



Events & Activities

MG Association Meeting, March 18, 6:30pm, Prescott, Care of Native Trees, See last page.

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.

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, next meeting April 1, 5:30pm, Cottonwood Public Safety Building corner of 6th & Aspen

Table of Contents

More Spring Vegetables . . .	1
Baby Bok Choy & Cashews . . .	3
Beef & Napa Cabbage . . .	3
Meet a MG, Joy Kimmel . . .	4
Bells are Ringing . . .	5
Garden Poem . . .	6
Announcements . . .	6-7

University of Arizona Yavapai County Cooperative Extension

Yavapai Gardens

Master Gardener Newsletter

March 2009

More Spring Vegetables

by Nora Graf



It's March and the spring garden is truly rushing upon us. Pam Bowman told me she has gourd seedlings that are a couple of inches high already. I'm not that organized. I promised myself that this year I would get seeds started early, get the beds prepared and so on. So far nothin'! Well, except

for turning the pages of heart-thumping catalogs. I've discovered the Baker Creek Heirloom Seed catalog this year. Amazing catalog! It skyrocketed up on the list of best and favorite catalogs before I even got out of the post office with it. Sumptuous pictures mixed with interesting descriptions and an astonishing array of heirloom plants make for a real page turner. They have cucumbers like Crystal Apple, Mexican Sour Gherkins barely the size of quarter and one called Thai Petch Tsai. They have three pages of eggplant varieties. Things like passion fruit, edible gourds and—my idea of heaven—page after page of melons; and so many tomato varieties I haven't even begun to plumb the depths of choices. There are flowers, too, but let's go back to the page labeled Oriental Greens. The reason being that these are among the cool weather vegetables I talked about last month. If you've been eating iceberg and leaf lettuces you find in the store, it is time to spread your wings and try something new. A couple of my favorites are the bok or pak choys (sometimes spelled choi) and Napa Cabbage. Bok Choy has a thick white crispy stem with a dark green leaf. I discovered bok choy years and years ago at a fantastic Chinese restaurant in Phoenix, now long gone (sigh!). You could occasionally find it in the grocery stores and so my mother began to cook with it. She was an adventurous cook, so we were often the subjects for new dishes.

Bok choy is a member of the Brassica genus which includes cabbage, turnips, Brussels sprouts and mustard. It is a fast-growing annual so is a perfect addition to the spring garden. It starts easily from seed and can be directly sown in the garden. If you can grow lettuce, cabbage or broccoli you can grow bok choy. (Just a note—lettuce is not a brassica, but for growing conditions both lettuce and bok choy are similar.) Some varieties do tolerate a bit of hot weather but that information came from a source where I would bet that 80°F is hot. Expect it to bolt as summer heats up around here. On the plus side, you can eat the flowers too. Since these are fast growers you won't have to wait long to eat them; some can be ready in as little as five weeks.

The Chinese have been growing bok choy for over 6000 years. Seeds from the plant have been discovered in stone age archaeological sites. The plant became a common part of the diet by the 5th century in southern China. A Ming Dynasty pharmacologist studied it for medicinal uses. At some point it was introduced to Korea where it became one of the main ingredients of



stores as bok choy. It has dark green leaf blades that form a cluster much like celery with generally a crispy white stem, although it can be light green. The white-stemmed form is the easiest to find.

Pekinesis is actually more common outside of Asia and include what we call Napa cabbage or Chinese cabbage, which is what they use in kimchi. Chinese cabbage looks like a cross between cabbage and lettuce. It forms a head with strong central stems, but it has a leafier look at the top than our common cabbage. The head is also taller than it is wide, vs. a circular head, and is milder and sweeter in flavor. I once threw out some seeds for Chinese cabbage and I had so much that I didn't know what to do with it all. (This was before I realized that Jeff could have made kimchi out of it.) It is a real easy grower in my garden and should be in yours too.



kimchi (see Chinese cabbage).

There are two main species, which includes different varieties:

Chinensis is the smaller of the two and does not form heads and is what you see labeled in

Another interesting Oriental vegetable is Mizuna. It is commonly grown in Japan. It can be cooked or eaten fresh. In a salad it adds contrast to other greens as the leaves are saw-toothed, (oak leaf sort of looking). It has a peppery, spicy taste which adds flavor to any lettuce mix. It is sometimes found in mesclun mixes. Mizuna can be cooked, can be used as a substitute for spinach and goes well with meat and fish. It can be added to soups and stir fries. It is a hardy green and can withstand cooler temperatures. Try planting some in the fall and you might be able to over-winter it.

I almost wrote about eggplant because I found this interesting tidbit. Gives you pause about fashion trends: Ladies in the Orient used to make a dye from the skin of eggplants, which they then used to stain their teeth gray, because it was thought to be very stylish. (Glad humans got over that!)

Baby Bok Choy with Cashews

www.elise.com

2 Tbsp olive oil
1 cup chopped green onions, including green ends
3 cloves garlic, chopped
1 pound baby bok choy, rinsed, larger leaves separated from base, base trimmed but still present, holding the smaller leaves together
1/2 teaspoon dark sesame oil
Salt
1/2 cup chopped, roasted, salted cashews (or almonds)

1 Heat olive oil in a large sauté pan on medium high heat. Add onions, then garlic, then bok choy. Sprinkle with sesame oil and salt. Cover, and let the baby bok choy cook down for approximately 3 minutes. (Like spinach, when cooked the bok choy will wilt a bit.)

2 Remove cover. Lower heat to low. Stir and let cook for a minute or two longer, until the bok choy is just cooked.

3 Gently mix in cashews.

Serves 4.

Beef & Napa Cabbage

(Gourmet Magazine)

1 Tablespoon soy sauce
1 Tablespoon rice vinegar (not seasoned)
2 teaspoons oyster sauce
1 Tablespoon cornstarch
1 pound flank steak
3 Tablespoons vegetable oil, divided
3 garlic cloves, smashed
1 (1-inch) piece peeled ginger, cut into 1/4-inch-thick slices
1 pound Napa cabbage, leaves and stems separated if desired, then cut into 1 1/2-inch pieces
Garnish: chopped scallion

Stir together soy sauce, vinegar, oyster sauce, and cornstarch.

Pat steak dry, then halve lengthwise and cut crosswise into 1/4-inch-thick slices. Toss with 1/2 teaspoon salt and 1 teaspoon pepper.

Heat wok over high heat until a drop of water evaporates immediately. Add 2 tablespoons vegetable oil, swirling to coat, then stir-fry garlic and ginger



until golden and fragrant, about 30 seconds. Add beef, quickly spreading pieces in 1 layer on bottom and sides of wok. Cook, undisturbed, 2 minutes, then

stir-fry until meat is just browned but still pink in center, about 1 minute. Transfer to a bowl.

Wipe wok clean, then swirl in remaining tablespoon oil and stir-fry cabbage stems over high heat until crisp-tender, about 2 minutes. Add cabbage leaves and beef with juices, then stir soy mixture and add. Stir-fry until sauce is simmering and slightly thickened, 1 to 2 minutes. Discard ginger if desired; season with salt.



Meet a Master Gardener – Joy Kimmel, MS

By Jay S. Fleishman

The area around the Napa Valley in Northern California is north of San Francisco and Oakland, and is noted for producing wine-quality grapes in abundant vineyards. It also produces an occasional biologist!

Joy Kimmel is a graduate of the 2008 Master Gardener course and was born and raised in Kelseyville, north of the Napa Valley. Her rural upbringing leads to an interest in profitable and productive botany. She says that the kids in her family got \$0.05 per tomato hornworm in the family vegetable garden each year. At the age of 8, she planted her own garden with corn, radishes, and squash.

She graduated from California State University, Chico, and did some undergraduate work on edible plants in the local 2400 acre city park. Her Master's Degree was in botany, specializing in taxonomy and focusing on hybridization of two wildflower species. Her post-Master's education emphasized geology, which she also taught, and organizational development while working for the Forest Service as the Regional Training Officer. Her duties included long-range environmental plan-

ning, environmental impact analysis, field botany, project management, and employee training.

Joy moved to Arizona in 1991 and has continued to study native plants and how they

can be adapted to uses in landscaping. Her class work with the Master Gardener program last year reinforced her knowledge about how plants grow. "I didn't know all that much about how to grow plants." She also became more interested in fire-wise landscaping, in part because of her extensive forestry work. She completed the Fire-wise Defensible Space Landscaping class in the spring of 2008. Her specialty is identification of native plants and is a particular resource for the extension offices in Yavapai County. She plans on preparing programs for the Speaker's Bureau on these and other subjects.



Her hobbies besides gardening include hiking, reading, line dancing, and various arts and crafts, especially watercolor painting. She prefers painting memorable landscapes and birds from her photographs.

She is such a great addition to the Master Gardener Association!

Bells are Ringing

by Nora Graf

Looking for something unusual for the flower garden? Something structural perhaps—a nice chartreuse counterpoint to all that dark green. Perhaps a bit finicky in our area, but maybe worth it. Bells of Ireland have been around since 1570. Long a staple of flower gardens, they seem to

have fallen a bit out of favor, but maybe in a garden or two they can be revived. You are actually not growing them for the flowers, which are tiny white things. You are growing them for the



calyxes which are big and green and dramatic. The plants make great cut or dried flowers. Also known as shellflower, *Moluccella laevis*, this plant is a half-hardy annual.

The funnel-shaped bells (calyxes) surround tiny white fragrant flowers. The bells are packed tightly along the stem. Surprisingly, it is a member of the mint family and not actually from Ireland. The genus *Moluccella* comes from the Molucca Islands in Indonesia. Linnaeus was confused about where the plant came from and in fact they are not from Indonesia either. They are native to western Asia, around Syria, Turkey and the Caucasus. The Ireland name in part seems to come from the color and apparently was named this to market them. The flowers themselves are seen as good luck symbols. Another reason to plant them!

In the garden they do well when combined with other colorful annuals. Their verticality add another dimension your garden design. You can leave them in the garden until they dry, as even then they provide interest. Blooming stems can be cut and dried. As the stems dry they do fade to a pale straw yellow-beige. If you prefer you can cut them green and hang upside down to

dry.

The seeds need light to germinate so use the absolute minimum of soil covering. It takes a long time for the seeds to germinate, up to a month, so have patience. Plan to seed 8 to 10 weeks before the last frost date. Not everything



can be like lettuce. You can speed up germination by planning ahead and chilling the seed in the refrigerator for two weeks first. Once the seed germinates the plants can tolerate temperatures as low as 40°F. If you start seeds inside, the young plants will likely wilt upon transplanting,

something that I can suddenly remember once I started writing this article. But if you are gentle and kind they should recover. In our climate they would probably prefer some afternoon shade, but might be able to take full sun. Soil needs to drain well, but they like an area that is moist. Mulching them well would help and you would not want to plant them in a xeriscape environment. The tall varieties may need staking, especially in windy areas, but there is also a smaller version that will stand on its own. If you don't think you have the right conditions in your garden, they can be grown in containers.

Bells self-seed easily, although in our climate I wouldn't think they could become a problem. You can also collect and save the seed yourself. They have interesting triangular-shaped seeds.

These plants are not usually found in Arizona gardens. I suspect they may be marginal growers but I remember growing them as a kid in Tucson quite successfully. They need to be in the ground early and are troublesome to transplant but might be fun to try. Seeds are readily available in many catalogs.

Garden Poem/Song

Dave Mallet, 1975

Inch by inch, row by row
Gonna make this garden grow
All you need is a rake & a hoe
(gonna mulch it deep and low)
And a piece of fertile ground.
(gonna make it fertile ground)
Inch by inch, row by row
Someone bless these seeds I sow
Someone warm them from below
Til the rains come tumbling down.

Pulling weeds, picking stones
We are made of dreams and bones
Need a place to call my own for the time is near
at hand
Grain for grain, sun and rain
Find my way through Nature's chain
Tune my body and my brain to the music of the
land.

Plant your rows straight and long
Temper them with prayer and song
Mother Earth will make you strong if you give her
love and care
An old crow watching hungrily
From his perch in yonder tree
In my garden I'm as free as that feathered thief
up there!



Gardening Workshop

Contact: Belle Starr: belle@seedsave.org
928.649.8180

Bill McDorman, President and Founder of Seeds Trust, a 25 year-old heirloom garden seed company will present a workshop on Gardening from the Inside Out, Saturday, March 14 from noon until 4 pm at the Old Town Center for the Arts in Cottonwood.

In the midst of the largest economic downturn since the Great Depression, there is a new and building interest in growing gardens. Bill has been fielding an exceptional amount of calls from people in the Verde Valley who are just beginning and have no idea where and how to start.

Whether you are an experienced gardener concerned about food security, are interested in helping to promote local food production or just want the satisfaction of planting a garden in your own backyard, you'll find these topics and more at this workshop.

A "Backyard Gardening Expo" will precede Gardening from the Inside Out, from 9:30 to 11 am in the parking lot of the Old Town Center for the Arts. Join Gardens for Humanity and Yavapai Master Gardeners for planting tips and the opportunity to purchase seeds, soil amendments and more. In the evening a special concert will capture the day's celebration musically with a performance by the soon to be famous World Garden Orchestra. The Saturday, March 14th schedule of events will kick off the Sedona-Verde Valley week-long Planting Festival. The Old Town Center for the Arts is dedicated to supporting community events and is located at 5th Street and Main in Old Town Cottonwood.

The cost for Gardening from the Inside Out is \$35 and tax deductible. Scholarships are available. Seeds and seed saving books will be available to purchase. Email belle@seedsave.org to reserve your spot. Credit cards accepted or call 928-649-8180.

MG Announcements

Volunteer Opportunity

Staff MG table at Highlands Center native plant sale on April 25th – contact Lynn Hazlewood, klwoodz@cableone.net, 776-1018.

Mentors needed for 2009 MG Class; mentor training March 26th, 6:30pm, Prescott office; contact Cynthia Cartier-Roberts, bloominstamper@cableone.net, 445-4861.

Next Speakers Bureau Workshop will be on April 18th at Prescott office. Contact Bob Burke, bburke@commspeed.net, 301-0394

Verde Valley Garden Tour

The Steering Committee for the Verde Valley Master Garden Tour has set May 9th as the date for the spring event. Windmill Gardens in Cornville will host the registration beginning at 9 AM. A voluntary donation of \$10 to help defray costs of the tour is suggested. At the registration a map with garden locations will be distributed. The tour will conclude at 4 PM.



Check out the Southwest

Flower & Garden Show
(www.SWFlowerShow.com)

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.

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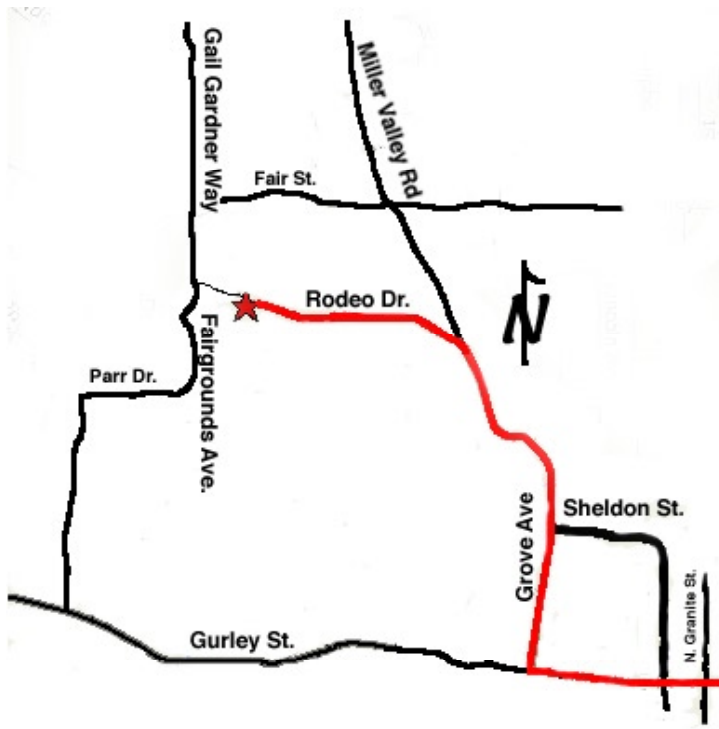
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MG NEWSLETTER



MG Association Meeting
March 18, 6:30pm Prescott

Dana Diller, a retired Prescott City arborist, will speak on "Diseases, Pests and Care of Our Native Trees." Calling on his wealth of experience, he will use projected CD images to better aid us in identifying these diseases and pests and talk about preventing and treating the problems.