

Yavapai Gardens

Master Gardener Newsletter

February 2007

Sweet Things by Nora Graf



I was having lunch in an Indian restaurant with my sister-in-law the other day, and I realized there were a lot of potatoes in one of the dishes. Now potatoes were a food of the Americas, and I wondered how they became such a part of India's culinary history. So when I sat down to write this newsletter, traveling plants were on my mind. (By the way, potatoes were brought to India in the 16th century but weren't used much until the British came. They promoted the value of the potato as a way to create a market for British potato farmers.) But potatoes aren't the only plants that traveled; one of our favorite winter plants has changed and traveled a bit also—the pansy.

The pansy comes from a large family. The viola genus alone numbers about 500 species. Violas were known in Greece in the 4th century BC, but the center of origin seems to be continental Europe. The plant's common name was originally "Heart's Ease." The term pansy seems to come from the French word *pensee*, meaning thought or remembrance. *V. tricolor* is different from the viola. It grows from the ground on one main stem and branched above ground. Violas branched below-ground, with many plants sharing the same root system. The bloom on the pansy was also larger and rounder than on the violas.

I'm sure you've heard the phrase, one person's weed is another person's wildflower. Well, in the case of the pansy that is true. The large flowered pansy is directly linked to a common weed found in European cornfields, *Viola tricolor*. In its weed state, the flower is only 1 inch long with a yellow lip and whitish wings and purple upper petals. The petals would usually have fine dark lines that converged in the center. There were many variants that show lighter and darker shades.

William Thompson is known as the father of the modern pansy, although both violas and pansies were cultivated by many gardeners. Thompson worked as gardener to Lord Gambier at Iver in Buckinghamshire. After Lord Gambier retired from the navy, he took up an interest in gardening. It was Lord Gambier that brought Thompson the pansy plants that grew wild on his land



Events & Activities

MG Association Meeting, Wednesday, Feb. 21, Prescott 6:30pm, program on Water Harvesting.

Yavapai Rose Society - , Feb. 19, 2pm, 1st Christian Church, Prescott. 1230 Willow Cr. Rd. For more information call 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

Prescott Iris Society, Feb. 10, Call 928-445-8132 for information. See pg 7.

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and asked Thompson to improve them. Thompson first looked to improve the size and the color of the plants by simple selection of seeds from plants with the desirable traits. From there, he began hybridizing the plants with other species from around Europe. He crossed them with varieties like the perennials European *V. lutea* and a purple Siberian variety, *V. altaica*. These varieties increased the color range of the plants and produced smaller overall plant. The splotches that make up the face of the pansy appeared by chance about 1930 in a neglected part of Thompson's garden. Thompson saw the value of the new flowers and the rest, as they say, is history. It was discovered in 1839 and was named "Medora."

By 1850 many new varieties were available and the pansy's popularity increased, and it became a florist flower with showy blooms. In other parts of Europe the flowers became popular but they preferred a less formal look, eventually replacing the British show-type pansies. They also were not as finicky to grow as the hothouse varieties. Over time, the colors of pansies have expanded to include darker colors, pastels, orange and pale pink. The pansy crossed the Atlantic and quickly became a popular garden flower in America. In 1888, a catalog noted it as "the most popular of all flowers grown from seed."

Pansies' close cousin, the violet, was undergoing its own transformation. The original plant was *Viola odorata*, a plant from wooded areas. It bloomed in very early spring. It was primarily dark violet, but white forms were not unknown and the violet color was often variable. In the 18th and 19th century this variety was hybridized with *V. alba* and *V. suavis* from eastern Europe and Russia. From these crosses came flowers that were scented, in colors of pale blue to pink and crimson. It was further hybridized with the American violet *V. sororia* which had white or mauve flowers, veined blue-black with large flowers but no scent.

An interesting sidelight of the scented violet, once noticed by William Shakespeare, is that the scent seems to come and go. The chemical constituent of the fragrance, called ionine, actually clogs the scent receptors in the nose, preventing you from smelling the flower. Once you remove your nose, the scent receptors become unclogged, allowing you to smell them again. The yellow or blue pansies seem to have the strongest scent.

Today, much of the innovative pansy breeding has happened in Germany, the United States and Japan. These breeding programs have widened the pansy's range of colors and sizes.

A final historical note on violets: Emperor Napoleon Bonaparte asked his gardener to send his wife Jo-

sephine a bunch every year on their wedding anniversary. Once he was exiled, he told supporters that he would "return with the violets in the spring." He escaped from Elba in March; a hundred days later the Battle of Waterloo occurred. During his exile, Josephine died and Napoleon picked and pressed violets from her grave and wore them in a locket until his own death, in exile again.

Pansies are the most common flower found in winter garden centers in our area. In fact, they are sometimes the only flower you can find, so it's easy to pick up six packs and quickly transplant them to your garden for instant color. But they are also easy to grow from seed. You might want to explore some more types in the catalogs. The current Thompson & Morgan catalog lists two pages of pansies, including an double variety and a range of colors from pastels to vibrant hues. They also list a couple of violas.

They need basically the same conditions as most flower seeds. The temperature for germination must be between 60-65°F. The seeds do need darkness for germination, though, so make sure you can wrap up the seed flat with plastic and then put something on top to make sure the flat is dark. Keep the mixture moist— don't let it dry out. Once the seeds germinate, place the flat in bright light. Grow them out until large enough to transplant. Plant the seedlings in the bed or container. Space them about 6 to 10 inches apart. They can be afflicted by slugs, spider mites and aphids but, since we grow them in the winter, they have few problems. So enjoy the earliest harbingers of spring.



Seed Sources

Thompson & Morgan
www.thompsonandmorgan.com
800-274-7333
220 Faraday Ave.
Jackson, NJ 08527-5073

Swallowtail Garden Seeds, has a large selection
www.swallowtailgardenseeds.com
707-538-3585
122 Calistoga Road #178
Santa Rosa, CA 95409

Meet a Master Gardener

by Pam Bowman

After his “first” retirement in 1979, Larry Combs and his wife, Arlene, moved to their previously purchased home in Prescott Valley. However, their stay was short-lived and they did not return until 1995. Larry finally retired in 1997 and enrolled in the 2001 Master Gardener class. Upon graduation he signed up for a weekly shift answering the numerous and varied questions of gardeners in the Prescott area. In addition, Larry assisted Jeff with pruning workshops a few years ago and he trained new Prescott office volunteers through 2003. Larry continues to sit at the Master Gardener desk every other week and provides the public with information acquired from years of research.

Born in the small town of Quicksand, Kentucky, Larry notes the town’s population has further dwindled and only a post office and store remain in the downtown area. At the age of eight, Larry moved with his family to a farm in Knox, Indiana. Although he knew he did not want to be a farmer, Larry admits life on the farm served as a strong foundation for future gardening endeavors.

Upon graduation from high school in 1959, Larry joined the Army. When he completed his 4-year obligation as an enlisted man in the infantry, he went to Officers Candidate School (OCS) and became a second lieutenant, specializing in armor. 1963 was a busy year for Larry—he married Arlene, finished OCS and headed to Korea as a Tank Platoon Leader.

Larry remained in the Army until 1979. During his Army career, he volunteered to serve in Vietnam and was wounded during the TET offensive in 1967 and, once he recovered, he returned to Vietnam. Following his war duty, Larry was stationed in a number of places, including Germany, Kentucky and Oklahoma. In Fort Sill, OK, he taught armor tactics at the artillery school.

Retiring from the Army, Larry worked at a number of jobs, finally settling in Warren, Michigan, at the Tank Automotive Command. In 1987, he became an instructor for the Defense Management Engineering Command. Larry notes that all his jobs entailed gathering and analyzing data...a task he really enjoys.

Despite moving 27 times in 43 years with his wife and two daughters and traveling extensively for his jobs, Larry managed to landscape and maintain numerous gardens. He attributes his continuing interest in gardening to Arlene’s love of flowers. He builds raised beds for flower gardens but cannot name the flowers his wife nurtures. He does, however, know all the names for shrubs and trees in his landscapes.

With their final move, July 4, 2005, to a condominium in Prescott, Larry and Arlene no longer maintain a large yard. Surgery on both knees made working in a large garden difficult, but Larry found that his duties as the President of his Homeowners Association keep him very busy in a larger garden. He actively participates on the

Landscaping Committee, where he supervises firewise landscaping, selects dead or dying trees for removal and determines how to trim trees within the community. Other responsibilities include arranging exterior painting, roofing, road repairs and maintenance of the swimming pools and club house.

In his spare time, Larry bowls and paints. He belongs to two bowling leagues and bowls in at least four tournaments every year. He paints when he finds the time or when a scene “catches his eye.” Larry also exercises at the “Y” three times a week.

Larry’s love of research has served him well over the years—in his job, in his gardens and now in his volunteer work at the Extension Office. Many gardeners in the Prescott area benefit because he enjoys gathering and analyzing data.



Wooden Plant Containers

from Gardening HowTo, July/Aug 2004



Looking to make some large plant containers? Here's a simple plan that even the most amateur do-it-yourselfer can manage:

1x3x8 ft pine or cedar (8) cut into the following lengths:

- A. 8 corner pieces, 22 inches long
- B. 16 side pieces 14 inches long
- C. 16 side pieces 12 inches long
- D. 2 cleats, 12 inches long
- E. 4 bottom pieces 12 inches long

140—1 1/4 inch 10d galvanized nails or 10 zinc-plated Philips-head wood screws

20—2-inch 10d galvanized nails or No. 10 zinc-plated Phillips-head wood screws

Wood glue for exterior use

Hand saw, jigsaw or circular saw

Framing square

Hammer, screwdriver or drill-driver
Staple gun with 3/8 inch or 1/2-inch staples

Heavy mil black plastic, such as a contractor-grade trash bag

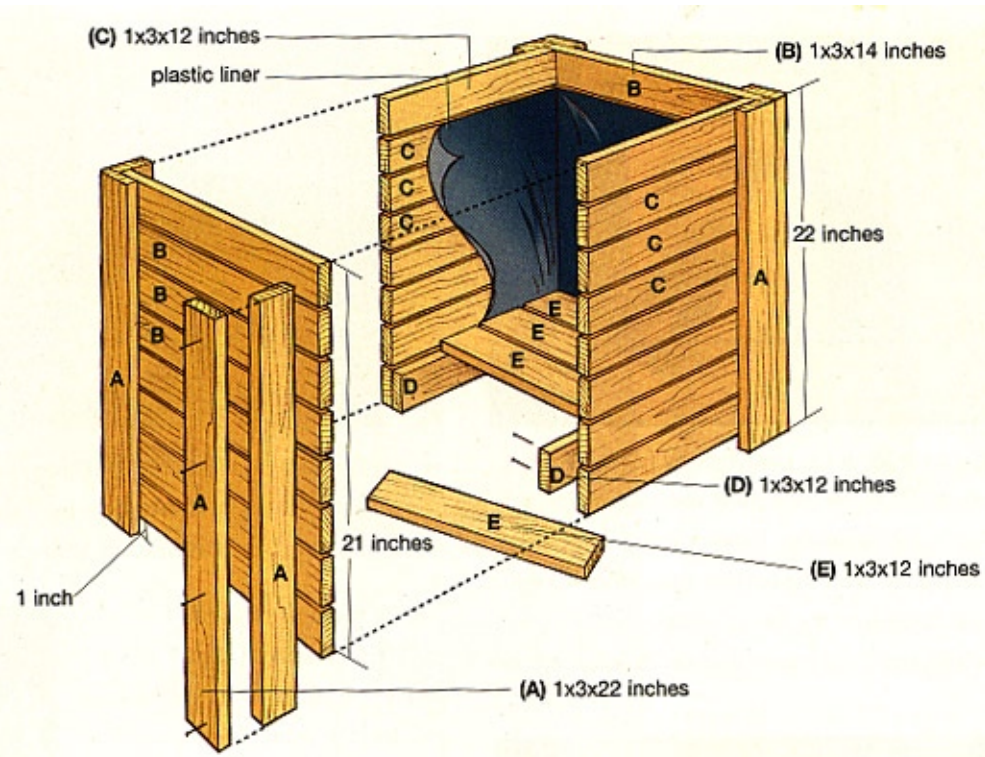
Gravel or pot shards

Clear wood preservative

Paintbrush

Decorative hardware, if desired

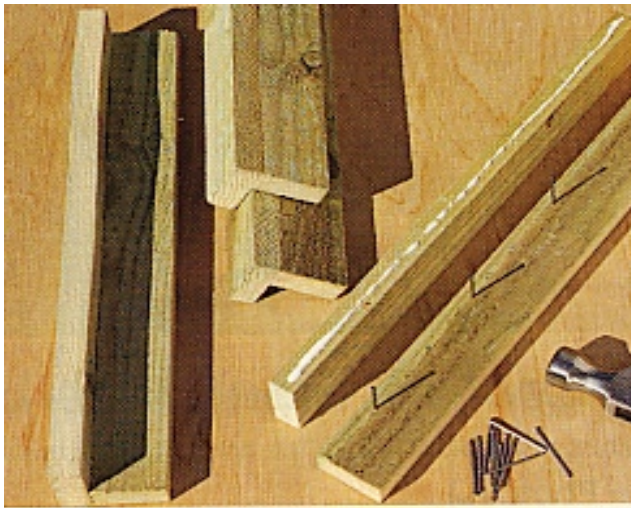
Cut 1 x 3 stock to lengths above. Assemble the four vertical corners (A) with 2-inch galvanized 10d nails and water-resistant glue or 2-inch no. 10 wood screws and glue. **(pic. 1)** Screws will result in stronger joints. Use at least four fasteners per corner assembly.



Assemble two sides of container by fastening horizontal boards (B) to the assembled vertical corners with glue and 1 1/4 inch nails or screws. **(pic. 2)** Fasten top and bottom horizontal boards first, with bottom piece raised about 1 inch from the bottom of the corner pieces. Use a framing square to ensure that the A and B pieces are square.

Attach the rest of the B boards, spaced evenly, with two 1 1/4-inch fasteners at the end of each board. Continue to check to make sure the pieces are square. **(pic. 3)**

1



them to the cleats using two nails or screws at each end. Bottom boards about 1/4 inch apart so the water will drain but will stay in place.

Build the other two sides by attaching the C parts to the vertical corner assemblies with glue and 1 1/4-inch nails or screws. **(pict. 4)**

Attach two cleats (supports) on the bottom of the container as shown in photo 5. The cleats will support the bottom boards.



2 Set the container upright. Drop the bottom boards (E) into place and attach. Space the bottom boards about 1/4 inch apart so the water will drain but the filling



3 Brush a couple of coats of clear wood preservative, inside and out. You can add a color to the preservative or apply a stain over the preservative after it has dried. When dry, line the container— not the base—with plastic or sheet rubber and secure with staples. Add any decorative hardware.

4



Fill the bottom of the container with pot shards and about 3 inches of gravel. Add potting soil and cut away excess plastic above the soil line or simply put a plastic container inside the box.



5

Spider Lilies

For those that picked up a spider lily at the January Meeting, I think it's *Lycoris radiata*, the red Spider Lily. It blooms late summer to early winter. Likes sun to partial shade, drought tolerant when dormant, likes a bit of water while growing. Height is 12-18" tall. If the person who donated the lilies can email me any other info it would be appreciated.

February to-do list

The vacation is over, time to get back to work.

February is the time you need to start to get serious about gardening again. Spring will be here in the blink of an eye. Sooner maybe. Take the time to get these chores done.

If you have been having problems with pests in your fruit tree, now is the time to apply dormant oil. Read the label carefully and make sure the oil will help your particular problem and apply according to the directions. A little time now may save you headaches later.

Prune fruit trees and grapes. As you are working around the trees, look for damage from fruit borers and other structural problems. Problems are easier to see without the leaves on the trees.

It's time to start seeds for early vegetables inside. Lettuce, broccoli, cabbage, cauliflower and Chinese vegetables like our early cool weather. They go down fast once it gets hot, so now is the time!

Peas can be started outside. I'm not much of a fan of cooked peas, but fresh peas eaten right off the vine are one of the great experiences only known to gardeners. They will grow well until it gets hot. Get going and get the seeds out if you want to enjoy the experience. Also, sweet peas can be planted. Peas like lots of organic material. I've always dug a trench and filled it with manure, filled it in a bit and then planted the seeds. I learned it from my mother and we usually had a great crop of sweet peas using that method.

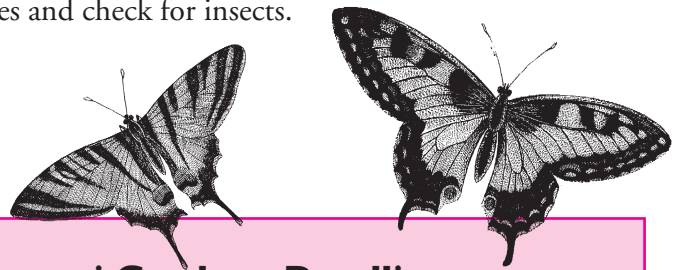
Bare-root plants can go in. Fruit trees, roses, berries, asparagus, shade trees, etc. Make sure you dig a hole that is more wide than it is deep. Roots spread out more than down. For trees and shrubs, don't amend the soil with lots of rich lush stuff. The hole will then act as a container and the roots will not spread out well. Just fill the hole with the same material that came out of it.

Iris are starting to really grow—give them some fertilizer now

Since you are outside now anyway, clean up the debris that may have accumulated from the winter. Clean flow-

er beds; now would be a good time to loosen the soil and amend it so the bed is ready when those seedlings are ready to go outside. Clean up any leaves around fruit trees, grapes and berries. Leaves can harbor insects. It's better to remove them and compost them than to leave them in place.

Houseplants are also in need of some care at this time of year. Look them over, remove the dead bits, wash their leaves and check for insects.



Yavapai Gardens Deadlines

I've tried to be flexible about deadlines for the newsletter but because of some problems that have cropped up, the deadline for articles is now the 10th of the month. No exceptions. If it doesn't arrive by then it will not go in the next newsletter. Never fear though it will eventually show up, but for my own sanity I am not going to make any promises about when. There are more people writing articles and I still like to write articles and so it may be that I will have to let some things slide to another month depending on demand.

Announcements by which I mean, no more than two to three lines about when, where and what, can still be sent in until the 25th of the month and I will TRY and make sure they get in. If for some reason the item doesn't make it I will let you know. Sometimes I have conflicts and may have to finish the newsletter early or later than usual. I do have a life outside of the newsletter which sometimes causes time conflicts.

There has been a request for an Insect of the Month column. I am not going to institute any regular columns outside of the MG of the month. I will try to include more insect articles but if someone is interested I will be glad to accept any articles.

2007 CALENDAR OF EVENTS

February 10-11, Pecan & Wine Festival
February 21, 6:30 (Prescott) MGA meeting, Water Harvesting—
Andrew Millson, owner of Millison Ecological, Inc., a full-service
permaculture landscape design and installation business
March 21, 6:30 (Cottonwood) MGA meeting
April 18, 6:30 (Prescott) MGA meeting
April 28, Grow Native! Plant Sale and Educational Festival, 10:00
am General Public Sale, \$5 admission
May 16, 6:30 (Prescott) MGA meeting, Social/Information evening
with 2007 MG class
June 16, Annual Arboretum Field Trip, Sign up by contacting Patti
Conrad (in the evening) at 778-4810
June 20, 6:30 (Cottonwood) MGA meeting
July __, MGA Field Trip, to be decided
August 15, 6:30 (Cottonwood) MGA meeting
August 25, V Bar V Ranch Field Day, Call Cottonwood office for
more information
September __, (Prescott) Recognition Awards & Picnic
September 20-23, Yavapai County Fair
October 11-13, Highland Garden Conference (This is a new date)
October 17, 6:30 MGA meeting
November 14, 6:30 (Cottonwood) MGA meeting, Elections

Free Aged Manure

If you are interested in getting some free aged horse manure, let me know and I'll put you in contact with the horse owner (Chino Valley). The horses are alfalfa fed. Owner will load the manure in your truck for you. Contact Mary Barnes.

Prescott Iris Society

Sat. Feb. 10th at 2 p.m. with Kathy Chilton, "Reigning Irises" pow-
erpoint presentation of the 2006 National Convention in Portland,
Oregon. Contact Vera Stewart 445-8132 for location.



FROM THE EDITOR: Please send or email articles and announcements to the address below. All articles must be in my hands by the 10th of the month. Short announcements (no more than 2 or 3 lines) will be accepted until the 25th.

Nora Graf
PO Box 3652
Camp Verde, AZ 86322
mesquite2@hotmail.com
(928) 567-6703

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Jeff Schalau", with a long horizontal line extending to the right.

Jeff Schalau
County Director, Yavapai County Extension Agent,
Agriculture & Natural Resources
email: jschalau@ag.arizona.edu

Prescott
840 Rodeo Dr.
Building C
Prescott, AZ 86305
(928) 445-6590
FAX: (928) 445-6593

Cottonwood
2657 Village Dr.
Cottonwood, AZ 86326
(928) 646-9113

Arizona Cooperative Extension
Yavapai County
840 Rodeo Dr. Building C
Prescott, AZ 86305



MG NEWSLETTER

MG Association Meeting

February 21, 6:30pm Prescott

Water Harvesting—Andrew Millson, owner of Millison Ecological, Inc., a full-service permaculture landscape design and installation business

