



Events & Activities

MG Association Meeting, Sept 20, 6:30pm, See address page for map. Our speaker will be Valerie Phipps, Mortimer Nursery, "Working with Bulbs", Prescott.

Yavapai Rose Society - , Sept 18, 7:00 PM at the First Christian Church, Prescott. 1230 Willow Cr. Rd. For more information call Bob or Nancy at 771-9300,

Alta Vista Gardening Club, Prescott, fourth Tuesday of the month, 12:30pm. Call 928-443-0464 for location and information.

Prescott Area Gourd Society, third Tuesday of the month, 6:30 pm, at the Smoki Museum.

Pond Club -this is an informal group that meets every couple of months, usually the 3rd week. Email aquaticgardens@esedona.net for more information.

The Organic Gardening Club meets on the 2nd Saturday of the month, 10845 Cornville, Call 649-6099 for informaion.

Prescott Orchid Society, meets 3rd Sunday of the month, 2pm at the Prescott Library, call Cynthia for information. (928) 717-0623

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University of Arizona Yavapai County Cooperative Extension

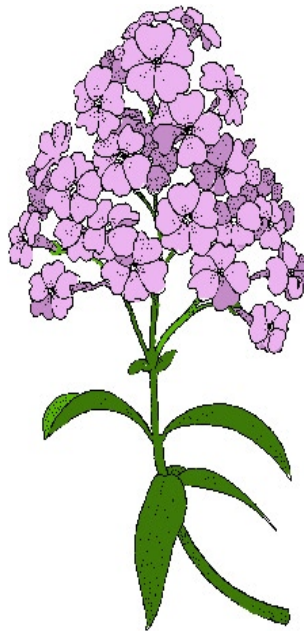
Yavapai Gardens

Master Gardener Newsletter

September 2006

Complicated Simplicity

by Patti Conrad

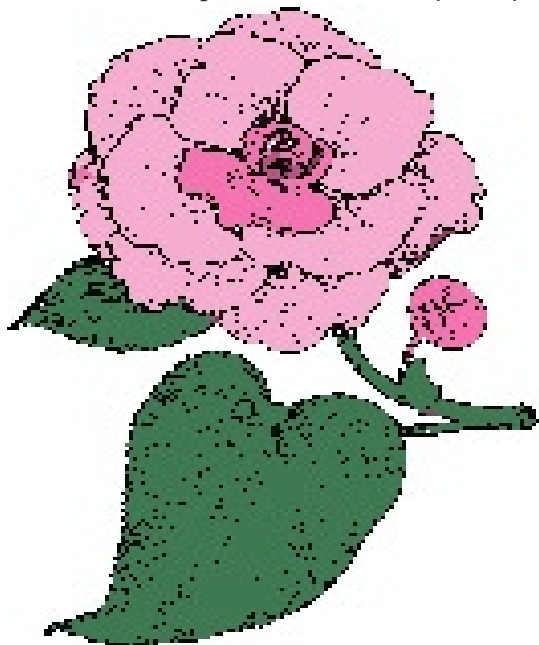


I was enjoying lunch at a Mexican food restaurant in downtown Prescott the other day and overheard a woman telling her friend the story of her life and the many unfortunate incidents and bad choices which led her life to be "complicated simplicity" now. I pondered over her words off and on for a week, about how it applied to gardening and our lives in Yavapai County.

The forces of nature are simple. The seasons change every year. The sun shines, the rain falls, even if it is only a little rain. In northern Arizona, the wind blows and the earth is made of clay, rock, sand, dirt and other four-letter words. It's simple. But, what kind of sun? Direct—midday sun? Filtered light? Reflected sun off a white wall? Dead space, stifling sun in a small courtyard or utility area on the side of a garage? Cool early morning sun before 10 am? Complicated nature, isn't it?

Rainfall is simple, or is it? How much was it? A few sprinkles or a deluge? How much is it at YOUR house? In Northern Arizona, it can rain one inch at my house and a few blocks away it can be only enough to wet the dust. If you want to know how much rain is actually falling on your garden, you need to get and use a rain gauge. The cost of the gauge will more than pay for itself in saving you water or plants. Every year at the garden center, folks come in with samples of leaves from a tree that is drought-stricken and they say, "Well, it rained and I didn't water it." I ask them how much rain did they get at their house they say, "a lot." I ask them how they know if they don't have a rain gauge. They say they don't know for sure, but it seemed like a lot. I say if it was "A lot or enough" their tree wouldn't be needing water now. Do you live on a slope? Maybe the rain is running off more that soaking in. Maybe the area

around the tree is covered in black plastic that is covered with stones, thus acting as an umbrella actually diverting the rain away from the tree's roots. Maybe the planting area is surrounded by a concrete patio and the tree can only sip up moisture from a 3-foot by 3-foot hole in the concrete. Simple, huh? Not really. Maybe a gopher has



gnawed off some of the tree's roots and it doesn't have enough "straws" to sip up the water. any number of things can affect what actually happened with any particular tree in regard to its

getting a nice deep drink of rain.

Gardening here is also simple . . . plant the right plant in the right place and give it just what it needs when it needs it. Simple. What isn't simple is figuring out when and how to do it. A good gardener I know tells this true story: Years ago in Phoenix lived a Japanese gardener and his wife who owned a small, but exquisite, nursery with many unusual plants and collector's specimens. People were always asking him, "When should I water this plant?" His answer was simple, "Water plant before plant die. After plant die, too late." Simple isn't it? The answer is really "Pay attention to your plants." We have complicated our lives so much that we do not have time to even look at the roses, let alone stop and SMELL them. No wonder we do not have time to notice that it has blister beetle before it is completely defoliated! We Americans want MORE, MORE, MORE and we can't take care of or keep track of what we have. Working in the nursery industry, I see people come in with dead plants they bought a few days earlier and they are outraged that the stupid things had the nerve to die on them. It is ALWAYS someone else's fault, especially the plant's fault. . . "BAD PLANT!" . . . like someone disciplining a dog for wetting in the house when the owner has never taken the time to house-train it. Every plant comes with directions, even after the tags are discarded. It tells us what to do for it by responding to conditions

such as light, heat, wind and soil type. We, the literate ones, must "read" the plant's sign language.

Pet owners put out bowls of water for their pets and when they are thirsty, they trot over and drink big, slurping gulps of water, happily raising their dripping muzzles and wagging their tails, saying "thank you, that was good!" (cats of course never gulp, drip or say thank you). Can plants do that? No. Plants have no feet and can't trot anywhere. Plants are entirely dependent on a human to meet their needs. Even plants in the wild will die with "neglect" from nature due to lack of rainfall. We, the mobile ones, must provide the water a plant needs.

People come in to the nursery, wander around through the thousands of plants and say, "I can't find what I want or need." I ask them questions so I can meet their requirements and find correct plants for the spot they want to fill. I show them sometimes ten different plants for the spot, and they say, "I've got that already; I've got that already; I've got that already." Although I am tempted to do so, I do not scream or bang my head against a tree. I simply say, "If it is doing so well for you, why not plant more of it, perhaps in a different color?" If you are a great cabinetmaker, why are you trying to be an accountant? Plant more of what you are a good caretaker of and be happy instead of planting stuff that causes you stress and heartache. Quit trying to push a square peg into a round hole. Simplify, simplify, simplify.

Complicated simplicity can be achieved by planting multiple varieties of the same type of plant. Let's take sages, for example. Plant regular Russian sage (I know it really isn't a salvia, but for illustrative purposes I'm calling it one); plant dwarf Russian sage and plant it in multiples. Put in cherry sage and plant it in all the shades of red, coral, red-red, fuchsia, Navajo red, and Sierra Linda. You will have to put up "Please wait your turn" signs for the hummingbirds.

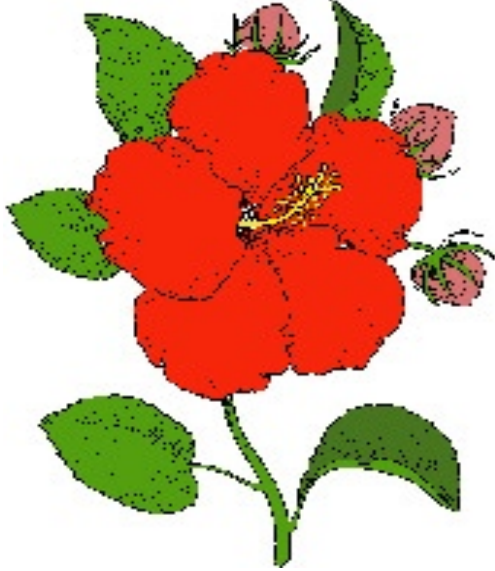


Last evening and early this morning I spent entirely too much time sitting on the deck and watching these amazing creatures flitting from tiny blossom to tiny blossom in intense con-

OCTOBER VOLUNTEER APPRECIATION POTLUCK- October 21st

centration on their task of feeding themselves. Not once did hey fly up to me and say “Got something different for dinner? I’m tired of this same old salvia nectar day after day.” Complicated simplicity . . . lots of the same thing . . . lots of red salvia greggii, lots of hummingbirds. What’s wrong with that?

Annual red salvias make beautiful, season-long swaths of color in the flower beds or pots. They come in shades of burgundy, coral, purple and white, too. Annual blue salvias are real stunners in the ground or containers



layered with bright yellow dyssodia or golden fleece and coreopsis. The perennial blue salvias are as reliable as the sun, and remember, animals do not like to eat salvias. The perennial blue

ones come in all shades of blue, dark intense lobelia blue to sky blue, and even pink and white; although I must say that I do not like these colors as much as the blues. Here again, simplify and plant lots of the same plant. It also makes caregiving easier. If you have lots of the same plant you can water it all the same, feed it at the same time and cut it back all at the same time. Isn’t that easier? Besides, large plantings of the same plant, such as blue meadow sage mixed with Victoria blue annual salvia, gives you a huge eye-popping blanket of color. This technique is used to great effect in public gardens and great estates. These places have professional staffs doing this same sort of thing year after year. There must be wisdom in it or they wouldn’t be doing it. Try it. What have you got to lose? What have you got to gain? More time to watch the butterflies? More time with the grand kids? More time to read that summer novel? The difference between boring and peaceful is merely a mindset or a point of view. You can change the blue annual salvia to red next year for variety. Everyone I talk to today is searching for more peace in their life. Change your point of view from “that’s boring” to “that’s peaceful” and grab yourself another glass of iced tea. Find a comfy chair in the shade and watch the grass grow. Simplify, simplify, simplify.

Fun, frolic and fantastic volunteers!! Be sure to mark your calendar for the annual Master Gardener potluck to be held at the Jerome State Historical Park in Jerome on Saturday, October 21 from 11:30 – 2 pm. Sign ups have begun at the August meeting in Cottonwood and will continue at the Sept meeting. The main dish and beverages and table service will be provided so – just bring yourself and guests. If you would like to sign up, and were unable to attend the meetings please contact Paula Stuart(paula@esedona.net) or Eunice Ricklefs(Eunice@commspeed.net). Don’t miss this opportunity to enjoy lunch with your gardening friends and family.

Master Gardeners will enjoy sweeping views of Mingus Mountain, the entire Verde Valley and Sedona’s red rock country from a lovely picnic grounds at the Jerome State Historical Park, with some trees. Although there isn’t huge shade available, Jerome is generally cooler than the valley or Prescott.

Additionally, you can tour the Douglas mansion, built in 1916 by Jame S. Douglas for his family. Large selection of photos illustrate Jerome’s rich mining history. The library, billiard room and marbled bathroom remain unchanged to show family life. You can experience the Jerome mine labyrinth through a model of the Little Daisy and United Verde Mine. Nora Graf, a notable MG is on staff there too.

***MAP WILL BE INCLUDED IN
THE OCTOBER NEWSLETTER.***



What an Education!

by Pam Bowman

Nine master gardeners attended the educational tour of the Veterans Administration Hospital gardens and greenhouse in Prescott on July 15. Greeted by a welcome sign, we all congregated in the shade of some large elms. Missy Sandeen, the tour organizer, informed us that unbeknownst to her our tour guide had left for China a few days earlier. Not to be deterred, we decided to tour the gardens and greenhouse on our own. We had no idea what surprises we would encounter.

We started with a perennial garden where we used our collective knowledge to identify the flowers and plants in beds along a brick path. We soon passed a small herb garden where we identified oregano, thyme, sage, rosemary and other herbs. Moving onto a small orchard we noted how the fruit trees—plum, apple, pear, peach, apricot and crabapple—had been pruned to permit fruit-gathering from the ground. Following the brick path under large elms, we wandered toward a large, fenced vegetable garden.

Leading us, Missy unknowingly stepped over a very long snake. Startled, she jumped back as some of us reassured her it was a 5-foot long bull snake. Watching the snake for a while, we commented on its beneficial nature because it preys on rattlesnakes and small rodents. Leaving the snake behind, we moved onto the extensive vegetable garden filled with tomato plants, corn, squash, onions and raspberries. Admiring the efforts of some of the hospital's residents, we spotted a cottontail about 10-feet away. Following her was a baby cottontail that was promptly attacked and constricted by yet another bull snake. The mother rabbit's attempts to save her baby by attacking the snake proved useless.

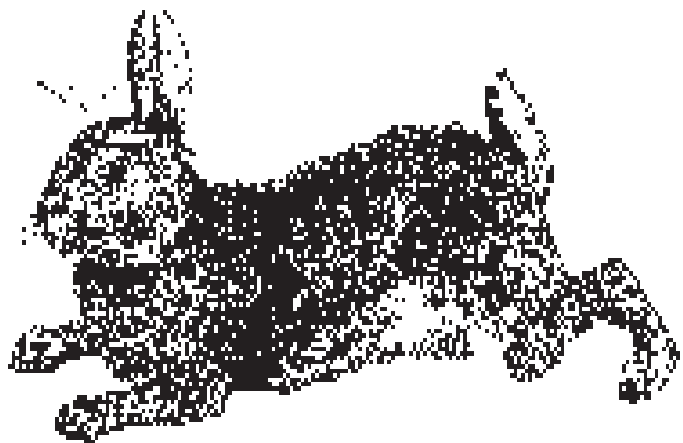
Shaken, we headed for the greenhouse where we found a wide variety of plants, including jade plants, weeping figs, lots of orchids and a very unique chain plant (Hoya). Here we encountered Bill Starkman, a master gardener who works in the greenhouse. After relating the "tale"

about the bull snake and baby rabbit, we asked him a few questions, and he readily provided answers about the gardening program at the VA hospital.

Patients are allowed to visit the inviting grounds where tables and benches are provided on the lawn under the big shade trees. Many roses and perennials and a few bonsai add to this soothing scene. The herbs and fruits are harvested and used in the hospital, while the individual vegetable garden plots are planted and maintained by some of the patients for their own use. A large number of raised beds are available for patients confined to wheelchairs. The greenhouse is used to propagate plants for the patients to use in their rooms. Bill noted that this program keeps them

busy, as they provide 6-8 starter plants daily.

At the end of the tour, some master gardeners returned to the vegetable garden and related that the snake was indeed swallowing the rabbit (and mother rabbit was still on the attack). All educational tours are interesting and informative, but few could match this one for the unexpected incident that allowed us to see nature at work. (A wildlife biologist friend of mine claims, that although bull snakes frequently constrict and eat baby rabbits, people rarely see it happen . . . perhaps 1 in 25 million.) Thanks to Missy and Bill, we experienced a tour to remember.



Seed Saving

by Nora Graf



Summer is on the wane—well just for the moment lets make believe it is, ok! It is September, after all! Anyway, plants of all sorts are setting seed. Saving your own seed can help save a variety you are especially fond of, whether it's a favorite flower or that wonderful tomato. If you really like this plant, saving seeds is also a way of preserving the plant for the future. I'm sure you've had the experience of one year your favorite is no longer in the catalogs. It has disappeared from commercial production. With the consolidation of seed companies (large

companies are constantly buying out smaller companies), many varieties are lost to gardeners. Also, the fad of only growing the latest thing sounds a death knell for "older" varieties. Whatever the reason for saving seeds, it can be a way of ensuring your favorites will be available for years to come.

I would suggest that if you are interested in saving seeds you pick up a book or check the internet and read up on the particular variety you want to save. There are a number of techniques and needs for different seeds, so do a little checking up first.

Depending on the type of seed, you will have to wet process or dry process the seed. Wet processing is used for seeds that are imbedded in damp fruits or berries. Tomatoes, cucumbers, melons are wet-processed. Most flowers, corn, lettuce, beans etc. can be dry-processed. Now, personally, when it comes to melons, cucumbers and squash, I just wash the seeds off and let dry, but the wet processing helps destroy some seed borne diseases.

The process starts with removing the seeds from the fruit, placing them in a jar or plastic container and allowing the whole mess to ferment for a few days. Afterwards, wash the seeds thoroughly. Place the seeds in a large container and fill with water. The viable seeds will sink to the bottom, poorer-quality seeds will generally float, allowing you to pour off the unusable seeds. Wash the remaining seeds thoroughly and strain.

Seeds are then dried by placing on a pan, screen or plywood. Drying on plastic and paper allows the seeds

to adhere to the material and then they are very difficult to remove. Put someplace where they will dry quickly; otherwise they might germinate or mold. Don't dry in direct sun, seeds become damaged when the temperature gets above 96°F. Don't dry them in the oven!

Dry processing is the collection of dry seeds directly from the plant. Collect the seed pods when pods are dry but before they split open and spread their seed. Some times you have to keep a good eye on them because the pods can split and spread their seed quickly. You can tie paper bags over seed pods that may be a problem. Remove the chaff from the seed. Depending on how much you have, you might just be able to blow the chaff away but if you are doing large quantities you might employ a fan on slow or even a hair dryer on the fan only setting. No hot air, remember!

Once the seed is cleaned and dried place the seed in airtight containers. Glass and metal work—just make sure they have a good seal. Bags like zip-locks and heat seal bags also work well. Like many of us, you may just stuff them in an envelope and stick them in a drawer. They will survive this way much of the time, but it isn't very optimal storage and your germination will certainly suffer over time. A cool dark place is best, floor level is better than locations near the ceiling.



For long term storage, the freezer may be the best bet, but seeds need an extra step before you just stuff them in the freezer. If you store seeds at an 8% moisture level or lower, they can be frozen. If frozen with higher moisture levels, the moisture expands and ruptures cell walls. If you want to freeze your seeds get some color indicating silica gel (easy to find on the internet). The way to use silica gel isn't hard but it can be a lengthy process, so I'm not going to go into the technique here. The information is readily available on line or in books. (See list below.)

Some things to remember about seed saving: plants love to cross-pollinate, so if you are growing a favorite lettuce but letting other varieties bloom at the same time, chances are the seeds you save this year may not produce the same plant next year. Keep the plants you want to save seed from isolated from similar plants to prevent crossing. Of course, crossing can produce 5

some interesting things—you never know. Protecting plants from crossing can be a problem, so if you are a little adventurous, just see what happens. Some plants don't cross-pollinate much; these self-pollinators can be grown with similar plants and you probably won't have much problem. Tomatoes and peas are like that. Once again, do a little reading to find out what your favorite plant needs.

Never said it would be easy, but it may be worth the time to save your favorites for the future.

Books to read

Seed to Seed by Suzanne Ashworth: mostly vegetables., published by Seed Savers Exchange, available on their website

Seeds by Peter Loewer, Macmillan Co., the science of seeds.

From Seed to Bloom by Eileen Powell: The Book Press, has information on 500 Herbs, annuals & perennials

The New Seed-Starters Handbook by Nancy Buble, available on Seed Savers Exchange website

Web sites

International Seed Saving Institute www.seedsave.org
Save our seed, collaborative effort of Cooperative Extension, Clemson university and private companies—
<http://www.savingourseed.org/Survey/SeedProcessingandStorageSurvey.html>



MG Assoc. Announcements

ARCSA Southwest Regional Rainwater Harvesting Conference Managing Stormwater and Harvesting Rainwater for Conservation

October 27 -28, 2006 Tucson, Arizona Register on-line at <http://cals.arizona.edu/catchwater>

Contact Ms. Cado Daily for more information at cdaily@ag.arizona.edu

Arizona Highlands Garden Conference 2006, October 13 & 14

It's time to register for this years conference. It is being held at the Hon-Dah Resort & Conference Center in Pinetop, Arizona. This is a great opportunity to learn new information on gardening and meet some wonderful people. Some of the speakers this year include, David Salman of Santa Fe Greenhouses, High Country Gardens Catalog, One of my favorite speakers, Carl Olsen will talk on Insects in the Garden. Other programs will be on seed-saving mulching, cactus and succulents, pruning and two gourd workshops by yours truly. Registration materials are available at the extension offices and at the website: www.cals.arizona.edu/navajo/2006_highlands_conference.pdf
The cost for both days is \$80.00

Virtual Plant Sale on-line Aug. 24-Sept. 20

Log on to www.highlandscenter.org and click on the Grow Native! selection, where you will find a listing of plants for sale. Pictures and growing information on all plants for sale will be available through links to our grower. Select your order and pay at our secure on-line site. Your plants will arrive Tuesday, Sept. 26, and can be picked up at the Highlands Center's Lynx Creek Site, 1375 S. Walker Road

For more details, visit: www.highlandscenter.org beginning Aug. 24, or call the office at 776-9550. Fun and easy! Best of all it is a great way to enhance your landscape, save water, create wildlife habitat, and support the Highlands Center! This is a GREAT time to plant, allowing establishment of your new plants over the winter months. Proceeds benefit the education programs of the Highlands Center, which helps children and adults discover the wonders of nature and become wise caretakers of the land.

MG Association News

If anyone would like to donate a hand pruner and a larger pruner to the Cottonwood Extension Office, they would appreciate it. Contact Tammy on 928-646-9113, tkieren@ag.arizona.edu

Mortimer Nursery in Prescott is holding an Autumn Outreach Fair on Saturday, Sept 16th. Several garden clubs, plant & bird societies, etc. will have tables set up. They have requested that the Master Gardeners have a table as well. It can be similar to what we do at the Prescott Farmers Market. Setup by 9:30am, start: 10:00am, end: 2:00pm. Free BBQ. If you would like to help staff the MG table please contact Lynn Hazlewood, klwoodz@cableone.net, 776-1018.

Volunteers are needed for the Water Festival, to be held at Watson Lake in Prescott on Oct 6th. This is not a Master Gardener event, but will count as volunteer time. Jeff Schalau plans to participate as well.

The Yavapai County Master Gardener Association is conducting a survey of 200 Master Gardeners. Surveys will be in the mail next week. If you receive one, please take a few minutes to respond. A stamped return envelope is enclosed for your convenience.

If you have any questions about any of these items contact Mary Barnes at 928-445-6590

Master Gardener Calendar

*September 20, 6:30 (Prescott) MGA Meeting, "Working with Bulbs" with Valerie Phipps from Mortimer's Nursery

September 21-24, Yavapai County Fair

October 21, Master Gardener Picnic, at Jerome State Park in Jerome, 11:30-2:00

October 13-14, Highland Garden Conference

*November 15, 6:30 (Prescott) MGA Meeting, Gary Young from Young's Farm in Dewey will be talking about the history and sale of the farm

*For Yavapai Master Gardeners Only

To suggest any additions to the calendar or to ask any questions, please email Melissa Sandeen at rksandeen@netzero.net. Thanks.

FROM THE EDITOR: Please send or email articles and announcements to the address below. Long articles will go in as soon as possible, announcements must be in by the 15th of the month to be included.

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MG NEWSLETTER



MG Association Meeting

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