

COOPERATIVE EXTENSION

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the Cochise County Master Gardener

NEWSLETTER

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SEPTEMBER 1992

PERVASIVE GROUND COVERS

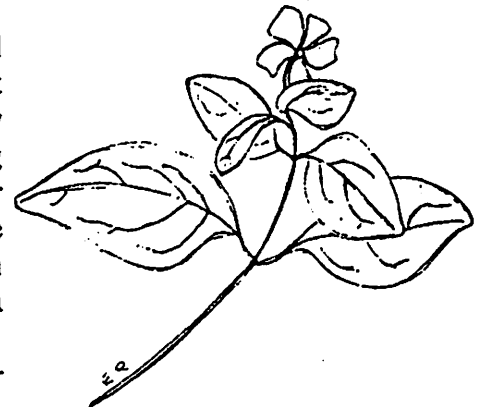
Barbara Kishbaugh
Staff Writer

VINCA: These beautiful, extremely hardy perennial ground covers which I call creeping myrtle, Elizabeth Riordon called periwinkle, and Rob Call said was vinca are all of the same family. In addressing the differences we learned that creeping myrtle, trailing myrtle, a.k.a. just plain myrtle, are all vincas. This evergreen vinca does best on the North side of the house and is an extraordinarily easy grower. If you desire to control soil erosion in gullies or on hillsides, this would be a good selection.

It does survive in full sun, but prefers a shaded area. It mounds and climbs somewhat like a honeysuckle and with regular watering the leaves appear full and glossy. In the spring, small blue purple flowers give a dainty appearance. *Vinca major* is a larger version of *Vinca minor*.

Elizabeth Riordon said a real problem was created when this plant smothered native growth in Ramsey Canyon along the year-round running water course. Most areas of our county are not so fortunate to have this water source, and if care is taken in site selection, this plant can be a definite asset.

Vinca minor



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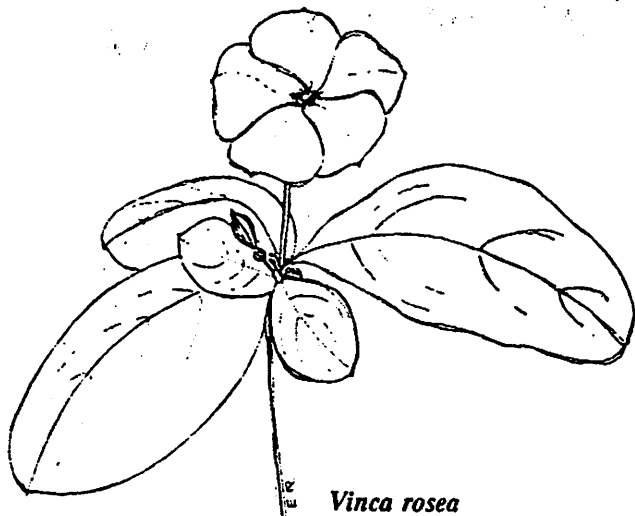
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Robert E. Call

Robert E. Call
Extension Agent,
Horticulture

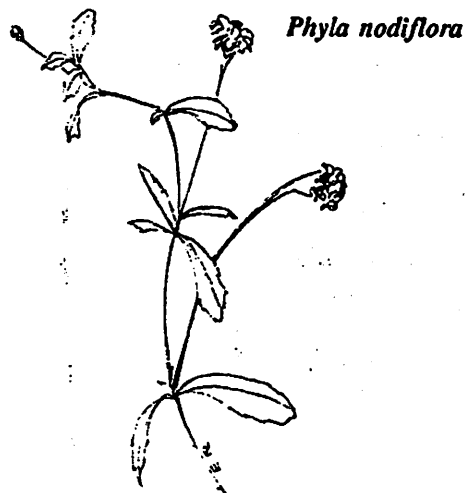
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Vinca rosea or periwinkle, is the annual version and is available in white, pinks, and rose colors. It is a hardy bloomer and a wonderful bedding plant. These vincas adapt easily when transplanted and are quite popular in our area.



Vinca rosea

Phyla nodiflora (*Lippia repens*): Lippia is a low growing perennial used as a substitute for grass. It seems to hug the ground while sending out runners in search of territory to conquer. Its dense green mats can tolerate foot traffic. Lippia is a perfect ground cover for situations where you desire a very low growing perennial. While it spreads readily, it will invade all areas in its path. It choked out native grass which was difficult to mow in our yard, so I encouraged its growth under our old mesquite tree. It transplants easily, grasping new territory with vigor—so use discretion in site selection since once established it will not easily relinquish control. I also transplanted some to cover an ant hill and it seems to be taking hold. Although it does not require mowing, you may want to cut it to rid the plant of the tiny clover-like blossoms which attract bees.



Phyla nodiflora

PLANTING A FALL GARDEN

Elizabeth Riordon
Staff Writer

September is a great time to plant your fall vegetable garden. If you start on a small scale, you can enlarge it next spring.

Depending upon your own microclimate and altitude, a variety of vegetables could be sown this month. Cabbage, root vegetables, and cauliflower could be planted now in any garden. Warmer and lower areas could grow lettuce, spinach, and onions. Of course as in every Arizona garden, organic matter of all types will help ensure a successful crop.

Staff:

Carolyn Gruenhagen
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Elizabeth Riordon
Virginia Westphal

Articles to be published in next month's newsletter must be received at the Sierra Vista Cooperative Extension Office by September 25.

GIFTS FROM THE DESERT

Carolyn Gruenhagen
Staff Writer

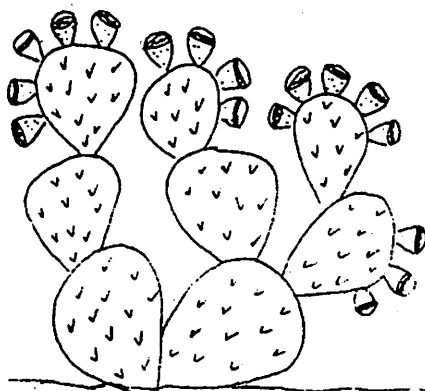
In a short time your prickly pear cactus fruits (seed pods) will be turning red, falling off, and generally becoming a mess. Why not pick them and make cactus juice or cactus jelly. It's not very hard and they taste great! Two years ago David Epele, President of Arizona Cactus & Succulent Research, Inc., a botanical garden in Bisbee, Arizona, shared the following recipes with us which we are repeating for the benefit of our many newcomers to Cochise County and our many new readers.

To pick the fruit, use kitchen tongs, and be very careful because they have tiny spines on them. Gather and wash a bucket or grocery sack of the fruit. Use the tongs to transfer the fruits into a large kettle, add about an inch of water, and cover. Boil the fruit gently until it is softened — about 45 minutes. After it starts to cook, mash with a potato masher to make sure each fruit is broken open. Continue cooking for another 10 minutes until all of the fruit is tender. Pour the fruit and juice into a cloth bag or strain it through several thicknesses of cheesecloth. Any small spines, the seeds, and the skin will remain in the cloth.

Now you have about a gallon of cactus juice. To make never-fail prickly pear jelly, boil 4 cups of juice along with a package of powdered pectin. Add 5 or 6 cups of sugar and bring to a boil. You may add a little lemon juice for an interesting taste. Pour the liquid into sterilized jelly jars and seal with melted paraffin or cap the jars and put them in

the freezer. That's all there is to it!

To make a delicious, refreshing drink that you can enjoy all year long, store the pure juice of the prickly pear fruit in freezer containers. At Arizona Cactus, the juice is frozen in plastic soda bottles. When ready to make the juice, thaw, pour into a gallon jar, add 1/2 cup of lemon juice and three cups of sugar. Fill with water and mix well.



It is also very easy to make a wonderful jelly from the dried mesquite beans. Gather about 3 quarts of mesquite beans and cut each into 2 or 3 pieces. Place in a large kettle and add water to cover. Simmer until the liquid turns yellow. Measure 3 cups of liquid into a large saucepan, stir in 1 package of powdered pectin, and stir constantly over high heat until the mixture comes to a boil. Add 4 1/2 cups of sugar and 4 tablespoons of lemon juice. Bring to a full rolling boil, stirring constantly. Boil hard for 1 minute or until syrup comes off metal spoon in a sheet. Remove from heat, skim off foam, pour into sterilized jelly jars, and seal.

THE AGENT'S CORNER

Robert E. Call
Extension Agent, Horticulture

QUESTION: Why are my Afghan pine (*Pinus eldarica*) tree's needles turning brown and falling off? The trees are deep watered on a regular basis. There are no signs of damage from insects or disease. What can I do about it?

ANSWER: During the 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 take some action to remedy the situation. **Control:** 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 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.

QUESTION: I have a young spruce tree that is drying up on one side. The needles are falling off and part of the tree is bare. The tree is watered well. The tree is planted three feet from the northwest side of the house. What is the problem?

ANSWER: 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 but arachnids, members of the spider family. With a magnifying glass you can see that these tiny creatures have two body parts: a head and 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. **Control:** 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 mites 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 tissue may occur. Chemical miticide are available to control severe infestations. Registered products include Kelthane (dicifol) and Omite (propargite). Always follow the label instructions when using any pesticide.

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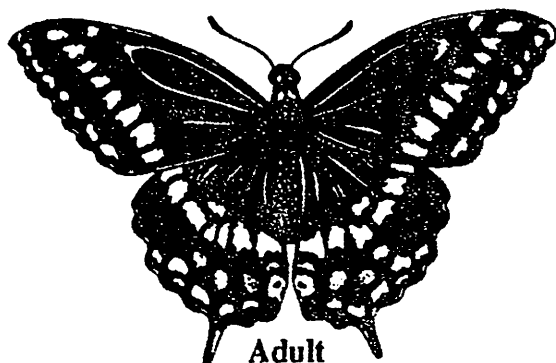
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WATCH OUT FOR . . . PARSLEY- WORMS & THE CABBAGE MAGGOT

T. J. Martin
Staff Writer

THE PARSLEYWORM (a.k.a. carrotworm or celeryworm): This 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

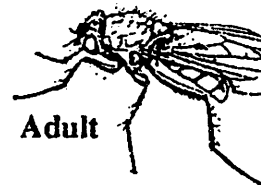
These eggs hatch into the destructive stage, the larvae. These two inch long caterpillars are pale green or white with yellow/orange-spotted black bands on each segment. If startled, the larvae can expose yellow or orange osmateria (or "horns") from behind its head, and emit a strong, sweet, defensive 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.

THE CABBAGE MAGGOT: The cabbage maggot infests the stems of young cabbage plants and others in the same family. These other favored hosts include broccoli, brussels sprouts, cauliflower, and sometimes Chinese cabbage, collards, kohlrabi, radishes, rutabagas, and turnips. The adult is a 1/4 inch long housefly-look-alike; gray, with black stripes on the thorax. The female fly lays her single white eggs at the soil line, and the hatching larvae are small (1/4 to 1/3 inch long) white legless maggots with blunt posteriors. This is the destructive stage.



Adult

The maggots make brown tunnels in the subsurface stem and roots as they feed. The affected plants wilt and usually die. These burrowing pests also act as carriers for the fungus that causes black leg, and bacterial soft spot. The cabbage maggot will produce several generations per year starting in early spring and ending in the fall. They overwinter in the soil as pupae.

Sprouting seedlings can be protected by the use of an agricultural fleece covering (Remay, *etc.*). If the fly cannot lay eggs there will be no larvae. An impenetrable mulch, or a collar placed around each stem will serve much the same purpose. Make sure the barrier is snug around the stem yet

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is flexible enough to "grow" with the plant. Other gardeners have used wood ashes (with or without lime added) to surround the plant or use as a dust. The lime can also be used as a drench near the affected plants. The use of diatomaceous earth is another option.



Larva

Frequent close inspection of the plants can reveal the presence of rice-like eggs which can be removed by hand and destroyed. Interplanting with mints, tomatoes, rosemary, or sage is said to repel the pest, and a few types of resistant varieties are available. Predators and parasites include parasitic nematodes, green lacewings, rove beetles, spiders, robber flies, and Chalcid and Trichogramma wasps.

SEPTEMBER REMINDERS

KEEP WATERING!
YOU CAN ALWAYS PLANT SOMETHING!

START SHOPPING FOR BULBS

Bulbs For Southern Arizona bulletin
is available in the Cooperative Extension Office

ITS COUNTY FAIR TIME

SEPTEMBER 24—27 IN DOUGLAS

Fair books are available at the Extension Office as well as the Chamber of Commerce of each county city.