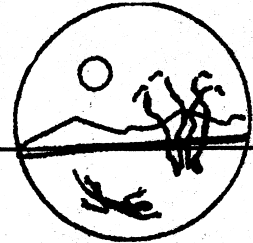


High on the Desert

Cochise County Master Gardener

Newsletter



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

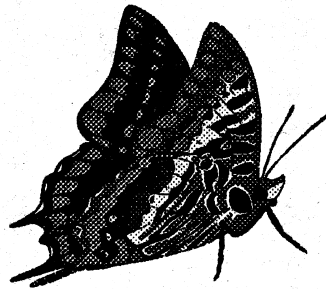
Late Bloomers

One of the challenges of gardening is having color all year long. This is easily accomplished from spring to late summer but the landscape can look bleak and sparse during fall and winter. Here are three great plants that will fill the void:

Anisacanthus thurberi, Desert honeysuckle, blooms in spring, summer, and late fall and its long tubular orange flowers make it a great plant for early and late migrating hummingbirds. It has an upright form spreading to 3 feet wide and 4 feet high.

Anisacanthus quadrifidus, Cohilla honeysuckle, has brilliant red-orange flowers from June to late November. Butterflies love this plant! Height and spread is similar to desert-honeysuckle. Trademark varieties from Mountain States include *A. q. brevilobus* (Mountain Flame) and *A. q. wrightii* (Mexican Flame). There is also

a salmon-colored form called *Anisacanthus purbulis*.



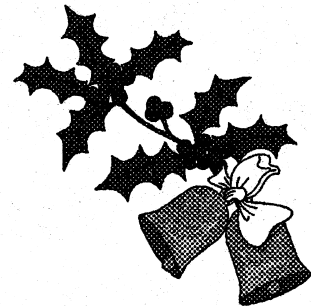
If yellow flowers are what you're after, try Mt. Lemmon marigold, *Tagetes lemmonii*. An aromatic plant with fine green leaves and one inch yellow flowers blooming from late summer until the first hard frost. Nice loose mounding habit, 3 feet high and wide, it has medicinal and wildlife value.

Some of the nicest fall/winter blooming plants gaining popularity are the Daleas. They range from groundcovers to large shrubs, colors from blue, purple, rose, and yellow. Some are evergreen or deciduous, scented, and rabbit-proof. There are about a dozen on the market—my favorites include

Dalea pulchra, an evergreen shrub with silver leaves and rose-purple flowers; *Dalea greggii*, a ground cover that's great for slopes to control erosion with clusters of tiny purple flowers; and the elusive *Dalea formosa*, with small violet flowers that are surrounded with feathery plumes and seeds with feathery tails.

Cheri Melton
Master Gardener/Staff Writer

Season's
Greetings!



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Don't Give Up!

This summer I learned the meaning of patience and persistence. I have a lot of house plants, 22 in fact; and some of them are fairly large (*i.e.*, five to six feet tall). Naturally, with this many plants, the chances of one or more of the plants getting a parasite increase.

I made the mistake of not placing newly purchased plants in quarantine to ensure they didn't have any parasites before integrating them with the older plants. Apparently, one of the new plants had whiteflies or something similar (I'm still not quite sure which insect it was, but based on the symptoms, my plant books indicated whiteflies).

At first, I thought only one or two of the older plants was infested. Over a period of several weeks, I began to notice a lot of insects hovering around more of the plants. You guessed it: ALL of the plants were infected!

I tried the standard insecticide used for vegetables and ornamentals that are infected with whiteflies. I diligently sprayed all of the plants two or three times a week to no avail. So, I read my plant books again. The insects were laying their eggs in the potting soil, and the newly hatched flies were emerging from the **BOTTOM** of the pots! No wonder the spray didn't work.

Since the problem was in the soil, the books recommended malathion. This insecticide is poured directly in the soil killing the larva and adults. I isolated the plants in groups of four or five for several reasons. First, malathion smells terrible, so I applied it in a spare bathroom, which allowed me to shut the door and also prevented the odor from permeating the rest

of the house. Second, I let the plants stand in the malathion for several hours before draining the water. These plants were then left in the bathroom for at least 24 hours.

After 24 hours, I moved that group of treated plants into a separate room and closed the door. After approximately four days, I had watered all of the plants with malathion. I had four or five plants in all rooms in the house. I felt that this would help prevent all of the plants from being re-infected. I hoped, if one of the plants within a particular group was still infected, it would only re-infect that group of plants.

At first, I thought I had eliminated the insects. When I tapped the pots, a lot of dead whiteflies fell out of the bottom. I also managed to flush out some other insects I didn't know were there. A few days later, I still saw some whiteflies emerging from the bottom of some of the plants. To be safe, I applied the malathion to all 22 plants again.

After the second malathion application, four or five plants were still infected. This time, I moved only those plants back to the bathroom and applied the malathion a third time. This time, the plants remained in the bathroom. I closely watched these plants and was able to further identify the two or three that were still infested. They got a fourth dose of malathion.

In the meantime, the other groups of plants stayed in separate rooms. Each day, I tapped all of the pots to see if any live or dead whiteflies emerged. Any that had live flies were immediately moved back to the bathroom and doused with malathion.

Eventually, after four or five weeks, I saw no further evidence of whiteflies. I'm keeping my fingers

crossed, but since this summer, I haven't seen any more insects. Sometimes persistence and patience pays off.

*Karen Brown
Master Gardener Trainee*

Drying Flowers

Heloise (we all know who she is) suggests the following easy way to dry flowers. The ingredients are simply borax, white cornmeal, and salt.

Combine the borax and white cornmeal in equal amounts, adding three tablespoons of salt for each quart of the mixture. Next, put about a 1-inch-deep, even layer in the bottom of a box. Put the cut flowers on top and gently cover each flower with more of the blend. Be sure to sprinkle some in between the petals of open blooms.

Once the flowers are covered well, put the lid on the box and store it in a warm, dry, out-of-the-way place.

It usually takes about 14 days or so for the flowers to dry thoroughly, but drying times will vary with the density of the petals.

When you think the flowers are dry, feel the petals to see if they are stiff and papery. Take special care in checking thick blossoms because they may look dry on the outside but may not be dry in the center.

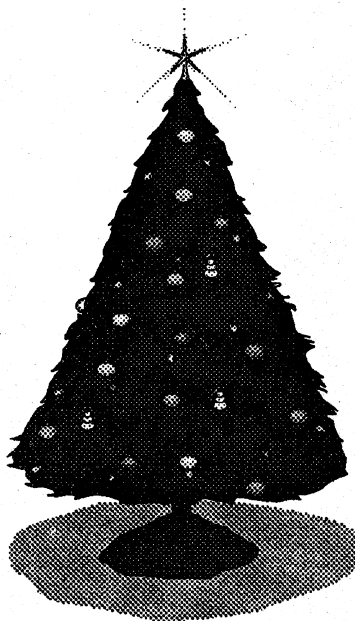
Once dry, remove them and gently brush with a clean, soft makeup brush to remove the rest of the drying mixture.

Microwave cookbooks also suggest that drying flowers in the microwave leaves the flowers with a fresher appearance and color than flowers dried by traditional methods. They are also less perishable. For directions, consult individual cookbooks.

The Agent's Observations

Q What are some good choices for living Christmas trees in Cochise County? How should they be cared for?

A Living Christmas trees add to the holiday season. Their freshness, scent, little needle drop, and the opportunity to plant the tree after the holidays make them very attractive. Trees that will do well include Eldarica pine, Allepo



pine, spruce, and some firs. After the holidays remove the ornaments and lights and move the tree to a cooler but sunny location. This will allow the tree to acclimate slowly for a couple of weeks to outdoor conditions. Water to maintain health and growth, but do not

water so much to cause root rot. If weather permits, meaning warm days during the first weeks of January, planting can be done. If the weather is poor wait until the cold weather of January, February, and the first weeks of March is over. Plant the tree as recommended and water to establish. Planting recommendations are available at the Cooperative Extension Office.

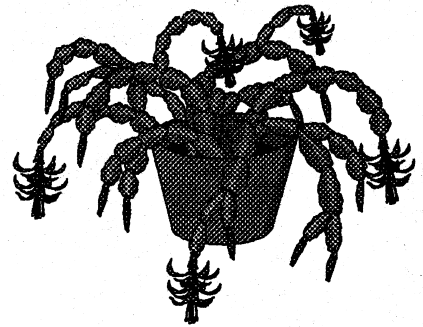
What's in a Name?

In the Cypress family, "Cypressus: symmetry (the conical shape). In mythology, Apollo turned Kypressos into an ever-green tree." (Don't mess with the gods!)

Source: *The Names of Plants*. D. Gledhill

Q My Christmas Cactus did not bloom this year. What happened?

A There are several "holiday" cacti. They are Christmas Cactus (*Schlumbergera bridgesii*) with smooth leaf margins or edges; Thanksgiving Cactus (*S. truncata*) which blooms earlier and has saw-toothed leaf margins and two oppositely pointed tips at the end of each leaf; and the Easter Cactus (*S. gaertneri*) which blooms naturally in the spring and has smooth leaf margins. These cacti species originated from the Brazilian jungle and grow naturally as epiphytes (in the air) in the branches and bark of trees.



These plants are short-day plants like poinsettias. Flowering is initiated by cool temperatures (45° to 55° F.), drier soil, and the naturally shorter days of spring or fall. The Christmas Cactus in question did not bloom because one or more of these conditions were not met.

To induce flowering, determine what type of cactus species you have. Ten weeks before blooms are desired, place the plant in a cool closet or dark cupboard from sundown to sunup, never letting any light reach the plant during seclusion. Keep the soil drier than normal. Once flower buds are set you can cease this practice and increase watering.

Source: *Houseplants*. The American Horticultural Society, 1980, pp. 81-85

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THE VIRTUAL GARDENER™ Just For Fun

This month I decided to take a break from the heavy academic stuff and talk about a couple of interesting Web sites I recently discovered.

The first site is just for visual enjoyment. It is the Flowerbase from the Netherlands (<http://www.flowerweb.nl/flowerbase/>). This site contains a database of over 7000 beautiful photographs of flowers. You can search the database by botanical name or common name in English, German, Spanish, Dutch, French, or Italian. The results of a search returns a list of plant names (botanical and common in all the languages) meeting your search criteria and thumbnail pictures of the flowers. Clicking on the thumbnail

pictures brings up a larger high resolution version of the picture. A search on the English common name "hibiscus" for example, returned 34 hits and a search on the botanical name "Rosa" returned 177 hits. If you feel in the mood to relax and enjoy a visual feast, this is a site you must visit.

The second site not only contains photographs but a wealth of information as well. This site, Plant Advisor—Southwestern Edition (<http://www.plantadvisor.com/>) focuses on plants of the low and mid deserts of the Southwest. It includes a Plant Advisor that allows you to select plants by sun exposure requirements, water use, and basic landscape use (e.g., ground cover, feature plant, background plant, etc.) and a Plant List that allows you to select plants by botanical or common names.

Information returned from searches of the database includes photographs of the plant, water and sun requirements, planting guidelines, and a brief discussion of insect and disease susceptibilities. In addition, there are lots and lots of links to other plant-related sites. All in all, this a very useful site that is certainly worth adding to your bookmark list.

*Gary A. Gruenhagen, Master Gardener
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High on the Desert

Next month watch for the reservation form for the fifth annual High Desert Gardening & Landscaping Conference to be held February 12-14, 1998 at the Windemere Hotel & Conference Center, Sierra Vista.

We hope to see YOU there!