



Events & Activities

Check out the new MG blog. More garden information, events and pictures.

<http://yavapagardener.blogspot.com>

MG Association Meeting, Recognition Picnic, Oct. 10

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

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University of Arizona Yavapai County Cooperative Extension

Yavapai Gardens

Master Gardener Newsletter

October 2009

Purslane or Pigweed

Portulaca oleracea

by Nora Graf



You're probably already growing this salad green and herb. You just don't realize it, as most people around here rip it out, considering it a weed. Just a reminder—"weed or not" is in the eye of the beholder. See the picture to see if you have been tearing it out when you could have been eating it!

The plant is native to parts of Europe and Asia but has been introduced nearly everywhere else. It apparently made it to the New World in Pre-Columbian times. It's often found on the edges of croplands and along roadsides. Worldwide there are 19 genera and 500 species of purslane. In the United States there are nine genera with the most species diversity in Western North America.

It has been cultivated for centuries and shows up in an American vegetable book in the 1860's. Recipes including purslane have been found in 17th century cookbooks. Purslane is an annual succulent herb, growing a taproot and having trailing stems that generally don't grow higher than 12 inches. It has bright-green glossy leaves, red stems and yellow flower that only opens in full sun. It likes hot weather.

Medicinally it has been used to relieve dry coughs, shortness of breath and immoderate thirst. When mixed with the oil of roses it was used to treat sore mouths, swollen gums and loose teeth. A tea made from purslane was used as a tonic for blood disorders. Today we know that purslane contains alpha-linolenic acid, one of the Omega-3 fatty acids that is also found in fish oil. It apparently contains more Omega-3 than any other leafy vegetable. The stems, which are red, are high in Vitamin C and other potent antioxidants. Apparently, if you feed it to chickens the omega-3 shows up in the eggs.

The flavor is described as sweet-sour or peppery and it has a crunchy texture. Use it raw in salads or sautéed as a side dish, it has a mucilaginous (think okra) quality that makes it work in soups and stews also. Young leaves go well with potatoes, beets, fava beans, garbanzo beans, cucumbers and tomatoes. They can be served alone, though, by sprinkling with sea salt, lemon juice and olive oil.



Since purslane grows as a weed around here you should be able to actually cultivate it in your garden. It can be grown from seeds, cuttings or root divisions from spring to midsummer. It doesn't seem to be too particular about soil and water. If you do try to grow it remember that it's weedy and may spread to areas you don't want it to. A single plant can produce over 50,000 seeds which are quite hardy and can survive up to 30 years in the soil.

Mexican Pork e' Purslane

2 lbs. pork leg, bone in, cut crosswise into 1" rounds
 1 1/2 lbs. tomato verde (tomatillo) husked and blanched
 1 large fresh cuaresmeño or jalapeño chile, seeded and deveined
 2 cloves garlic, peeled and sliced
 1/4 cup chopped onion
 3 tablespoons chopped epazote
 1 hoja santa or avocado leaf
 3/4 lb. purslane or watercress, cleaned and steamed
 2 nopal paddles, cut into 1/2" squares, boiled till tender and rinsed well
 Salt to taste

Place the meat in a large pot or dutch oven and cover with 2 1/2 cups water and salt to taste. Pressure cook for 25 minutes or bring the meat to a boil, lower flame and simmer until tender. In a blender or food processor, place the tomatillo, chile, garlic, onion, epazote, hoja santa or avocado leaf, and enough of the meat broth to blend until smooth. Transfer to a saucepan in which a little oil

has been heated, add meat and remaining meat broth and simmer 15-20 minutes (see NOTE.) Add purslane and watercress and simmer another 10 minutes. Serve with sliced avocado and white rice. NOTE: Tomatillos vary in acidity. If you find that, after cooking, they are a bit too acid for your taste, add a pinch of sugar or bicarbonate of soda to reduce acidity.

Cucumber-purslane-yogurt salad

5 large Cucumbers, peeled, seeded and cut into quarter-round slices
 1/4 pound Purslane, large stems removed, washed and drained well
 2 tablespoons each, Fresh chopped mint, cilantro and chervil
 4 cups Whole milk yogurt
 1/4 cup Virgin olive oil
 3 cloves Garlic, puréed with the blade of a knife
 2 teaspoon ground Coriander
 kosher Salt and ground Black Pepper
 Place the cucumber, purslane and herbs into a large bowl. In another bowl, stir together the yogurt, olive oil and garlic, coriander and season to taste with salt. Add the yogurt mixture to the vegetables and mix well. Add a pinch of ground black pepper. Taste the dressed cucumber-purslane salad for seasoning, adding a little more salt if needed. Serve chilled.

If you really want to cultivate purslane (remember it will spread, even to your neighbors!) you can find seeds at :
www.sandmountainherbs.com
www.seedsofchange.com (they have golden purslane)
www.wildgardenseed.com (have two varieties)



Meet a Master Gardener – Carol Ekeland (2008)

By Jay S. Fleishman

Here is something I never knew: Chico State University has the second oldest campus in the California State University System! Founded in 1887 and located 90 miles north of Sacramento, Chico State University is known for academic excellence in science and technology, environmental studies and several other fields. Carol Ekeland graduated from Chico State and earned a masters degree in science and sports medicine from the University of Arizona in Tucson.

Carol was born and raised in Southern California in an area called Fallbrook, located in north San Diego County, east of the Santa Ana Mountains, the Cleveland National Forest and Camp Pendleton Marine Corps Base. The Cleveland National Forest is due east of Laguna Beach and northeast of Oceanside.

Fallbrook has been long known as the Avocado Capital of the World and hosts an annual Avocado Festival each spring. The avocado (*Persea Americana*) is a relative of cinnamon, camphor and bay laurel. It is cold-sensitive and is picked before it ripens, but ripens soon afterward. Nearly 60% of US avocado production is in San Diego County. This was one of the areas victimized by the vicious wildfires of San Diego County in 2007. The area is a favorite of Hollywood celebrities (Howard Keel, Duke Snider, Tori Spelling, and Weird Al Yankovic). Frank Capra (Mr. Smith Goes to Washington, Arsenic and Old Lace, It's a Wonderful Life) raised olives on his Red Mountain Ranch of 1100 acres in the 40's and 50's here, where he also produced a short documentary about a water rights controversy.

What a great place to grow-up on a 50 acre citrus and avocado tree nursery! Carol not only worked in the tree-planted area lighting smudge pots in the winter and picking fruit in the summer, she got to drive tractors and other farm vehicles and hung out in the cold storage locker



with her brother on hot summer days. "The big lesson I learned during this time was that the life of a farmer/grower is a tough one. Weather, water and root rot were always an issue," she said. So she graduated from high school and went first to Chico State University and then the University of Arizona. The next 27 years were spent working in orthopedic rehabilitation at both clinical and scholastic venues, with the last 18 years at Miracosta Community College as the Head Athletic Trainer and as an instructor teaching sports medicine, adult fitness/wellness and activity classes. Miracosta Community College is in coastal San Diego County, 35 miles north of San Diego and just southeast of Oceanside. Carol and her husband, Ben, have traveled widely in Mexico and the South Pacific seeking waves. They are avid surfers. They recently

moved to Sedona for relief from the Southern California scene.

Carol completed her work for certification with the Master Gardeners in April, 2009. Her interests include growing food organically, using plants to attract wildlife and problem-solving, involving the use of screens, shade and creating outdoor living areas. Her garden is producing tomatoes, peppers, summer and winter squash, cucumbers, corn, lettuce, many herbs, onion, carrots, cantaloupes, broccoli, sunflowers and "a well-fed gopher". She says, "I have a totally new respect for gophers!" With her love for Japanese themed gardens, she has four varieties of bamboo and three Japanese maple trees.

She hopes to share what she has learned with other gardeners in her area and is a member of the Master Gardener Community Garden Committee for that purpose. She also staffs the Verde Valley Farmer's Market Master Gardener table and appreciates the effort that the growers put into their beautiful produce. Join me in welcoming Carol Ekeland into the Yavapai County Master Gardener Association. (Cynthia Carter-Roberts is her mentor)

Lemon Balm

Melissa officinalis



The tang of lemon given off when the leaves are crushed give this herb its name. It has a long history of medicinal and culinary uses. Its latin name “Melissa” comes from the Greek and refers to “a honeybee” because the flowers are very attractive to bees. Honey made from its flowers was quite popular. The plant has become naturalized throughout the world but its original range was southern Europe.

Romans introduced it to Britain where it became an essential element of monasteries apothecaries. It was used as an antispasmodic and has soothing and sedative properties. Other uses are for treating colic, vomiting, poor digestion, palpitations, vertigo and fever. The oil seems to have antibacterial effects. It is also used in perfumes, toilet waters and liqueurs. The Greek physician Dioscorides put the plant on bites from dogs to scorpions and then put the leaves in wine for the patient to drink. (You wonder which was more effective the external use or the the internal!) In the United States the plant was brought over early with the new settlers. Thomas Jefferson was known to grow it in his garden. The plant was used as medicine into the 19th century but was losing its popularity to other members of the mint family that were stronger.

In cooking, the leaves can be added to fish and poultry dishes, herb sauces and marinades, along with being used as a tea, in jams and jellies, custards, salads and vegetable dishes, imparting a fresh lemony flavor. As a tea it is particularly good combined with peppermint. Leaves are best used fresh for cooking but they can be dried and used in teas.

Lemon balm prefers moister areas and can be grown from seeds, divisions or cuttings. It isn't the most attractive plant, being loosely branched and a bit floppy, but its fresh lemony fragrance would go nicely in a garden where you would brush up against it to release its scent. It can be invasive in some areas. In colder climates it will freeze back but if it hasn't been too cold, it should resprout come spring.

If you are interested in making a wine with lemon balm here is a recipe from 1892: Take 40 pounds of sugar dissolved in 9 gallons of water and poured, when cool, over 2 1/2 pounds of balm and “a little new yeast.” Let stand open for 24 hours and then ferment under cover for six weeks. Pour into bottles with a sugar cube in each bottle. The wine improves with age, being better the second year.

Gardening Tips

There was a time when mouse pads were handed out as gifts everywhere. If you've accumulated a few but don't know what to do with them, here's an idea. Wrap them around the handles on your wheelbarrow to make them more comfortable. Simply tape them firmly in place with duct tape.

Want to add some colorful annuals to your flower beds but want to make a more dramatic statement? Put them on a pedestal. Use bricks to create a temporary column within the bed. Bricks will generally blend well with plants and by using a nice pot you will be creating a exciting focal point that can be easily changed in the garden.

Citrus Killer for Aphids

from “Great Gardening Formulas,” by Joan Benjamin & Deborah L. Martin

1 pint water
rind from 1 lemon, grated
Cheesecloth
pump spray bottle

Bring water to a boil. Remove from heat and add grated lemon rind. Allow the mixture to steep overnight. Strain the mixture through cheesecloth and pour into pump spray bottle. Apply the mixture to plant leaves that are under attack by aphids or other soft-bodied insects. Mixture must come into contact with the insects body to be effective. You can use other citrus rinds as well, the more pungent the better. Use sour orange, grapefruit or lemon for the best results. (Cats also don't like citrus, so it might also work as a deterrent for a cat rampaging in your garden. Just a thought. Note from the editor.)

Sweet Roses Make For Sweet Dreams



Beautiful, fragrant roses make most people happy, and now research is suggesting that fragrant roses may also make our sleep happier by stimulating happy dreams. Researchers in Germany analyzed the sleep patterns of 15 women for one month. Scents of rotten eggs, fragrant roses, and no scent

were pumped under their noses during their dream cycle while they slept. Researchers then woke up the women and asked them to record their dreams.

Although the women didn't dream about rotten eggs or roses, the study did show that there was a correlation between positive dreams and the fragrant rose smell and negative dreams and the rotten egg smell. Researchers are now considering another experiment using roses to help alleviate the stress of people who have frequent nightmares.

Birds Eat More Weed Seed in Organic Fields



It's thought that organic farms have lots of bird and wildlife activity because of the lack of harmful chemicals that are sprayed on the fields. Birds, in particular, are welcome because they are keen predators of pest insects on plants. Now researchers in New Zealand are suggesting that birds also help farmers in another way. They seem to eat more weed seeds on organic farms compared to conventional farms.

Researchers at Lincoln University in New Zealand studied weed seed predation at eight conventional and eight organic farms. Dishes filled with two common weed seeds, lamb's quarters and Persian speedwell, were placed at various distances from the edge of the field to the center. They monitored the birds feeding on the dishes for 2 days. There were higher feeding rates of weed seeds on dishes on the edges of organic farms than conventional ones. Overall there was a 17% loss of weed seeds on the organic farms while the conventional farms only had a 10% loss. This suggests that bird populations are more robust around organic farms and more helpful in removing weed seeds.

Vacation Plant Treatment to Resist Drought



Summer vacations are often a tough time on plants, and can be challenging for the gardener, too. You have to get a neighbor, friend, or relative to come in and water the plants or take a chance it will rain while you're away so your plants and lawn don't dry up.

Now there's a new, all-natural product that can be added to plants and lawns to send them into temporary hibernation so they can fight dry conditions and

survive. "Vacation" is a soil drench, anti-transpirant that stimulates plants to close their stomata (breathing and evaporation pores in a leaf) and conserve moisture. There are no adverse effects on the plants. In 2 weeks the effects wear off and the plants continue to grow. If the plant was flowering when you apply Vacation it will hold those flowers, but not produce more until the effect wears off. The effects of Vacation are reversed any time by rain or watering the plant. Vacation is biodegradable and safe for pets and wildlife. It's registered for use on vegetables, lawns, shrubs, and flowers.

Grow Figs in a Pot



Fresh figs are a treat, especially if you eat them right off the tree. However, most varieties are only hardy to USDA zone 8 (although the roots of some varieties are hardy to USDA zone 6). In warm climates the trees can get very large. Now there's a new fig variety for gardeners in cold climates and for

those who want to grow figs in small pots on a deck, patio, or even indoors.

'Petite Negra' fig (*Ficus carica*) grows only 2 to 3 feet tall, but produces two crops a year of plump, black, juicy fig fruits one year after planting. It's self-pollinating so you only need one plant to get a crop. Because of its diminutive size, this variety grows well in small containers on a patio during the summer. In cold regions, just bring it indoors to a sunny window in fall. It will stay green all winter as an indoor houseplant. Move it back outside in spring after danger of frost has passed. In USDA zone 8 and warmer areas it can be planted in the ground as a dwarf, edible, ornamental shrub.

Bird Feeding 101

Now is a good time to watch birds. Many birds are migrating and might stop at your house looking for something to eat. So keep the feeders going but keep in mind good bird feeding manners.

Keep your feeders clean. Use soap and water or a 10% bleach solution. This helps prevent disease from spreading.

Keep the feeding area clean. Hulls and uneaten feed can accumulate under feeders and attract rodents and other pests. If you are plagued with mammal problems try removing the feeders at night when raccoons, deer and opossums are more likely to raid them—bears, too, in more wild areas.

Use fresh seed. Do not feed moldy seed.

You should probably be wearing rubber gloves when cleaning feeders and birdbaths.

Birdbaths need weekly cleaning and refilling. This prevents the spread of disease and keeps mosquitoes from gaining a new breeding ground. Wash with soap and water or a 10% bleach solution. Rinse!!!

Feeders mounted on windows may increase the number of birds flying into the window. The problem is worse in the spring when birds are defending all comers from their territories. Limit the use of a window feeder at that time.



New Yavapai Gardener Blog

I hope some of you have looked at the new Master Gardener blog: <http://www.yavapaigner.blogspot.com/>

The blog is an attempt to try and get more immediate information out on activities and events and a place to post pictures of MG events and your gardens. Most recently photos from the garden tour in Flagstaff were posted. There are also some interesting articles on corn gluten you might want to read.

I would like to post your pictures, so please email what your garden looked like, a favorite plant or any pictures you take at an MG event or other gardening event or program. (For example photos of the fair and the MG annual picnic.)

I am also interested in hearing about gardening conferences or events that other MG's might be interested in.

You can now sign up to follow the blog and make comments.

I want the blog to be interesting and useful. So let me know what you would like to hear about or feel free to send me interesting things to post.

Nora Graf
mesquite2@hotmail.com

MG Calendar

October 1st thru 4th - Yavapai County Fair

Oct 10th - Prescott Goldwater Lake "MG Recognition Awards & Picnic"

November 18th Cottonwood – "Growing & Cooking with Herbs" Presenter. Serve Snacks made with herbs as refreshments

December – No Meeting

January 2010 - Cindy Scott from Underwood Garden Heirloom Seeds "Heirloom Seed, What Are They and How to Gather & Save Seeds"

Recognition Picnic – Oct 10th

Please notify Kathy MacCauley ASAP if you are attending. Noon-3pm, Goldwater Lake, Prescott. Let her know how many are attending and what you will bring. Need main dishes and desserts. 443-8934, prescottgirl@Qwest.net.

MGA Committee Sign-up

All MGA committees need members for 2010. Committee Responsibilities are posted on our website. Contact Bob Burke to sign-up, bburke@commspeed.net, 301-0394. If you are on a committee this year and want to remain, you need to sign-up again.



Thank You!!!

The following MGs completed 50 hours:

Dave Skopec (mentor Lesley Alward)
Mary Jacobson (mentor Terry Stewart)
Su Petersen (mentor Bob Burke)

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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MG NEWSLETTER

MG Association Meeting
No meeting, but make sure you attend the picnic!

Oct 10th - Prescott Goldwater Lake "MG Recognition
Awards & Picnic"