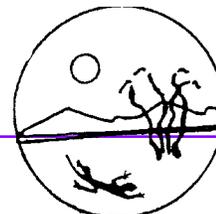


High on the Desert

Cochise County Master Gardener

Newsletter



The University of Arizona and U.S. Department of Agriculture cooperating.

Red Hot (Pink & Orange, too!) Plants for the Garden

As we move along the warm colored spectrum of the color wheel, this month highlights plants that are in shades of red, pink and orange. Many of these plants attract hummingbirds and butterflies. The following plants are proven performers in my garden.

Wildflowers & Perennial Flowers

Penstemon baccharifolius
Penstemon barbatus - Scarlet Bugler
Penstemon cardinalis
Penstemon eatonii - Firecracker Penstemon
Penstemon parryii - Parry's Penstemon
Penstemon pinifolius - Pineleaf Penstemon
Penstemon pseudospectabilis

Penstemon superbus - Superb Penstemon
Salvia greggii - Autumn Sage
Salvia microphylla
Salvia parryi
Sphaeralcea species - Globemallow

Annual Flowers

Cosmos sulphureus - Sulphur Cosmos
Tithonia rotundifolia - Mexican Torch Flame

Shrubs

Anisacanthus puberulus - Pinkie Acanthus
Anisacanthus thurberi - Desert Honeysuckle
Anisacanthus quadrifidus var. *brevilobus* 'Mountain Flame'
Anisacanthus quadrifidus var. *wrightii* 'Mexican Flame'
Buddleia marrubifolia - Woolly Butterfly Bush
Calliandra eriophylla - Pink Fairy Duster

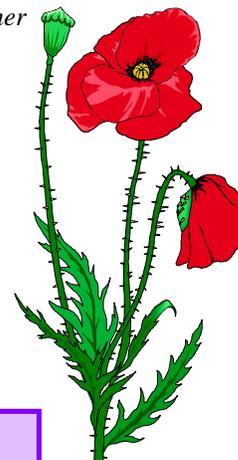
Trees

Cercis canadensis var. *mexicana* - Mexican Redbud
Chilopsis linearis - Desert Willow
Chitalpa tashkentensis - Chitalpa
Punica granatum - Pomegranate
Robina neomexicana - New Mexico Locust
Unquadia speciosa - Mexican Buckeye

Accent Plants

Fouquieria splendens - Ocotillo
Hesperaloe parviflora 'Red'
Opuntia basilaris - Beavertail Cactus

Cheri Melton
Master Gardener



GARDENERS KNOW THE BEST DIRT!

Cochise County Cooperative Extension
www.ag.arizona.edu/cochise/mg/

1140 N. Colombo, Sierra Vista, AZ 85635
(520) 458-8278, Ext. 141

450 Haskell, Willcox, AZ 85643
(520) 384-3594

Lions, Tigers, and Bears! OH MY!!!

(Part II: Arachnophobia)

As with snakes, many of us have an irrational fear of spiders and other creepy crawly things. Spiders belong to the class arachnida which includes spiders, ticks mite, daddy-long-legs, scorpions, and pseudoscorpions. Only a few members of this group pose even a minute threat to humans and that threat has been grossly overblown particularly in the movies. Let's begin our discussion with the spider.

All spiders are venomous. Don't panic; most are entirely harmless to humans. The venom of the spider serves as a digestive fluid so they can eat their prey, which is not you. They are voracious feeders and since in our area there may be hundreds of thousands of them in a single acre, they really help to control the insect population. Therefore, indiscriminate use of pesticides can seriously reduce their populations and result in an explosion in the numbers of other non-beneficial insects—not a good thing. As I have said repeatedly in other articles, when you must use pesticides, do so with extreme caution and use strictly in accordance with the accompanying instructions!

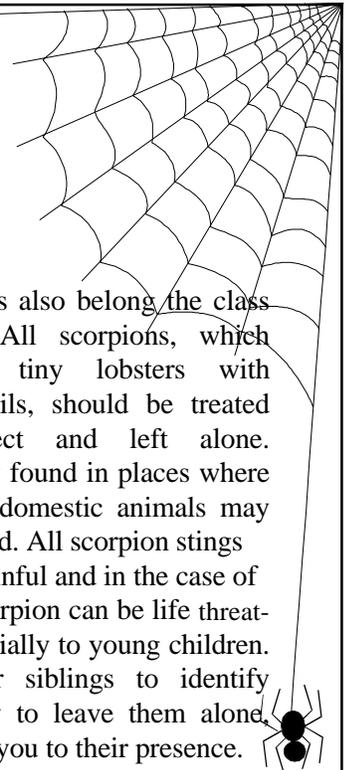
I could spend pages discussing all the many spiders found in SE Arizona. But, rather than bore you to tears (I saw your eyes glazing over), I will discuss only three: the tarantula, the black widow, and the scorpion.

The tarantula has an undeserved bad reputation. I remember seeing several horror movies with a tarantula crawling over the sleeping damsel in distress to deliver a fatal bite or to be saved at the last moment by the daunting hero of the film. Bunk! Yes, tarantulas will bite you but only when provoked, i.e. you are handling them inappropriately (many keep tarantulas as pets). The bite may not be pleasant but it is harmless. In addition, they can release irritating abdominal hairs if roughly handled. Since they are harmless—just leave them alone and you won't have any problems. I sort of think they are very southwest chic and they do provide hours of entertainment for my three Scotties; so they are welcome at my hacienda at least. The same is not true for the black widow spider!

Black widows are poisonous and found just about everywhere here in SE Arizona. They love to nest in debris and around buildings; so you should always exercise caution when moving materials that have been in place for a while or when putzing around in dark places. Basically, look before you reach! The bite can be quite painful but is seldom life threatening. If bitten, seek medical attention and chalk another one up to hard-learned experience. The female is generally not aggressive unless she is protecting her eggs.



Robert E. Call
Extension Agent, Horticulture
Carolyn Gruenhagen
Editor



Scorpions also belong the class arachnida. All scorpions, which look like tiny lobsters with upturned tails, should be treated with respect and left alone. Destroy any found in places where humans or domestic animals may be threatened. All scorpion stings are quite painful and in the case of the bark scorpion can be life threatening, especially to young children. Teach your siblings to identify them, know to leave them alone, and to alert you to their presence.

When spending the night in the boonies **always** shake out your shoes and clothing **before** you put it on. Mr. Scorpion does not like to share the space with you and will deliver an excruciatingly painful sting. Treat all scorpion stings as potentially dangerous and seek medical attention immediately. This is not the time to discuss in committee whether it was or was not the sting of the bark scorpion or some less dangerous species. Complete descriptions along with color pictures can be found in the *Audubon Field Guide to the Southwest*. You can search out scorpions by using a black light at night when they are most active. When hit by the black light, scorpions glow and it is thus easy to locate them. As a preventative measure, keep habitat opportunities to a minimum around your house. They love to hide under rocks, debris, and dead tree bark.

Next month more creepy crawly varmints.

John Phillips
Master Gardener

I.D. that “Bug” Before You Spray!

It is unfortunate that all bugs have been deemed as “bad” bugs. Not a day goes by that I don’t see a television commercial that tells us to buy their chemical killer and “get all those bugs dead.” What they don’t tell us is that these sprays are not discriminating, searching out and only killing those that are truly bad in the garden. They also kill the good guys! Good bugs you say—could there be such a thing? Yes! But if you are dowsing the garden with sprays you may be missing the beneficial effects of good vs. bad in the garden.

Many people love butterflies. Did you know that they have four life cycles—egg, larva (caterpillar), pupa, and adult butterfly? Most butterflies never see life because they are snuffed out in the caterpillar stage. Those “black worms” on your dill, parsley, or fennel plants are the caterpillars of the Black Swallowtail! A good source for identifying caterpillars is *Peterson First Guides—Caterpillars* by Amy Bartlett Wright.



Did you know that the ladybug larva is a ferocious eater of aphids? They look like little black and red alligators! They look pretty “scary and bad” and the gardener may assume that it is a pest. It probably looks this way to deter predators from eating them!

Two years ago I visited a garden that had a “grasshopper problem.” This garden didn’t have a grasshopper problem—it had a bird deficiency! After adding a couple of bird feeders filled with premium bird food, a water source, fruit posts, and a few plants to provide shelter (and will produce berries in a few years) the “grasshopper problem” is gone. As an added bonus, Cactus Wrens have begun nesting—an added enjoyment to the garden that was once sterile and boring.

Ants are important to our desert gardens. They act as our earthworms, tilling and aerating the soil, which helps retain soil moisture, increasing drainage and fertilizes plants. Remove only the ants that are near animal areas and the house. Consider leaving ant homes that are in the outer fringes of the garden as ants are the main food source for our Horned Toads. The toads also eat bean and cucumber beetles in the veggie garden.

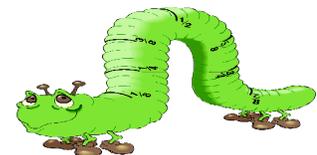
Spiders are incredible workhorses in the garden. Orb weavers are all over my veggie garden taking care of those bad guys! And black widows frequently make homes in my agaves and container plants. Granted you don’t want spiders in the house but in the garden they really take care of a multitude of problems. Always remember never to stick your hand where you can’t see it and wear gloves.

If you seem to be plagued with bad insects then perhaps it’s time to dig deeper. Some plants attract bad bugs. For example, aphids love oleanders. This may require one to resign itself to the fact and be on a soapy water spray schedule to keep them under control. Or here’s a radical idea—replace the plant with one that is resistant to pests!

Lush, new succulent growth is attractive to pests and is usually a result of (over)application of fertilizers and water. Adjusting fertilizer and irrigation schedules can help balance new growth that prompts feeding frenzies, or better yet, choose plants that do not require fertilizers and are drought tolerant.

For more on how to create and enjoy a natural garden I urge you to read *Natural by Design: Beauty and Balance in Southwest Gardens* by Judith Phillips.

Cheri Melton
Master Gardener



August Reminders

- ✓ Keep pulling the weeds
- ✓ Fertilize
- ✓ Prolong annuals
- ✓ Plan your spring wildflower garden
- ✓ Watch for nutrient deficiencies, sunburn, saltburn, overwatering, and insects
- ✓ Plant cool-season flowers and veggies

The Virtual Gardener— Not Just a Pretty Face

Everyone enjoys the sights and scents of a flower garden at this season of the year, but how about taking your enjoyment of flowers to a whole new dimension? If you like flowers, I mean you R-E-A-L-L-Y like flowers, give them a taste test. There are many web sites that discuss the ins and outs of eating flowers, give you some tips for which ones to eat and which to avoid, and even provide some tasty recipes. One of my favorite sites is <http://homecooking.about.com/food/homecooking/library/sub/msubedibleflowers.htm> which provides a comprehensive discussion of flower cuisine. Probably the first thing to understand is which flowers can be safely eaten and which should be avoided.

The list of edible flowers at this web site contains 64 entries, too long to reproduce in this article but here are a few:

The taste of carnations (*Dianthus caryophyllus*), like its fragrance, is described as spicy. The flower of jasmine (*Jasminum sambac*) which has been scenting the air on my patio continuously for the past couple of months is used to impart a sweet, delicate flavor to tea (one of my favorites). Squash blossoms have a sweet, nectar flavor but the price of eating the blossoms is the fruit. And finally, yucca blossoms can add a pretty touch to soups but not much flavor in my experience. Only the petals of yucca should be eaten; other parts of the flower are poisonous.

Speaking of poisons, the about.com web site lists 84

poisonous plants. Some such as castor bean (*Ricinius communis*), deadly nightshade (*Atropoa belladonna*), and oleander (*Nerium oleander*) are no surprise. Others such as Carolina jasmine (*Gelsemium sempervirens*), daffodil (*Narcissus* sp.), Nandina (*Nandina domestica*), and potato (*Solanum tuberosum*) are a surprise. The lesson to be learned here is **never** eat a plant or flower that you don't know for sure is edible. For a more comprehensive list of poisonous plants, check out the web site at <http://vm.cfsan.fda.gov/~djw/readme.html>.

The about.com web site recommends that you should never eat flowers from a florist because they may be treated with chemicals and pesticide. Ideally you should only eat flowers you have grown in a pesticide-free environment and you should pick the flowers in the morning or afternoon when the water content is highest. Avoid flowers with diseased or bug-eaten spots.

The Cooperative Extension of Iowa State University (<http://www.ipm.iastate.edu/ipm/hortnews/1995/7-21-1995/eatflow.html>) lists ten rules for eating flowers.

1. Only eat flowers when you are sure they are edible. Use a good reference book to check them out before you consume them.
2. If you don't know that a flower is edible, don't eat it just

because it is on your plate. Ask the host if you are not sure.

3. If pesticides must be used on flowers to be eaten, use only those products labeled for use on edible crops.
4. Do not eat flowers from florists
5. Do not eat flowers picked from the roadside
6. Remove pistils and stamens before eating, Eat only flowers petals for most flowers.
7. Remember that flowers may taste different when grown under different environmental conditions.
8. Don't overdue it. Too many flowers (or too many different kinds of flowers) eaten all at once may cause digestive problems.
9. If you are allergic to some flowers, be aware that eating them may also cause an allergic reaction.
10. Enjoy the tastes and colors that flowers can add to many foods.

Until next time, happy eating and happy surfing.

Gary A. Gruenhagen, Master Gardener
gruenha@sinosa.com

EXTRA! EXTRA!
On August 8 from 2:00 - 3:00 p.m. a rainwater harvesting presentation will be given by Ann Phillips in the Sierra Vista Library's Mona Bishop Room. The public is invited to attend. For info call the Coop Extension office in Sierra Vista.

Call's Classic Comments

Are your Afghan pine (*Pinus eldarica*) tree's needles turning brown and falling off even though they are deep-watered on a regular basis and there are no signs of damage from insects or disease? The answer may be that during summer months with high temperatures many pine tree species will naturally shed some of their older needles. However, if the terminal new growth is turning brown then you need to take some action to remedy the situation.

Normal, proper watering should continue throughout the growing season. Some think that the monsoon rains water enough. This is usually not the case. Rain is inconsistent both in timing and amount. Another watering problem is with larger pine trees. When young trees are planted, a drip system or other watering system is installed to supply the needs of young trees. Perhaps one or two emitters are placed near each trunk. This is sufficient while the tree is young, but not as the tree grows older. Emitters must be doubled up or replaced with higher flow emitters and spread out laterally to encourage extended root growth. I have seen mature evergreen trees blown over by a storm when the ground was wet and always the tree had an underdeveloped root system. The cause was poor water application that did not encourage extended root growth.

Recently I received a question about a young spruce tree that is drying up on one side. The needles were falling off and part of the tree

is bare. Again, the tree was well watered. It is planted three feet from the northwest side of a house.

It appears that the tree is probably infected with spider mites. This can be determined by placing a white piece of paper under a branch while giving the branch a quick tap. Spider mites will be dislodged, fall on the paper, and look like little specks running around. These animals are not insects by arachnids, members of the spider family. With a magnifying glass you can see that these tiny creatures have two body parts: a head, abdomen and eight legs. There are numerous species of mites, both harmful and beneficial. Spider mites thrive in hot, dry weather. Trees planted too close to a house will try and push the house over! Also, the afternoon sun reflects heat off of the house on to the tree and provides a perfect environment for mites.

If proper cultural practices are used, predacious mites normally control harmful mites. If mites become a problem washing them off with a hard stream of water can help destroy small infestations. Dormant oil sprays applied during early spring also help keep them in check. Dusting sulfur is labeled for mites and is an organic treatment. Care must be used when using sulfur during high temperatures because burning of plant issue may occur. Chemical miticide are available to control severe infestations. Always follow the label instructions when using any pesticide.

Source: September 1992 *Cochise County Master Gardener Newsletter*

*Robert E. Call
Agriculture Agent, Horticulture*

Cuttings 'N' Clippings

► Remember the "Let's Talk Trash" compost workshop August 12 from 10:00 a.m. until noon at Veteran's Memorial Park, Ramada #3. Free!

► The High Desert Garden Fair will be held at the University of Arizona South Campus September 16. For more details see the back page of this newsletter. Plan to stop by—there will be lots to see and do!

► Check out the Master Gardener web site:

www.ag.arizona.edu/cochise/mg/index.htm

for information on the Arizona Highlands Garden Conference 2000, September 7 & 8 at Tonto Natural Bridge State Park near Payson, AZ (tel #520-425-7179) and the Western Region Master Gardener Conference October 14 - 16 at the Mesa Conference and Community Center, Mesa, AZ (tel #602-470-1556, press 1017). Both are open to the public.

► Cochise County Master Gardeners Association will resume their monthly meetings on September 6 at the Sierra Vista Library from 5:00 - 7:00 p.m. The October 4 meeting will be held at Ramsey Canyon Preserve. More details about that next month.

► Now available on our web site **Ask a question** and **Frequently asked questions!** Check it out!!!

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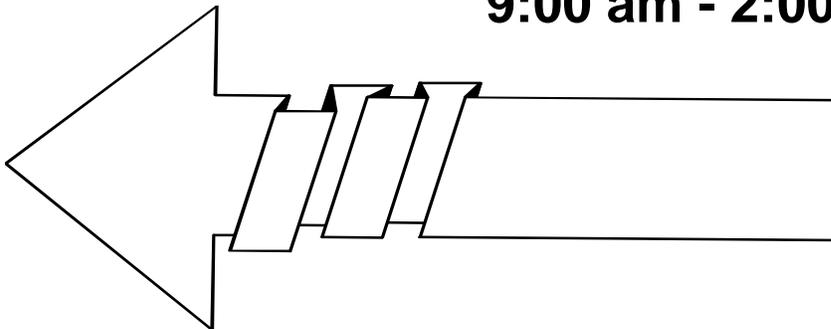
Address Correction Requested

Cochise County Master Gardeners Association in conjunction with
The University of Arizona Cooperative Extension presents . . .

High Desert Garden Fair

- ▶ Farmer's Market
- ▶ Local Nurseries
- ▶ Garden Crafts
- ▶ Outdoor Living
- ▶ Books
- ▶ Irrigation
- ▶ Information on:
 - Forestry
 - Wildlife
 - Water Wise*
 - Recycling
 - Gardening
 - Sustainable Systems
- ▶ Seminars on:
 - The Winter Garden* (9:30 am)
 - Preserving the Edible Garden*
(11:00 am)
 - Autumn Beauty: Plants for Year*
Round Interest (12:30 pm)

Saturday, September 16, 2000
University of Arizona South Campus
1140 N. Colombo, Sierra Vista, AZ
9:00 am - 2:00 pm



Plus lots more!!!