle's presentation will be on Xeriscape and low water use plants.

Yavapai Rose Society - February 17, 2:00 PM at the First Christian Church, 1230 Willow Creek Road, Prescott. There will be a Consulting Rosarian Question and Answer period. Guests are welcome and there is no charge. For more information call Bob or Nancy at 771-9300, or Dave at 778-5507.

Prescott Area Iris Society meeting: February 1st at 1:00 pm. at the Prescott Library. Program will be spring in the iris garden.

Prescott Area Gourd Society meets the third Thursday, at the Prescott Library on Gurley and Marina.

The Cottonwood Organic Gardening Club meets at the Cottonwood-Verde Valley Fairgrounds on the second Wednesday of each month at 1:30 pm.

**BARK BEETLE SEMINAR: MAR. 20 1PM.** This is an absolute must for Master Gardeners. See page 7.

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## Planting Considerations



I am writing this at the end of December but in no time we will be out in the garden getting ready for spring. If you are planning to add new plants or renovate an older area, there are some things you need to take into consideration.

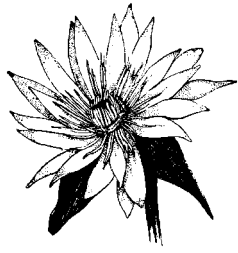
1. The site: look at it—is it sunny all day or does it get some shade? Is it up against a wall that gathers heat during the day? Some full sun plants will get fried if the reflected heat and light are too much. What about the soil? Is it raw new desert soil? Planting that tender midwestern plant in it could doom it to death. We don't usually have to worry about wet soils but what is drainage like? Do you have a layer of caliche that needs to be broken through for a larger plant or can you get by with planting annuals on top of it? Look around—plan before you start to plant!

2. Ever seen a eucalyptus tree planted within two feet of a house? I have and I've also seen the damage the plant did to the house. The plant might look great when its small but take into consideration that the small 5 gallon plant you brought home could someday lift the roof off, damage the walls and even lift the house off the foundation. At the least, a plant can easily overwhelm some of its smaller neighbors. Whoops!, there goes that rare plant that took you two years to find and

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it's slowly being covered up by the neighboring plant which is growing twice as fast! Size is important.



4. I've noticed that the older I get the faster time goes. Do I want to spend all my precious time taking care of one plant? No! Babying a plant is one thing but it isn't the only thing in life. Think about the care and feeding of the plants you want. Does one need to

be constantly fertilized, mowed, trimmed, covered in cold weather, shaded in hot? Not for me—in my garden it's survival of the fittest but, if you aren't as tough to maintain such a policy, still keep in mind some plants will take more time, effort and money to keep alive and looking good.

How to put the considerations into action:

1. One of the best things you can do is actually draw a plan of your back yard. No, this doesn't have to be an architectural wonder but just a scale drawing of where the buildings and hardscape are and where any established trees and plants are that you want to keep. Place on ones you don't want to keep also, but note that you are removing them. Note special conditions like wet or caliche soils or where it seems hotter or colder around the yard. Add any special conditions that might affect a plant. This is your starting point.

2. Make a plant list of those plants you are interested in that includes not only the name of the plant but its size and requirements. Do research. (I've made scaled-cutout pieces that I can lay on the drawing, so I could move them around to see how they fit.) The list can then be matched with the conditions of the location you are looking at. The pecan tree is not going into the space with the 3 foot caliche layer without a backhoe. Time to look for something else for that space. Anyway, you get the idea.

2a. When deciding on plants, look at their blooming, or prettiest, season. (For some plants this could be winter.) The idea is to have continu-

ous interest in the garden, whether its spectacular blooms in the spring and summer, changing colors in the fall or bright berries or interesting form in the winter.

3. Think about the future. It would be nice if all of us could hire someone to do the heavy labor of maintaining a landscape but most of us can't. So, before we purchase a plant, think about future maintenance. Does it need frequent pruning? Is it sensitive to frequent pest infestations or disease outbreaks? Does it need frequent fertilization or constant soil amendments to maintain it in good condition?

4. Now that you are ready to purchase your plants, plan on buying quality. We've all probably bought plants cheaply because we want to save money and we know that with time and extra care we can rescue that sad looking cull at the nursery. Don't do it. Buy good looking plants that are well cared for from the beginning. It will pay you back in the end. Avoid spindly plants and pull the plant out of the pot to check the root system, especially potted shrubs and trees.



5. If you can travel, check out Arizona's botanical garden's plant sales. These are great places to find quality plants and varieties you will not find in your local nursery. Local nurseries are businesses and are less likely to carry unusual plants that will not sell as fast as a flat of pansies or marigolds. Most of the gardens have lists of plants on their web site so you can research them prior to the sale. Besides purchasing plants the sales help these gardens survive and expand our knowledge and the possibilities in gardening.

6. Support your local nurseries and request plants you are interested in because (A) You can't

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travel to the botanical garden sales (B) Because if a nursery doesn't know what its customers want, they aren't generally willing to try unusual things.

These aren't really the simplest things to do; they take time and effort. Time in the yard to really understand what you have. Time and effort to do research into various plants and develop your plant list. But it will pay off because now it means you have chosen what you are going to do and not the impulse purchase plant that you are spending hours on every summer because it doesn't really work.

If you have a computer there are several landscaping programs available (if you have a PC there are several; there is only one for the Mac and I haven't tried it yet.) I've heard some good things about them, especially those that can "grow" the plants so that you can see how it would look in a few years. They sound fun and useful but I suspect they have mostly midwestern plants on their databases. You might look for one that allows you to add to the database.

Either way, take the time and effort and have fun!



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## Master Gardener Adopt-A-Program

*Each year Master Gardeners can participate in a number of events throughout the county. Often though it has been difficult to find someone to organize these efforts. We are looking for volunteers to*



*adopt an event and make it their project. Currently there are a number of events we are looking at. Among them are the Farmers Market in Cottonwood, a Home show in Cottonwood is a possibility and the annual conference needs someone. Or come up with an event of your own. We are in the beginning stages of this program but if you have volunteer hours you need to do, get in touch with Bev Emerson.*

### Other Volunteer Opportunities

*Both Danel Bright school and The Secret Garden in Prescott need volunteers. Contact Bev Emerson for information*

# Bird Feast

A lot of gardeners enjoy attracting birds to their gardens. During the next few months with less to offer in the garden, try giving your birds a winter treat. These are for cold days so the lard won't melt away. For something more heat resistant, try the second recipe.

- 1 cup lard
- 1 cup crunchy peanut butter
- 2 cups rolled oats
- 2 cups cornmeal
- 1 cup flour
- 1/2 cup sugar

You will also need cookie cutters, waxed paper and a chopstick or something similar.



Place the cookie cutters on a tray covered with wax paper. Melt the lard and peanut butter in a saucepan at low heat. Add the remaining ingredients and stir well to form a thick mixture. Pour or spoon the mix into the cookie cutters to a depth of about 1 inch. Poke a hole in the suet near the top of each cutter. Make the hole large enough to thread ribbon or yarn through. Put the tray of filled cookie cutters into the freezer for at least a week. Remove the "cookies" from the cutters and peel off the waxed paper. Thread ribbon or yarn through each and hang them outside.

Yields approximately 12 cookies.

Here's a heat resistant suet treat for the birds.

- 1 1/2 cups water
- 1 cup uncooked oatmeal
- 3/4 cup lard or bacon grease, melted
- 1 cup Cream of Wheat or Wheatina
- 1 cup hominy grits or corn meal
- 1/2 cup raisins or dried currants
- 1 1/2 cup creamy peanut butter (crunchy can be used also)

2 handfuls  
birdseed or  
chicken scratch

Bring the water to a boil and add the oatmeal. Turn down the heat and let simmer for 1 minute. Remove from the heat and stir in the remaining ingredients in the order listed above. When the mixture is cool enough to handle—without sticking to your hands like glue—mold it into round cakes that are about the size of a tennis ball (2 1/2 to 3 inches in diameter.) You can put one out immediately, place the others on a wax lined



pan and put in the freezer. After frozen, put them in a plastic bag and store in the freezer. When you need another one, thaw until soft. Then hand it or press into the surface of a pinecone. They will keep longer in a shaded area.



## Manure For Free

We have a huge supply of cow manure at the V-V Ranch. It is available to anyone who has a need for it. We have 4-5 semi loads available. For pick up info, call Bopper at 928 821-3299 to make arrangements for pick up and directions to the ranch. We have a loader available. No delivery. Dave Shaffer, Director V-V Ranch.

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# Cuttings

This is a cheap and easy way to propagate perennials. It's especially great if you want to increase a favorite plant because each new plant you create is a carbon copy of the parent. There are a huge number of perennial plants that can be propagated by cuttings; some of the more familiar are rosemary, geraniums, lavender, carnations, hydrangeas, poinsettias, yarrow, chrysanthemum, coleus, perennial salvias and many more.

You will need a sharp knife, something that will give you a clean cut (look for a thin straight blade,) pruning shears, containers, plastic bags or something to preserve the humidity, potting mix, rooting medium, bleach or alcohol to sterilize equipment, a warm room or heat mat, mister of some type. With those items in hand let's begin.

We will begin with stem cuttings. Make sure the plant is free of disease and insects. Cut the stem piece 3 to 6 inches long. Remove any flowers or flower buds, remove the bottom set of leaves. It is important that you do not crush the stem. Use the knife to make a clean angled cut just below a pair of leaves. Check the leaves; too many or large leaves will make it difficult for the plant to survive or form roots, too few and there won't be enough for photosynthesis. If the plant has lots of little leaves you might want to remove a few; if the plant has large leaves, leave the leaves at the top bud intact but cut any of the other leaves in half.

Some plants will root easily without rooting hormone but others need some encouragement. For those that are difficult or slow rooters, dip the end of the stem in the rooting hormone not much more than a quarter of an inch. Then gently tap the stem to knock the ex-

cess off. A little bit goes a long way with rooting hormone.

Now the stem needs to be planted. Stems can be planted in pure sand or vermiculite or a soil-less potting mix that drains well. Poke a hole in the mix with a dibble, a stick, finger, whatever and place the stem in the hole. Press the mix around the stem firmly. You can put several cuttings in a container, depending on its size.

The crucial part is maintaining high humidity, near 100%. If the container is small enough, a plastic bag works well to hold moisture. You can also use planting trays with lids, but the cuttings need humidity and light. The plants will start sending out leaves when the roots begin to grow. If you give a gentle tug to the stem and if it resists, roots have started to form; if it is still loose, no roots have formed.

The process is really that simple and now you have a garden filled with your favorite plants with a minimal investment. There is a catch, though; each type of plant may not be favorable to rooting at the same time. Herbaceous plants, those that do not form woody stems, (most house plants and herbs but not rosemary) can have cuttings made throughout the year.

Semi-hardwood cutting (semi-ripe) is when the tips are still soft but it is starting to harden lower down. These need to be cut when active growth has

slowed down and no new leaves are being formed, in late summer. The cuttings should be between 4 and 6 inches long. These generally will need rooting hormone.

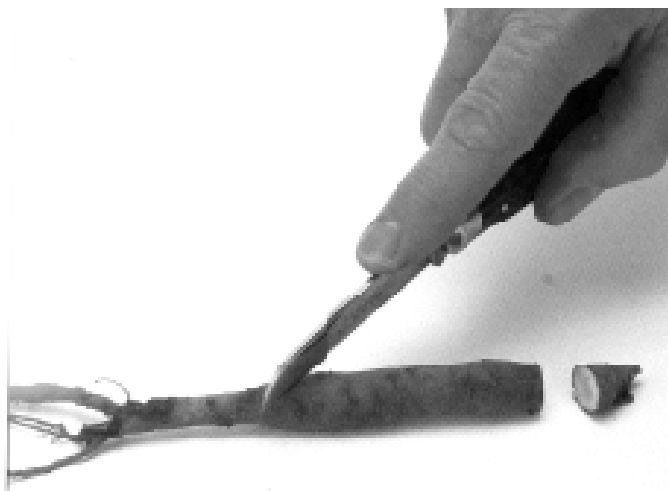
Hardwood cuttings from trees and shrubs should be taken after the plant loses its leaves in



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the fall. The cuttings should be between 5 and 12 inches long. These need to be treated a bit differently. Take all your cuttings (can be done either singly or in a bundle) and place in a container of moist sand or vermiculite. Keep cool (35° to 45°) in a dark location for the winter. Over the winter the stem develops a callus from which the roots grow. Dust the callus with rooting hormone and pot as you would all other types.

Root Cuttings can be made if the roots are fleshy like Oriental poppies, Geraniums, Verbascum, Echinops, Phlox and Ceanothus are



**1** *Cut the top end straight and the bottom end slanting, so that you know which end should be uppermost when you insert the cuttings.*

some of the plants where root cuttings are possible. The time to do root cuttings is after the plant has gone dormant in early winter. Dig up plant (or part of it.) Severed pieces are fine, since that is what you are going to do to them anyway. Take the root and cut off smoothly both ends. Cut the top end flat and the other slanted; you need to plant them correctly. Place cutting in pot with the top up (straight cut.) Push cutting down in soil and cover top. Cover with plastic or bag or place in a cold frame. Only water when potting mix gets too dry. Too much water will cause the root to rot. When new shoots appear, fertilize with a

mild fertilizer like manure tea. They can be planted out in the garden when the plant gets a bit larger.

There are also leaf cuttings and leaf bud cuttings, divisions and layering to increase your population of plants. Some plants will even start in a glass of water. Rosemary can be started this way. Pick up any good book about propagating and it can walk you through the easy steps for any of the processes.



## Contemplating the World

I read a lot of gardening books. Some for research, others for the beauty of their writing and the mood they evoke. They write about lovely summer days; of the seasons passing, spring to summer; of the joy of watching plants grow. They seem to have the time to sit back and contemplate the world. Personally, I think they must not live in Arizona and they can afford to hire someone to do the digging and they certainly don't have bermuda grass trying to engulf everything.

Don't get me wrong, I love these books and stories and I love watching the plants grow. But I'm still waiting for time to sit back and contemplate the seasons passing.

Here I am in November still trying to keep the bermuda out—not enough cold weather to slow it down yet. I just finished fall planting and am now looking forward to moving about 3 tons of rock to finish the "washes" in the front yard and fill in the wash that is forming across my driveway; (I live on a hill.) Then, there is the decomposed granite I want to put on part of the yard. This is just in the front yard. The back yard I don't even want to contemplate yet. Tons of soil will have to be brought in and moved. There are 6 boxes, soon to be 8, 6 foot by 3 foot that need to be filled for, hopefully, a vegetable garden core early spring.

Once I get done with these immediate issues, there are the long term landscaping projects: a new fence and row of shrubs across the back of the lot, the rock wall which is still three-quarters unfinished and a dozen other projects waiting for time and money. Sit back and contemplate the seasons. Maybe after I win the lottery and can hire a gardener. Well, I can dream can't I?

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# MG Association News

## *From the President*

Our January meeting was well attended and Pro water Irrigation had a great program on sprinklers.

Our treasurer reported a tidy sum and committee reports were given. Bev Emerson caught us up on the conference in Paysn this fall and asked for volunteers to help at it. Cecy and Nora filled us in on the Camp Verde Wine & Pecan Festival and asked for volunteers to work at it. Eunice handed out a membership booklet that she made and asked for ideas for it and if others want in it. We created a new committee—Door Prizes. Lary Anderson and Jim Musgrove volunteered to serve on it and see that prizes are at every meeting. All in all it was a great meeting.

I imagine that everyone is as busy as I am, wk, a sick hubby and keeping things going here take a lot of time and energy. Please volunteer as we need to see all of you out there, you don't need to do everything just work on things that you can get to and enjoy doing.

Our next meeting is in Cottonwood and hope to see all of you there. Enjoy all of the new seed catalogs that are coming now and look at all the new things they have come out with. Amazing how many new veggies they have added. Shrubs and flowers have many new varieties also. It looks like a dry year again so be very conscious of the water required by the things you plant.

**Anna Wilson**



## ***Bark Beetle Seminar, March 20, 1pm***

*One of the biggest issues this year is the bark beetle. To help answer questions about this widespread problem Jeff Schalau will be presenting a seminar for Master Gardeners only. The program will go from 1pm to 3pm. There will be time for questions. Location will be announced in the next newsletter, but it will be in Prescott somewhere. Make the time to go especially if you work in the offices answering questions.*

## ***MG Association Projects Help Really Needed !!!!!***

Highlands Garden Conference Planning committee needs help! Planning Activities: Program/Speakers, Web site, Location, Fundraising, Sponsors/Exhibitors, Door Prizes, Booths, Goody Bags, PR/Advertising, Props, Program/Notebook, Registration. Benefits of being on the Planning Team: Teamwork/Fellowship, MG Volunteer hours, Barbecue, Souvenir (committee chooses) and 1/2 price registration! This is a lot of fun and some hard work, but a great service to the community that loves to garden. Come be a part of this special event.

Please let me know if you are planning to attend.

Christopher Jones, Gila County Extension Agent

Gila County Cooperative Extension

1177 Monroe Street

Globe, Arizona 85501

(928) 425-7179—Phone

(928) 425-0265—Fax

or call Bev Emerson at 928-646-9113 or 646-0379 or email [bemerson5@juno.com](mailto:bemerson5@juno.com) for the date of the next meeting.



## ***Public Relations Help Needed***

The Master Gardener Program is needed of a volunteer who has journalistic skills and a public affairs background to handle meeting announcements and feature stories for the Prescott & Cottonwood area or better yet, a person from each of these areas with these qualifications.

We need to let our communities know about our ongoing projects and to be able to enlist their support, financially & otherwise, Photography skills would also be helpful. What a fun way to earn some volunteer hours. If you are interested and have these qualifications, please leave a message at our Cottonwood office for me, 928 646-9113 or you can reach me at 646-0379, e-mail [bemerson5@juno.com](mailto:bemerson5@juno.com). Hope to hear from someone soon. Beverly Emerson, Master Gardener Program Coordinator.

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# Pennyroyal

## *Mentha pulegium, Hedeoma pulegiodes*

As I always mention in my herb articles, “just because it’s natural doesn’t mean it’s healthy for you.” Pennyroyal is a good example of a plant that, among other things, is noted for its “unhealthy” oils. Do not take this plant internally if you are pregnant! (Note: it is the concentrated oils of the plant that are dangerous.) Now that I’ve given warning, here’s a little history.

Pennyroyal, like nearly all familiar herbs, has a long history of use and cultivation. It is mentioned in Greek literature as an insect repellent. American Indians also used it. Traditionally, it has been used as an insect repellent, to relieve itchy and watery eyes, soothe the stomach and relieve colds. Its name *pulegium* comes from the Latin —*pulex*—meaning flea. Pennyroyal was used in cooking but its use has declined as the flavor and smell are very strong—even more so than the familiar mint. From 1831 until 1916 it was an official drug to be used as a stimulant, carminative and emmenagogue. Then from 1916 to 1931 it was listed as an intestinal irritant and abortifacient. It was commonly drunk as a tea to soothe stomach difficulties but was also used to induce abortions. Unfortunately it often killed the mother. As little as two tablespoons of the oil can cause death and an amount as little as 1/2 teaspoon can cause convulsions and coma. One source mentioned acute liver and lung damage. In spite of its drawbacks, the oil is readily available on the internet and in most cases with little or no warning of its side effects. Before using this plant internally, consult your doctor!

That said, the plant is still sold as an ornamental and insect repellent. There is American pennyroyal, (*Hedeoma pulegiodes*), and European

pennyroyal, (*Mentha pulegium*), two entirely different genera but very similar in appearance. They are both members of the mint family, with the European genus being more ornamental than the American. It does have a strong mint odor. Generally, it is a low growing with a somewhat scraggly appearance. The best presentation would probably be in a rock garden or along the edge of a bed

where its bright green leaves and purple flowers would stand out. While I’m sure that description doesn’t cause people to rush out and buy a plant, it might have some use if you are a pet owner with a flea problem. The leaves can be crushed and rubbed on the skin to repel mosquitoes, fleas, gnats, ticks and chiggers. Braid the plant to make collars for your pets or make

sachets for the areas where your pets sleep.

Pennyroyal is easily propagated from cuttings, root divisions or seeds. Sow seeds in spring or fall if you are in a mild area. The seed is known for its poor germination so sow more seed than you normally would. Cover seed lightly with soil. Thin seedlings to 4 to 6 inches apart. The plants will spread by runners and will take root easily if conditions are good. It prefers wetter acidic soils. In our area it would probably do best in a container or in heavily amended soils. Extra watering is a must, as it doesn’t take drought well.

Pick anytime and hang to dry. The best flavor is when the plants are in full bloom. Remove leaves from the stem when dry and store in an airtight container.

Truthfully, I’m not sure this plant is worth trying but have seen it for sale occasionally in the area. I thought I should write something about pennyroyal for those that are interested in planting it. I realize I don’t usually write about plants that maybe you shouldn’t plant, so this is a first.



## Bird Feast

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without sticking to your hands like glue mold it into round cakes that are about the size of a tennis ball (2 1/2 to 3 inches in diameter.) You can put one out immediately, place the others on a wax lined pan and put in the freezer. After frozen, put them in a plastic bag and store in the freezer. When you need another one, thaw until soft. Then hand it or press into the surface of a pinecone. They will keep longer in a shaded area.

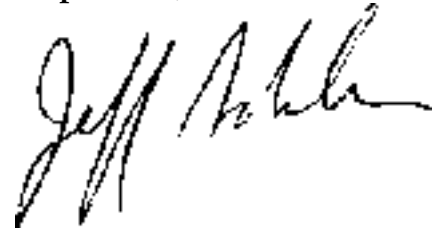
The "Arizona Master Gardener Manual" is now on-line. Check out <http://ag.arizona.edu/pubs/garden/mg/>

NOTE FROM THE EDITOR:

Let me know about your garden, the types of seeds you planted, interesting articles you found-anything of gardening interest. Send to:  
**Nora Graf**

**P.O. Box 3652**

**Camp Verde, AZ 86322**



**Jeff Schalaus**

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*Yavapai County Extension Agent,  
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