

Yavapai Gardens

Master Gardener Newsletter

June 2008



Events & Activities

MG Association Meeting, Wednesday, June 18, 6:30pm, Prescott. Barry Golden will speak on iris. See page 8 for map and more information.

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.

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

Prescott Area Iris Society call 928-445-8132 for date and place information.

Verde Valley Iris Society call Linda Smith at 928-567-7470

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Cucumbers

by Nora Graf



One of my favorite plants to grow when I managed the garden at Fort Verde State Park were cucumbers. They were easy to grow and very reliable producers and some of the heirloom varieties were just fun. For years, though, I kind of by-passed them in my kitchen, but lately I've had a hankering for cucumbers—their cool, crispy crunch and their distinctive flavor. I've always been extremely fond of my grandmother's pickles made from homegrown cucumbers. I've come close to that flavor, but, like many childhood things it is probably gone forever. I don't care what all those jars in the store say, they aren't like my grandma's pickles!

Cucumbers likely came from Asia and Africa, although historians believe northern India is their place of origin. From Northern India they traveled to China about 3000 years ago. They were also grown by the ancient Greeks and Romans and came to the New World via the early European explorers. Most of the varieties we grow today have green skin but there are varieties with white, red or yellow skins. Most have warts or spines, although modern varieties have been bred to have none.

White Wonder is a southern heirloom and has ivory white fruits with black spines. It is a good slicing cucumber. Boothsby's Blonde is short, oval and warty. The skin is creamy-yellow and has a sweet flavor. It is a good slicing cucumber. Lemon/Lemon Apple is originally from Australia but is grown in the United States. They are lemon-shaped with pale yellow skins and crisp white flesh. They also have a thin skin so they can easily be eaten right out of the garden. Lemon cucumbers work well for both salads or pickling. Crystal Apple is similar to Lemon but it is prickly with a creamy white skin and mild flavor. They are drought resistant. Might be interesting to try here.

Of course, we are probably more familiar with the form of the cucumber known as pickles. Cucumbers lend themselves readily

to the pickling process from sweets to dills, to mustard pickles, hot pickles and pickle slices. Varieties used for pickles are interesting and aren't just ordinary cucumbers. The Burpless Muncher never gets bitter and its name is certainly an incentive to growing it. What fun to casually mention in conversation that you have some Burpless Munchers at home. There is the Cornichon de Bourbonne, an old French variety. You pick these when they are 2 to 3 inches long. I love these little pickles. I have tried growing them and the plants grew well but I had difficulty coming up with enough fruit to actually have enough to pickle at any one time. It would be worth trying but plant lots of seeds for more vines.

West India Gherkins are conversation starters. These are two inches long with soft spines. I grew a type of Indian Gherkin and was very successful with them but at the time I wasn't sure what to do them so they were more conversation pieces than anything. This would be a great plant for a children's garden.

Most people have probably heard of the Armenian Yard Long. It lives up to its name with very long and slender fruits. It is easily digestible so folks who complain about cucumbers should be able to eat these.

Cucumbers are easy to grow. They like warm weather and watering throughout the season. Like most garden vegetables they like a loose soil and extra compost. Plant the seeds directly in the soil after danger of frost has passed (or you can start them early in containers.) Space 12 to 18 inches apart. Fertilize about a week after the first flowers bloom and then again three weeks later. While the vines can grow quite long, you can get them to grow on trellises. You can let them sprawl on the ground but it is difficult to find the fruit sometimes if you do that.

Cucumbers are afflicted by a variety of pests and diseases, but I had few problems with them. Some of the problems can include curly top virus, leaf spot, mildews, cucumber beetles, aphids, flea beetles, whitefly and leafminer. If you have blossoms but no fruit you may have to pollinate by hand. The flowers are pollinated by bees and if there are not enough bees you won't have any

fruit. The fruit can be harvested from the point where it is about two inches long until it starts to turn yellow, about 15 days.

There is still time to plant—give something new a try! Many of these varieties are still available for you to try. Some sources of seed are:

seeds@rareseeds.com
(417) 924-8917
Baker Creek Heirloom Seeds
2278 Baker Creek Road
Mansfield, MO 65704
(These folks have an excellent selection of cucumber seeds)

HEIRLOOM SEEDS
PO Box 245
W. Elizabeth PA 15088-0245
(412) 384-0852
www.heirloomseeds.com

Victory Seed Company
PO Box 192
Molalla, Oregon 97038
www.victoryseeds.com

Aunt Martha's Garden
731 E Valley Rd
Willits CA 95490
<http://prosities-debbieoo.homestead.com/martha.html>



Trip to Tickaboo

by Pam Bowman

With a couple of initial wrong turns near Cliff Castle Casino, all the carpooling groups of Master Gardeners (MG's) finally arrived at Tickaboo Ranch in Verde Valley. Diane Scantelberry, the ranch owner greeted the 23 MG's in a beautiful setting under big shade trees near the Verde River. Diane noted that the ranch name was Tickaboo when she and her husband purchased it. After some research she found another ranch and a now defunct town in Utah with the same name, which means friendly in the Ute language.

At the ranch, Diane grows one acre of field crops—primarily tomatoes peppers, okra, pole beans, snow peas, cantaloupe and small annual artichokes. She admitted to being “pleased if the crops are higher than the weeds.” In a large greenhouse where she starts her field crops, Diane uses hydroponics techniques (no soil) to grow sweet green peppers, lettuce, basil, sage, thyme, rosemary, parsley, cilantro, lavender and nasturtiums. What she grows in the greenhouse is the “bread and butter” of the operation while field crops provide dessert.

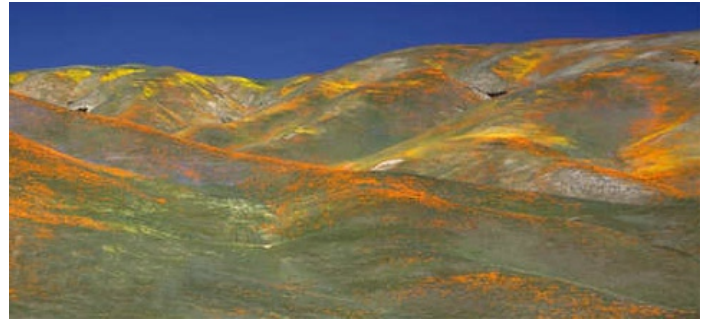
Diane began her commercial endeavors by focusing on restaurant sales—a difficult relationship because chefs changed frequently and restaurant orders were often difficult to fill. Leaving restaurant sales, she began to sell her produce to small markets in the area; wholesale prices reduced her profit margin and once again produce managers changed with regularity. Building another venue for her produce, Diane and a neighbor started the Verde Valley Farmer's Market in 2005. Restricted to produce grown within 50 miles of Camp Verde and limited sales of food and home grown crafts, this farmer's market is growing fast.

In 2007, the Verde Valley CSA (Community Supported Agriculture) was initiated by Diane and others. People in the community become shareholders for an annual fee and they receive a weekly bag of varied produce. CSA's have at least three advantages: fresh produce promotes individual health, community dynamics improve and local sales reduce gas consumption. 2008 will mark the first year Diane will sell 100% of her produce directly to consumers.

Two groups toured the greenhouse to view hydroponics at work. Diane uses two growing systems where hydroponics techniques promote faster plant growth and larger plants in a medium of perlite. She feels hydropon-

ics is the answer for small farmers, because they don't need dirt and they use less water. She does use chemical fertilizers for economic reasons, but she uses beneficial insects to control pest damage.

All the attending MG's enjoyed an interesting, informative and relaxing morning learning about hydroponics. Thanks to Missy Sandeen and her committee for arranging such an enlightening, fun field trip.



MG Staff Spring Plant Sale

by Pam Bowman

The Spring “Go Native Plant Sale” at the Highlands Center for Natural History is responsible for educating gardeners about the importance of gardening with native plants and giving these gardeners a wide selection of these plants to purchase. Once again Master Gardeners played a key role in this event. Under the leadership of Lynn Hazlewood, the following MG's filled bags with compost for sale, unloaded plants from trucks, set up the plants and signs, aided those purchasing plants, answered questions about the plants and planting, served as cashiers and staffed a Master Gardener information table.

Anita Fleming, Anna Wilson, Bev Turnbull, Bill Cart, Bob Burke, Cathy Michener, Cynthia Cartier-Roberts, David Skopec, Diane McKelvey, Diane Nault, Jackie Rizzo, Jonella Blake, Janet Schieber, Jean O'Laughlin, Joan Tyler, Judy Strickler, Kathy Grant, Ken Earls, Lesley Alward, Linda Sunstad, Marti Dodd, Melissa Sandeen, Marv Mazur, Nancy Millet, Pam Bowman, Richard Wise, Rose Williams, Sally Berkshire, Sherry Howard, Tana Bourdage-Allman, Terry Stewart, Tom Watkins, Wendy Spring

Thanks to all for helping promote native landscaping in Prescott.

Tickaboo Ranch



Growing Knowledge – What is pH and why is it So Dog Gone Important to Your Plants?

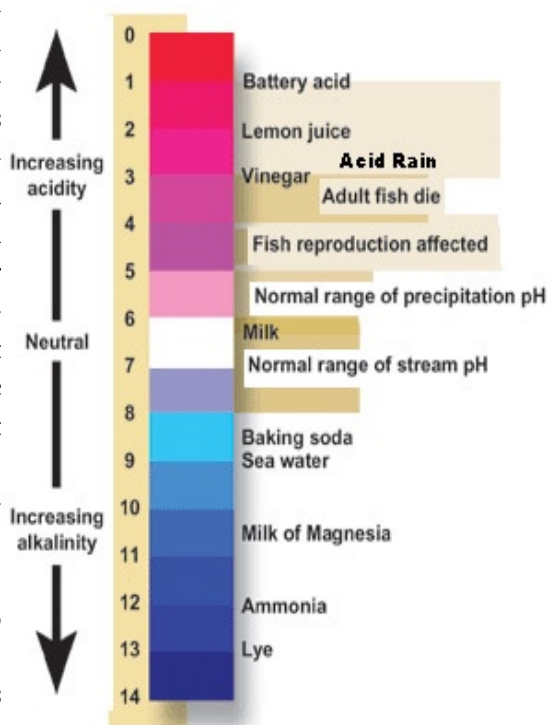
by Cynthia Cartier-Roberts

All the water and fertilizer you can round up isn't going to make a hill of beans of difference if the pH level in your soil isn't what your plants need. pH is the measure of the acidity or alkalinity of a substance or a solution. You may have also heard soil referred to as sour (acidic) or sweet (alkaline). The PH scale ranges from 1 – 14; 1 being the most acidic, 14 being the most alkaline and 7 being neutral. 6.5 is the point where most elements are available.

All plants, whether native or cultivated need Nitrogen, Phosphorus, Potassium, Calcium, Magnesium and Iron in addition to minor elements at different levels. Elements are unavailable to plants at certain pH levels, so it's important to know what the pH and or element needs are of the plants you want to grow and what the pH level is in your soil. If you can't find what a particular plants pH needs are, work backwards or maybe it's forwards. Know what the plants elements needs are and make sure your soil pH is at a level that those elements will be available to your plant (see below). Don't make it too complicated. Just know if you're plant's growing needs are for a higher, mid or lower pH.

Vegetables for example are greedy guys when it comes to their nutrition needs, which seems only right as they provide us humans with our nutrition needs. Since 6.5 is the point where most of the elements are available to a plant, that's where you want your soil for veggies.

Having the right pH level in the soil for a particular plant is like having a healthy immune system in the human body. When your soil can make available the proper nutrients to your plants, your plants will have a healthy immune system that will help them to fight off disease, viruses, recover from an injury (accidental damage), and survive a physical attack from an assailant (bugs and insects that are not beneficial to your plants health). And let's not forget – Grow, grow, grow.



Okay, so you get the whole pH thing, what should you do now? First, have your soil tested. You can either buy a kit and do it yourself or take a soil sample from your growing area to either the Prescott or Verde Valley Cooperative Extension offices and have it tested for FREE. Mix soil from three different holes in your growing area and put it in a plastic quart or gallon bag. Drop it off, fill out the short form and your results will be mailed to you, if you leave a S.A.S.E., or you can pick them up. Soil testing is done every Friday

Soil in our area will usually be between 7 and 8. pH can be raised by adding lime – not something we Arizonians need to do, typically. There

are two ways to lower pH: soil sulfur and steer manure. Add soil sulfur 5 lbs. or steer manure 50 lbs. for every 100 sq. ft. I would add the soil sulfur in the early spring or fall, but manure only in the fall – but that's just me.

Happy Gardening!

For the Trivia Minded: What does pH stand for? The “p” (always written in lower case) is a chemical mathematics symbol for “the negative logarithm of”. The “H” is the chemical symbol for hydrogen. So “pH” is the negative logarithm of the concentration of hydrogen ions in a soil or water solution. Now you know.

Estimated pH range of “greatest” availability of elements:

- 6.0 – 8.0: Nitrogen
- 6.5 – 8.0: Phosphorus
- 6.0 – 10.0: Potassium, Sulfur,
- 6.5 – 9.0: Calcium, Magnesium,
- 6.5 – 10.0: Molybdenum (Don't ask me, I can't even say it)
- 5.0 – 7.0: Manganese, Boron, Copper and Zinc
- Below 6.5: Iron

MG Association News

June 14, Flagstaff Arboretum Field Trip—Sign up by calling Pattie Conrad (928-778-4810) in the evening. This is a fun trip and a great opportunity to get some unusual plants!

Monsoon Madness Yard and Plant Sale

If you haven't signed up and want to help at the sale contact Bev Bostrom, bostrick26@gmail.com, 708-0084. If you plan to make donations for the sale, please let Sherry Morton know what you plan to donate. Sherrymorton@cableone.net, 776-4620.

Verde Valley Farmers Market, Camp Verde

When : Saturdays, 8:00 am until 12:00 noon, June 14th through October 4th

Where : Eagle Scout Pavillion, located off Main Street on Hollamon, directly in front of Fort Verde State Park

Who : Market Manager , Jane Davie, 634-7077

This farmers marker is really dedicated to local farmers. Craft sellers and and non-farm items are limited, so if you want farm items this is the place to go.



Astoria, Oregon farmers market

**Prescott Farmers Market - MG Table
Need more volunteers for July and August. Contact Sherry Morton, 776-4620 for details**

June 14, Prescott Garden Tour hosted by the Alta Vista Garden Club this year. The gardens will be open from 8am to 4pm. To obtain tickets (\$10 donation per ticket) or more information contact caasam@cableone.net.

FLOWER ARRANGING WORKSHOP

Something special is being planned for you! A workshop on flower arranging will be offered for Certified Master Gardeners on Saturday, August 16, 2008, from 9:00 a.m. -12:00 p.m., at the County Extension Office. The workshop will cover flower arranging basics, including color and design. A florist will demonstrate how to make a basic arrangement. Each participant will leave with their own arrangement and handouts on floral arranging.

The cost will be \$25.00 and will cover both supplies and floral instruction. Participants are asked to bring their own pocket knife, scissors and garden gloves.

The class is limited to the first ten paid registrations. Please contact Cynthia Cartier-Roberts (445-4861) to register. Supplies need to be prepared and ordered, so we will be adhering to a registration deadline of July 26th.

MG Calendar

June 14, Flagstaff Arboretum Field Trip—Sign up by calling Pattie Conrad (778-4810) in the evening

June 14, Prescott Garden Tour, 8:00 am-4:00 pm, Cost--\$10

June 18, Barry Golden—"Irises"

July 12—Moonlight Madness Yard & Plant Sale

August 16, Flower Arranging Workshop, 9-12:00 a.m., \$25.00 charge—call Cynthia Cartier-Roberts to reserve your spot now--pay by July 26th, only certified Master Gardeners may attend

August 20, Cottonwood—Don Troutman—"Ponds"

September 13, Autumn Outreach Fair at Mortimer Nursery, showcases local non-profits dedicated to gardening and conservation

September 17, Prescott--Pattie Conrad—"Fall Gardening"

September 18-21--Yavapai County Fair

October 13 & 14—Arizona Highlands Garden Conference, Prescott Resort

October 26—Recognition Awards & Picnic—Verde Valley

November 19, Prescott—Elections; Panel--"The State of Organics in the Food Distribution Industry"

December—No Meeting



Hands-on Volunteer Opportunity in Yavapai College Sculpture Garden

John Paustian (MG) is working with Yavapai College to plant a rose garden in their Prescott campus sculpture garden. He is ready to do the planting, and looking for MGs to help. Please contact John, grejonaz@cableone.net, 443-3550.

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".

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



Iris "Beverly Sills"

MG NEWSLETTER

MG Association Meeting
June 18, 6:30pm, Prescott
Speaker: Barry Golden



Barry Golden taught anatomy and physiology in the Nursing School at Yavapai College. He also taught other classes in the biological sciences. Now a retired Professor Emeritus, Barry devotes his time to Golden's Iris Garden, a commercial enterprise established 18 years ago in Diamond Valley.

With his extensive experience growing Irises, Barry will talk about rhizome irises, bulbous irises and miniature irises. He will also provide information about Iris varieties he does not grow. If you would like to learn more about the Iris, which is not consumed by "pesky" animal visitors, or have already caught "the Iris Virus," put this program on your calendar today.

