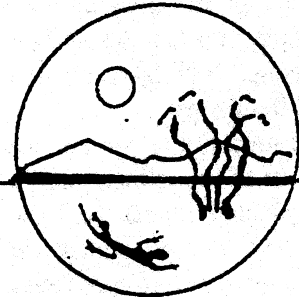


High on the Desert

Cochise County Master Gardener

Newsletter



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

PLANT PROFILE--

The Third Annual Texas Ranger Roundup!

Family: Scrophulariaceae
(Figwort Family)

Common names: Texas ranger,
barometer bush, Texas sage,
Ceniza

Range: Native to Texas and
Mexico. Found growing on rocky
limestone hillsides, plains, caliche
habitats, and along arroyos.

Each year to celebrate my anniversary with the newsletter, I write about my favorite plant, the *Leucophyllum* species. The first article can be found in the August 1995 newsletter and the second in the 1996 July edition. Texas rangers are a hardy and carefree plant. Tolerant of poor soils, winds, drought, and heat—a great plant for the xeric garden.

Rangers are evergreen, although extended drought or cold can cause some leaf drop. Bloom occurs during the warm, wet

summer months when the humidity is high and color ranges from white to pinky roses and shades of purple.

This year I've added four more rangers to my growing collection. *Leucophyllum* 'Rain Cloud' is out of Texas A & M and is a hybrid between *L. minus* and *L. frutescens*. Growth habit is vertical to 6 feet tall and 3-4 feet wide. Tall

"Texas rangers—the greatest plants on earth!"

and narrow which is unusual for a ranger. Foliage is silver-grey with violet blue flowers. *L. revolutum* 'Houdini' is from Mountain States and has very large, showy purple flowers and blooms profusely. Growth pattern is like its cousin 'Sierra Magic Mix' to a height and spread of four feet. *L. zygochillum* 'Cimarron' is another selection from Mountain States and is great for tight spaces—only growing 3 feet tall by 3 feet wide. Foliage is soft grey and the leaves cup up. Blooms more profusely than 'Blue

Ranger' with light blue colored flowers. This ranger is less susceptible to overwatering than others. *L. frutescens* 'Mountain Cloud' is the latest ranger in the "Cloud Series." Height is from 4-8 feet with a 4-6 ft spread. Foliage is light green with lavender flowers.

Random recent findings: Indians dry the leaves and flowers to make a tea. In the U of A Extension Office, Sierra Vista, cuttings of a Texas ranger were taken and arranged in a vase. The foliage and flowers have dried and are holding up beautifully. The flowers hold on to their color so they make nice dried arrangement material.

On a sad note, Benny Simpson, who is responsible for introducing the "Texas A&M Cloud Series" passed away after Christmas. May his memory live on in the many gardens that feature his rangers.

Texas rangers—The Greatest Plants on Earth!

Cheri Melton
Master Gardener/Staff Writer

Cochise County Cooperative Extension

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

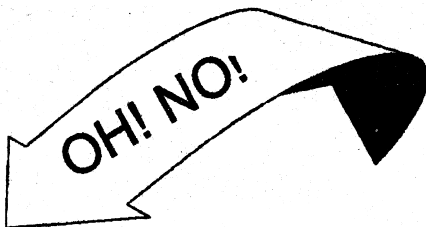
450 Haskell, Willcox, AZ 85643
(520) 384-3594

Ripping up lawn leads to lawsuit in N.M.

ALBUQUERQUE, N.M.—The homeowners association of the Towne Park community is suing a resident for breaking its covenants by ripping up her grassy lawn and replacing it with landscaping native to the Southwest.

The unidentified woman said she was just trying to be a good citizen by replacing nonnative bluegrass, which sucks up dwindling water reserves, with water-conserving, native plants.

"This little bit of grass made this community different from other communities," Towne Park board member Joseph Gironda said. "Practically everybody who purchased out here purchased with the understanding that there would be grass in front lawns."



Cuttings 'N' Clippings

➤ Cochise County Master Gardeners Association meets monthly, the first Wednesday at 5:00 pm. All certified Master Gardeners and Trainees are invited to attend. Call the Sierra Vista Cooperative Extension office for the meeting location.

➤ The Cochise County Fair takes place September 17-21 at the fairgrounds in Douglas. Fair booklets are available in the Cooperative Extension offices.

➤ The Sierra Vista Area Gardeners' Club meets the third Thursday of the month at 2:00 pm at the Sierra Vista Library. Everyone is invited to attend. Members are asked to start saving their seeds for a seed exchange at the 1998 High Desert Gardening & Landscaping Conference.

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*High on the Desert*  
High Desert Gardening  
& Landscaping Conference  
February 12-14, 1998

### Newsletter Staff:

Peggy Dierking  
Carolyn Gruenhagen  
Cheri Melton  
Virginia Westphal

*Robert E. Call*

Robert E. Call,  
Extension Agent, Horticulture

# Water Wise

## "BROWN BAG" LECTURE/WORKSHOP SERIES

For six consecutive weeks, the following will be offered on Wednesdays and Saturdays:

Each Wednesday "Brown Bag" lecture will be held at The U of A Sierra Vista Campus in Room 106 from noon to 1 p.m. Come during your lunch hour and bring your lunch! Each Saturday workshop will be held at The U of A Sierra Vista Campus from 9 a.m. - 10 a.m., EXCEPT on Sept. 13 when the workshop will be at the bandshell in Veterans Park from 9 a.m. - noon.

There will be a charge of \$3 for each session (except Saturday 13, which is free). There is a discount for pre-registration. Send \$25 for all 11 sessions on or before Sept. 3 to The U of A Cooperative Extension Water Wise Program, 1140 N. Colombo, Sierra Vista, AZ, 85635, or call for scholarship information, 458-8278, ext. 141.

**Week 1:** Sept. 10 (Wed) Lecture: "Landscape Design" Rosina Harmony, Certified Landscape Architect  
Sept. 13 (Sat) 9 a.m. - noon Workshop: Tree Planting and Care, Bandshell in Veterans Park —trees will be for sale!

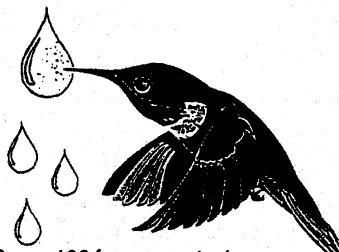
**Week 2:** Sept. 17 (Wed) "What Kind of Soil Do You Have?" Don Breckenfeld, Resource Soil Specialist, USDA  
Sept. 20 (Sat) Workshop: Location of Soil Types

**Week 3:** Sept. 24 (Wed): Lecture: "Rain Water Management" Steve Kimble and Carol Escott, Certified Permaculturists  
Sept. 27 (Sat): Workshop: Construction of Water Harvesting Systems.

**Week 4:** Oct. 1 (Wed): Lecture: "Plant Selection" Jan Groth, A.C.N.P., Landscaper/Designer  
Oct. 4 (Sat): Workshop: Planting Techniques and Landscape Maintenance

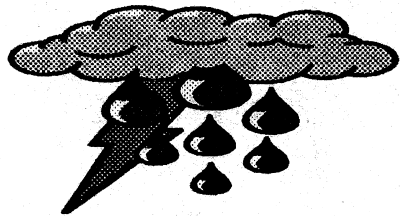
**Week 5:** Oct. 8 (Wed): Lecture: "Irrigation" DeForest Lewis, Master Gardener, A.C.L.P.  
Oct. 11 (Sat): Workshop: Installation and Repair of Irrigation Systems.

**Week 6:** Oct. 15 (Wed): Lecture: "Home Hot Water Systems Retrofit and Plumbing," presenter TBA  
Oct. 18 (Sat): Workshop: Simple Home Plumbing Repairs



*Water Wise Sponsors:* Cochise County, City of Sierra Vista, AZ Water Co., Bella Vista Water Co., PDS Water Co., SSVEC, The U of A Cooperative Extension.

# The Virtual Gardener— Water, Water Everywhere



Someone once said that the three biggest problems faced by gardeners in the High Desert are water, water, and water. We are most aware of this in the hot, dry months of late spring and early summer when we can't seem to pour enough water on our plants to keep them alive. We watch them desiccate right before our eyes in the super dry air, and we yearn for the summer rains, knowing that the higher humidity, cooler temperatures, and abundant rainfall will make our gardens flourish. How ironic, then, that some of our most prized plants seem to languish in the rain and sometimes even die. It doesn't seem fair that a plant we carefully nursed through the dangerous dry season begins to die when life-giving rains begin to fall. What's happening?

You may be tempted to think that your plant has somehow grown intolerant of water during the long dry season or perhaps has fallen prey to some water-borne disease. Although disease is always a possibility, another likely cause—and one that should always be investigated—is death by drowning. Our heavy clay soils, often liberally laced with caliche, compact to a concrete-hard substance that is impervious to penetration by water. When we dig (or blast!) small holes in this stuff to create homes for our

plants, we create sumps where rainwater collects and never drains away. The submerged roots of the plants that live in these holes become starved for oxygen and the plants die. So what's a gardener to do?

If you have a caliche problem, the New Mexico State University College of Agriculture and Home Economics has a Web page (<http://elroy.nmsu.edu/CAHE/retops/a-127.html>) just for you. The author, County Extension Agent C. E. Siepel, points out that in addition to creating water problems, caliche can restrict a plant's ability to use soil nutrients by reducing root penetration and creating a high pH environment. For this reason it is a good idea to keep plant roots out of contact with the caliche. Caliche soils can be managed by breaking up and physically removing the caliche and back filling the hole with a good soil mixture. The author suggests that reasonable sized holes range from 2 feet deep by 6 inches wide for flower beds to a whopping 6 feet deep by 8 feet wide for large trees. Before installing a plant, every hole should be checked for drainage by partially filling it with water and watching how fast the water level drops. About 1 inch per hour is an acceptable rate. If the hole does not drain properly, you need to either dig it deeper or at least punch some drain holes in the bottom.

If you have a heavy clay soil, you need to amend it so that it absorbs water and can better provide nutrients to your plants. Oregon State University has an excellent Web page ([\[orst.edu/AgComWebFile/Garden/soil/howtoimproveclaysoil.html\]\(http://orst.edu/AgComWebFile/Garden/soil/howtoimproveclaysoil.html\)\) describing how to do this. The key is to work in plenty of organic material and sand, but the sand should only be added after the organic material so that you don't create natural concrete instead of garden soil. A couple of inches of compost or other organic material and a similar amount of sand should be thoroughly mixed into the top 6 or 7 inches of soil. Since the organics decompose slowly to yield nutrients for plants, the best time to add the organic material to the soil is in the autumn.](http://www.wagcomm.ads.</a></p></div><div data-bbox=)

Before I sign off for this month, I want to invite you to the Cochise County Master Gardeners Association "High On Trees" adopt-a-tree program to be held at Veterans Memorial Park Bandshell in Sierra Vista from 9:00 am to noon on September 13th. For the price of 90 minutes of your time to attend a class on the planting and care of trees in the High Desert, you can adopt a tree. If you're not interested in adopting a tree, come anyway. The class on tree care will be well worth your time. Don't miss it!

*Gary A. Gruenhagen, Master Gardener  
([gruenha@c2i2.com](mailto:gruenha@c2i2.com))*

## September Reminders

- ▶ Keep on watering!
- ▶ You can always plant something—try cool season veggies
- ▶ Start shopping for bulbs (*Bulbs for Southern Arizona* bulletin is available from the cooperative Extension offices)

## Harvesting & Preserving Herbs Part 2

For drying herbs on a screen, there are commercially made driers or you can use one made from old window screening elevated by wood, bricks, books, or rocks. Make sure the air will circulate over and under the screen. Wash the herb leaves, blot dry and carefully remove them from the stems. Place leaves on the screen to dry, turning once or twice to make certain they dry evenly. The window screens can be stacked several high by criss-crossing them on each other to conserve space. If using a commercial drier, follow the instructions with it.

A third way to dry herbs is in the microwave by placing leaves in a single layer between two paper towels. Dry for 2 minutes and then continue to microwave for 30 second intervals until leaves are brittle. For future reference, keep records of how long each variety takes to dry.

A few herbs lose color or flavor when dried. Chervil, chives, fennel and burnet are best preserved by freezing. Parsley and dill can be stored for a short time in the refrigerator if wrapped in a moist paper towel. Burnet, chervil, fennel, parsley and tarragon benefit from blanching in boiling water for 1 minute and cooled in ice water before being wrapped and frozen. The other herbs just need to be washed, stems removed, leaves wrapped in aluminum foil or plastic bags and frozen.

For convenience, herbs may be packaged in amounts to be used. One way to do this is by placing 2 cups of herbs in a blender with 1 cup of water and blend well. Pour the mixture into ice cube trays and freeze. The cubes can be stored in

plastic bags for quick and fresh seasonings in soups and stews.

Herb leaves retain more flavor if they are left whole and crushed or ground as needed. If a stored herb has no scent even after crushing, it will have no flavor and should be discarded. Store dried herbs away from light and heat in airtight containers.

*Leonora Franke  
MG Trainee*

*“Even a  
green thumb  
still needs  
four  
fingers”*



## IT'S FALL!

Fall is upon us and that means two things. It is the preferred time for planting in the high desert and Fall Plant Sales! Perennials, shrubs and trees grow about 80% or more of their root growth in late summer and early fall. With an established root system by next spring, plants will be able to handle the harsh dry winds of spring and the extreme heat of summer.

After planting don't forget to add a 2 inch layer of mulch. This will protect the roots from temperature swings in the winter and keep the root zone cool in the summer.

**Tohono Chul Park** will hold their fall plant sale October 4th & 5th, 8am-5pm. Tel # (520)742-6455.

**Desert Survivors** sale is October 3rd (members only, 4-dark) 4th (8-4) & 5th (10-4). Tel # (520) 791-9309.

**Tucson Desert Botanical Gardens** sale is on October 4th (10-4) and 5th (12-4). Tel # (520) 326-9686.

Visit the **Boyce Thompson Southwest Arboretum** October 17th thru November 2nd from 8-5 for their two week sale. Tel # (520) 689-2723.

Here are two great local sources to buy native plants: **Diamond JK Nursery** in Sonoita is located at the base of the communication tower. Speciality items include cacti, succulents, wildflower and native grass seed. Hours are Wednesday thru Saturday from 8 am to 2:30 pm. Contact Jim Koweek at (520) 455-9262. In Elfrida, you can buy native plants grown by Peter Gierlach at the **High Lonesome Trading Company** located at 10343 Hwy 191. Hours are 8-5:30 Monday-Friday and Saturday 8-1. Both locations carry hard to find and unusual natives and if you can't find it - ask! Special orders are welcome to locate that special plant for your garden!

*Cheri Melton  
Master Gardener/Staff Writer*

# The Agent's Observations

**Q** Round growths are occurring on the leaf petioles of several cottonwood trees around my home. What is causing this and is it harmful to the trees?

**A** The round growths that are occurring on your trees are the home of a petiole gall-forming aphid, with a scientific name of *Pemphigus populicaulis*. These aphids induce globose galls on the leaf petiole of cottonwood and other poplar species. No leaf blade distortion occurs from the gall formation. Cutting open the galls will reveal the aphids. The life cycle of these insects takes place in one year. Eggs, the product of sexual union, are laid in autumn in crevices of the bark. They hatch in spring, and nymphs feed on newly developing leaf petioles. In a few days the up folding of gall tissue completely encloses the stationary stem mother. Birth of young is parthenogenically (meaning cloned) while confined inside the gall in a hollow chamber. These young, when mature, have wings. During midsummer a slit-like orifice develops, allowing the winged aphids to escape and fly to the roots of secondary host plants in the Crucifer or Composite family where they

*Pemphigus populicaulis*  
gall



produce several generations. In late summer winged aphids that developed on the secondary host plants fly back to the primary host, cottonwood trees. Mating occurs and the female lays the eggs that overwinter.

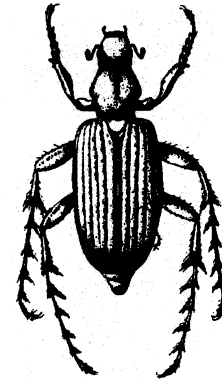
**Control:** Because the gall-forming aphids do little damage to the affected trees control measures are not recommended.

**Source:** *Insects That Feed on Trees and Shrubs*, 1991. Warren T. Johnson and Howard H. Lyon. Cornell University Press, Ithaca, NY. pp.461-462.

**Q** Several insects have been feeding and mating on my plants. They are olive/brown in color and look like an elongated beetle. Their legs are very long. What are these and how can I control them?

**A** The insect is the rose chafer (*Macrodactylus subspinosus* (Fabr.)). These are general feeder although it is associated with roses and grapes. Feeding also occurs on raspberry, blackberry, strawberry, peony, iris, dahlia, hollyhock, and other ornamental flowers and shrubs. This pest is abundant in areas having light, sandy soil. The beetle feeds on flowers, leaves, fruits and the larvae feed in the soil on roots of various grasses and weeds. The larvae are small white grubs that pass the winter deep in the soil and migrate upward in the spring. They pupate in late April and emerge as long legged adults in May and early June. Feeding and mating occur, sometimes simultaneously, in June and July, the eggs

being deposited singly a few inches below the soil surface. Hatching takes place in two weeks and feed until cold weather approached, being nearly full grown. They then begin migrating down into the soil to avoid cold weather. One generation occurs per year.



*Macrodactylus subspinosus*

**Control:** Any insecticide whether "organic" or conventional will destroy the adults while they feed if they occur in large numbers. Many years there is a limited population and limited damage. With many insects cold winters decrease their population. Cold weather, however will not eradicate insects. The past few winters in Cochise County have been fairly mild allowing increase insect populations to survive and reproduce.

**Source:** *Insect Pests of Farm, Garden, and Orchard*, 7th Edition. 1979. Ralph H. Davidson and William F. Lyon. John Wiley & Sons, New York. pp.436.

Robert E. Call  
Extension Agent, Horticulture

**F.Y.I.** Many insects in your garden may be the plants' best friends, and you will want to take steps to protect and encourage them. Lacewings, for example, feed on a variety of mites and insects that damage plants. Several species of small wasps attack immature stages of whitefly.

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Cochise County Master Gardeners Association presents . . .



. . . an adopt-a-tree program

**September 13, 1997**

at the bandshell in Veterans Memorial Park, Sierra Vista.  
Following a 90 minute Tree Planting and Care workshop each  
person will be allowed to "adopt" a tree for a potting fee .

Registration begins at 8:00 am — workshop at 9:00 am  
(Varieties include *Eucalyptus microtheca*, *Chilopsis linearis*, & *Rhus ovata*)  
For further information call The U of A Cooperative Extension, 458-8278, Ext. 141.