

COOPERATIVE EXTENSION

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



the Cochise County Master Gardener

NEWSLETTER

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OCTOBER 1990

WHAT TO DO ---- WHAT TO DO ---- WHAT TO DO ---- OCTOBER

Jackie Dillon-Fast
Staff Writer

THE COMING OF THE FIRST FROST: The timing of the first frost is not necessarily tied to higher elevation. Both Willcox, at 4167 feet, and Benson, at 3585 feet, may experience late October or early November frosts while Bisbee, at 5350 feet, may experience first frost two weeks later, even though it is at a much higher elevation. This is because colder air sinks, and if there is little air movement, the cold air becomes trapped in valleys and low areas of yards. Communities like Palominas are especially prone to October frosts. Of course, as with all attempts to predict weather, there are variations from year to year, and sometimes from yard to yard. In mid-October, start paying closer attention to nighttime temperature, and be ready to protect frost sensitive plants. The November Newsletter will review some frost protection strategies.

THE HARDEST JOB OF ALL: Most gardeners would rather eat shrink-wrapped lettuce than thin their tiny vegetable seedlings. Unfortunately, that's what we may end up doing. Without thinning, seedlings are often forced to battle each other for nutrients, water, and growing space. The result is weak, under-developed vegetables, and disappointed gardeners. If you planted a winter vegetable garden, grit your teeth, steel-up your spine, and start thinning. Remove enough seedlings so that the remaining vegetables are the proper distance from one another. If you'd rather not thin, plant only one seed in each hole at planting. Your germination rate will be lower, but you will also not be faced with the Gardener's Dilemma. Thinnings, by the way, make good salads!

OVERSEEDING LAWNS: Warm season grasses, such as Bermuda grass, are entering a winter rest period. If you want to keep your lawn area green through winter, overseed this month with a cool season grass such as annual or perennial ryegrass. The cool

(Continued on next page)

UNIVERSITY OF ARIZONA


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season grass will flourish in the cooler temperatures and go dormant during the hot days of summer when the warm season grasses are at their peak.

PLANTING BULBS: Aim to have all of your spring and early summer blooming bulbs planted 4 to 6 weeks before the first hard frost. For most of us, the end of October marks the end of spring bulb planting. See our feature article this month for more on planting spring bulbs.

DON'T LET YOUR WEEDS GO TO SEED: If you have let your weed vigilance relax a bit during the last month, go at them with a vengeance now. Bag, rather than compost, any weeds that already have seed heads.

DIVIDING PERENNIALS: Spring or early summer blooming perennials need to be divided every 2 to 4 years in the fall in order to keep them strong and blooming. (Late summer and early fall perennials should be divided in early spring.) A clumping perennial that is never divided often produces weak growth, and is vulnerable to pests and diseases. Plus, dividing is a great way to get more plants without spending more money - every gardener's dream. Before dividing, prepare the hole where the divided portion will be planted, and don't let the roots dry out. To divide a clumping perennial (it's okay if it still has leaves as long as it is a spring or summer bloomer), cut around the plant's rootball with a shovel, then push the shovel underneath the rootball and lift the plant to pry the rootball loose from the soil. Insert two pitchforks, or a small garden fork or knife, in the center of the perennial and work them back and forth until the rootball begins to separate into two halves. You can often use your hands to divide smaller plants. Plant one half in its new location, and return the other half to the original planting hole.



Is this *Nicotiana glauca* (tree tobacco)?

The Sierra Vista U of A Cooperative Extension Satellite Office is staffed by home gardeners who have received additional training in desert gardening and have volunteered to help other gardeners in the community.

NEW OFFICE HOURS!

Beginning October 1, the Sierra Vista office will begin its winter hours. A Master Gardener volunteer will usually be available to answer gardening questions and distribute information from 9:00 am until Noon on Monday and Wednesdays.

Staff:

Jackie Dillon-Fast
Carolyn Gruenhagen
Rose V. Land
T.J. Martin

Articles to be published in next month's newsletter must be received at the Sierra Vista Office by October 26.

HELP GLOBAL ReLEAF!

Cochise Global ReLeaf has been given 500 trees (*Pinus eldarica*) to be planted in Cochise County in February 1991. In the meantime, 500 one-gallon plastic pots are needed by November 3 to put them in. If you need to clean out your gardening shed, and want to get rid of those extra pots, please bring them by the Cooperative Extension Office in Sierra Vista, or call there (458-1104) to have them picked up.

If you like to get your hands dirty and want to help these baby trees get off to a good start, join Cochise Global ReLeaf at their tree-potting "party" November 3. Call the Cooperative Extension for details.

* David Epple suggests removing cactus stickers by putting white glue on the area, allowing it to dry, and then peeling off the glue and stickers.

GARDENING EVENTS HIGHLIGHTS

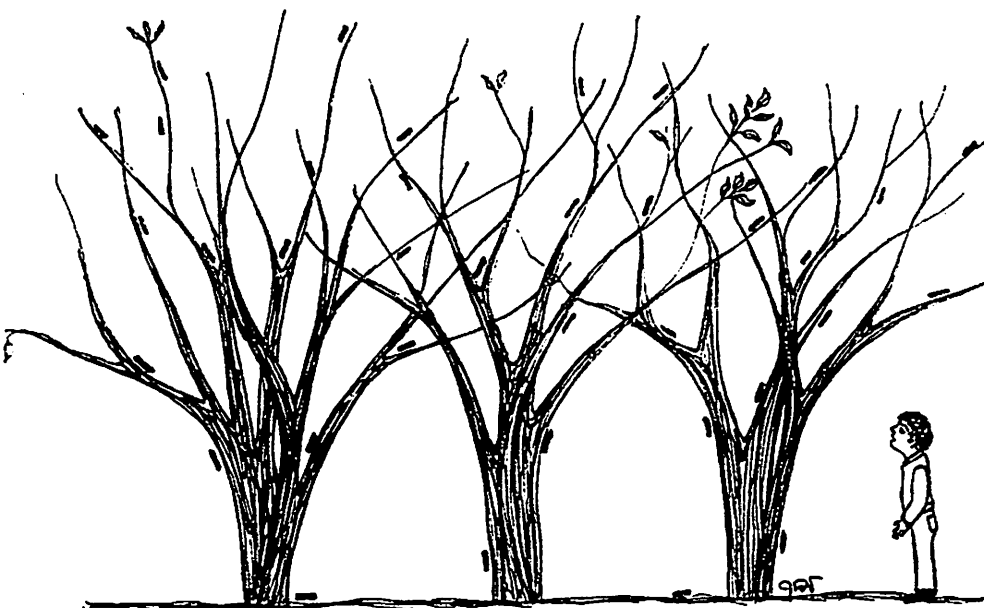
Jackie Dillon-Fast
Staff Writer

Non-credit Cochise College Community Campus courses for this fall include a class on "Backyard Fruit Growers" taught by nursery owner Dorothy White. The class meets in Willcox at the Cochise College Willcox Center on Tuesday November 6 from 7:00 to 9:00 pm. Ms White will cover selection, tree sources, planting tips, and care of fruit trees. Contact Cochise College Community Campus at 459-9796 (Sierra Vista), 384-4502 (Willcox), 364-7943 (Douglas), or 432-5737 (Bisbee) to register.

The Tucson Botanical Gardens Fall Plant Sale is October 6 from 10:00 am to 4:00 pm and the 7th from 11:00 am to 4:00 pm. A "Member's Only" Sale begins at 8:00 am Saturday.

Arizona Global ReLeaf Week is October 20-27, and October is Public Lands Month. Watch your local newspapers for announcements of public tree planting events and other activities.

In-the-works: a group tour of the Biosphere II in Tucson on November 9th (more information elsewhere in this newsletter), and a field trip to a St. David Herb Garden at the end of November. Do you have suggestions for plant clinics, demonstrations, field trips, or lectures? Would you like to share your knowledge with other Cochise County gardeners? Let me know by sending a note to our Sierra Vista office, or call the office on Monday or Wednesday mornings.



MULBERRY LANE - MIDSEPTEMBER

CUTTINGS 'N' CLIPPINGS

* If you have trouble rooting cuttings, and many gardeners do, you may want to try soaking the cuttings in willow water before placing them in the rooting medium. According to experiments done at the Ohio Agriculture Research and Development Center, willows contain a root-promoting substance that will leach into water when they are soaked. Mung bean cuttings that were soaked in willow water had 18 times the number of roots as those soaked in distilled water. Make the willow water by soaking willow shoots from the current year's growth of any species of willow in water. Cut the shoots into one inch pieces, place them end down in a glass and add a half inch of water to the glass. Cover the glass with plastic and let the shoots soak for 24 hours. Then, steep softwood cuttings in the willow water for another 24 hours, and place them immediately into a rooting medium. Using a rooting hormone in addition to the willow water soak will be even more effective. Maintain high humidity around the cuttings by misting them several times a day or by placing a glass or plastic bag over the container.

* Proper Maintenance of Drip Irrigation Systems: Monthly - flush the filter at least once a month and visually inspect emitters by turning the system on for 30 minutes, and then checking around the emitter ends for excessively large wet areas (leaking emitter), or excessively small or dry areas (clogged emitter). Every three months - flush the entire system by removing all end caps and running the system for a minute or two. Every six months - remove and check the filter for holes or blockages.

* In a twenty year U of A survey of 956 soil samples in Cochise County, 56% of the soils sampled had a pH between 7.5 and 7.9, with 7.0 being neutral, and the best pH for plants. Although individual sites will vary (after all, 44% of the samples were above 7.9) more than half of us have soil that is only slightly less than ideal for growing plants.

* How to make a new plant from an old one - rooting made simple: take a 4-6 inch cutting from the parent plant (note: where you take your cutting from depends on the kind of plant). Dip the cut end in a rooting hormone containing indole butyric acid. This encourages faster rooting and lowers risk of infection. Stick cutting in media of 1 part perlite to 1 part peat moss and make sure there is adequate drainage from the bottom of the container. Water the rooting so that the media is moist, not wet, slip the entire pot in a plastic bag and tie it closed at the top. A small loop can be made with wire to keep the plastic off the plant. Set the pot in a place where it does not get direct sunlight. In 3-4 weeks most cuttings will have rooted. (Again this depends on the kind of plant.) To check on your rootings progress, open the plastic bag and lift the cutting carefully with a spoon to check for roots. A gentle tug may also tell you, but be careful not to damage the delicate new roots. If the plant has rooted, transplant it into your garden or to its new pot. If it is partially rooted, leave the bag on, but open the top to allow air to circulate to the rooting. You may need to water the pot occasionally after opening the bag to keep it from drying out. Some easy rootings to make include coleus, Swedish ivy, English ivy, and anything herbaceous. Difficult rootings would include azaleas, hollies, crape myrtle. Some rootings, such as mint, can be started in a glass of water and then transferred to the rooting media. The hardest part of rooting is maintaining the proper moisture level which is the reason for the plastic bag - it keeps the air around the rooting moist. Good luck, and be prepared to lose a few.

"Thus we seek two values in every landscape.

One, the expression of the native quality of the landscape,

The other, the development of maximum human livability."

- Garrett Eckbo

PARSLEYWORMS

T.J. Martin
Staff Writer

The parsleyworm (AKA carrotworm or celeryworm) is a major pest of the members of the parsley family such as parsley, dill, celery, caraway, carrots, and parsnips. The adult is the Black Swallowtail, a butterfly with a three inch wingspan. This pretty black creature is found nationwide and has two rows of yellow spots near the edges of the wings, plus a row of blue spots on the hind wings. The female lays single white eggs on the host plants.

Adult

These eggs hatch into the destructive stage, the larvae. These two inch long caterpillars are pale green or white with yellow/orange-spotted black bands on each segment. If startled, the larvae can expose yellow or orange osmateria (or "horns") from behind its head, and emit a strong, sweet, defensive odor. The larvae feed voraciously on the foliage of its host plants until pupation. There may be three or more generations per year, and the insect overwinters as pupae or even as adults in very warm areas.

Larvae

The larvae can be easily handpicked, or can be excluded by use of agricultural fleece. Natural predators include predatory flies, parasitic wasps, lacewing larvae, and assassin bugs. They also are prey for many kinds of birds, as well as toads, snakes, and lizards. *Bacillus thuringiensis* can be used early on; start spraying every 7 to 10 days when you see the adults. Older populations of the larvae can be controlled with Pyrethrum or Rotenone.

LET'S SEE THE BIOSPHERE!

Carolyn Gruenhagen
Staff Writer

The Biosphere II, located near Oracle, AZ, has become world famous. Now, just about two months before eight researchers are to be sealed inside this incredible facility for a period of two years, you have a chance to tour it. On November 9 we have reservations for a tour - a private tour if we have at least 25 people attending. The cost is \$9.00 per person, and you will have to provide your own transportation, although we will try to arrange car pooling. If you are interested in this trip, please call the Sierra Vista office and make your reservation. What an exciting opportunity this is!