

Master Gardener Horticultural Communicator



University of Arizona

Cooperative Extension

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Things to Expect

SPIDER MITES become troublesome as temperatures increase. Morning rinsing of foliage with forceful spray of water at least weekly through May is helpful. Miticides may be necessary.

CITRUS FRUIT DROP will occur. The shed of newly set fruit is a natural thinning worsened by hot weather and dry winds. Water moderately during this season.

GRAPE LEAF SKELETONIZERS will return. They're small, black and yellow striped worms that skeletonize grape leaves. Prompt, thorough application of carbaryl or *Bacillus thuringiensis* to the leaves' underside gives control.



Grape Leaf Skeletonizer Larva

WINTER WEEDS are stimulated by winter rains. Contact sprays work well in March. Don't allow them to mature and produce seed.

APHID populations on vegetables, trees and shrubs are temporary. Hose them off or use mild liquid dish detergent.

POWDERY MILDEW on roses, euonymus, cucurbits and grapes can occur. Spring temperatures are ideal for infection.

SEASONAL LEAF DROP on carob, African sumac, pine and other trees will occur as weather warms.

**Wildflower Hotline
602-754-8134**

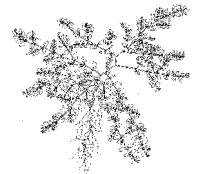


Things to Do

ENJOY the wildflowers!

PLANT CITRUS TREES. Young 2 - 5 year old trees transplant most successfully. Larger, older trees are more costly and suffer more shock. Protect bark from sunburn and mechanical injury with a sturdy wrap.

PREVENT PROSTRATE SPURGE by applying recommended pre-emergence herbicides in areas where this weed is troublesome. Try products containing Pendimethalin or Isoxaben. If some escape, try spraying them with vinegar.



Prostrate Spurge

FERTILIZE BERMUDA GRASS LAWNS during late April or early May. Hold off on dethatching until May or June for best results.

PINES SHOWING TERMINAL DIEBACK is usually a physiological response we call pine blight. Check the soil near the trunk. Those with circling roots express the symptoms worse.

MULCH GROUND SURFACES under roses and other heat sensitive plants.

APPLY IRON to bottle brush, pyracantha, silk oak and other plants with iron deficiency symptoms. The chelates work faster. Reducing watering frequency often helps.

MILDEW ON GRAPES can be controlled by applying dusting sulfur to foliage when new growth reaches about 6 inches long. Read and heed the 90°F label warnings.

DON'T DETHATCH BERMUDA GRASS AND HYBRID BERMUDA GRASS lawns until May.

Terry H. Mikel
Extension Agent, Commercial Horticulture

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**Environmentally Responsible
Gardening Website**

<http://ag.arizona.edu/maricopa/garden/>

Compost is King (*Continued from page 3*)
keep the compost heap near the area where you plan to use the most compost.

5) If the composting area can be seen by anybody besides the gardener, try to keep the area looking fairly neat and picked up. If it isn't reasonably tidy, this aspect can be a big negative as far as the neighbors are concerned. You'll really, really want your neighbors to be deliriously happy about your compost heap and freely give you all their lovely,

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Property Owners & Residents Association (PORA) Office, 13815 Camino del Sol Blvd., Sun City West, AZ 85375. Phone 602-546-1672. Hours: 9 a.m. - 1 p.m. Tue., Thu., and Fri.

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wonderful leaves to use in feeding your marvelous microorganisms. If you play your cards right, they may even bag the leaves for you! It's rather like applying the business philosophy of Win-Win to gardening; both parties get benefits.

Previews of coming attractions: Next time we'll talk about the actual creation of the composting container(s).

C. Dawn Earle
Master Gardener

Compost is King

Thinking back to high school days, wouldn't it have been a real kick if the biology teacher had ever said, "P-s-s-t. Hey, kids!" Then he'd pause significantly and look around to see if anyone was overhearing him. Then his eyes would widen hypnotically and he would whisper, "Would you like to learn one of the Secrets of the Universe?" At a amazed chorus of "Yeahs", the biology instructor would lean over to impart The Wisdom Of The Ages. Then to our mesmerized ears would appear the dramatic announcement: "Compost Happens!"

It does. That's the truth. Compost will happen with or without our help.

Old Mother Nature seems to have been nurturing this planet, its plants, its animals and us long before human beings were involved with world-wide management of natural resources. She's done quite well in providing a balanced system of recycling resources to make our environment suitable for life.

One of the slow composting methods is as simple as tossing a pile of vegetation on the ground somewhere and letting rain and weather do the job. If the neighborhood zoning police don't strongly 'encourage' <ahem> another approach to composting, you will eventually end up with a nice black pile of free nutrients to feed your soil. There is at least one serious drawback to this method: it does take a l-o-o-n-g while to happen.

A much quicker method is to provide Mother Nature's Helpers* with the ideal conditions to turn the green yucky stuff into wonderful black stuff. (*Well... If Santa Claus can have Elves, why can't Mother Nature get some press for her Helpers?) The Helpers are very tiny soil microorganisms which turn useless garbage into a valuable gardening resource. Remember the old adage about feeding the soil (organisms) so the soil can feed your plants?

Fortunately, the conditions that the Helpers find optimum aren't that difficult to supply. Just follow a couple of principles and, voila, you have compost much, much sooner. Adding plant and some animal wastes in correct proportions with enough moisture and available oxygen will create the best environment for the beneficial microorganisms to thrive. Under these conditions, the microorganisms can quickly break down the plant/animal materials into nutrients

the plants can best use. Even more importantly, compost holds moisture in the soil and lightens the soil enough to allow necessary air to reach the plant's roots. As a big bonus to gardeners, the Helpers can also destroy certain disease organisms and weed seeds if the pile gets warm enough. (Heat in the compost heap means the Helpers are really cookin' in there!) Though I wouldn't put anything in the pile I know for sure is diseased.

Let's talk about the basics of setting up your own compost factory. The best thing about being the boss here is that your micro-workers don't take time-and-a-half for overtime and don't voluntarily take the day off. Let's begin with:

Choosing a Site for the Compost Heap

1) Pick a site that gets some shade from the merciless desert summer sun and some sunlight in the cool winter months. The shade of a deciduous tree is ideal for this purpose. A deciduous tree loses its leaves during the winter and this allows the sun's light and warmth to help keep the compost in a better temperature range. During the summer, desert heat can overheat the pile and cause it to dry out too fast if it isn't shaded. Another option is placing the compost on the north side of the house or in a place where it will receive at least afternoon

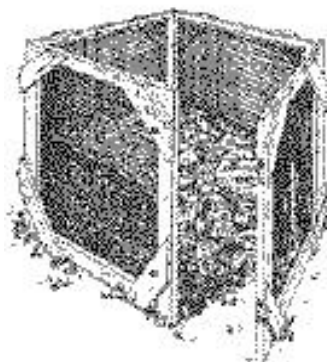
shade.

2) Try to select a spot which isn't overly exposed to drying winds.

3) Keep in mind that Mother Nature's Helpers will need water on a regular basis. Trust me, it will become tiresome to keep hauling buckets of water to the compost pile. It's much easier to plan to put the compost heap in a place accessible by garden hose.

4) The main purpose of the compost heap is to provide organic materials to improve soil structure and add life to your garden. But as valiant as the gardening Helpers are, I haven't heard of anyone training the compost to walk from the heap to the gardening bed. Therefore the farther away the compost heap is from your main gardening area, the sorer your back will become when you continually have to pick it up and haul the compost to where it will do the most good. If you're lucky enough to own a good garden cart, it will give you more range to lug the stuff to the beds without needing a nap after all that effort. Suggestion:

Continued on page 2.



Portable Wood and Wire Bin

Tender Bulbs for Summer Gardens

In hot desert summers, many of us may consider our gardens to be disaster areas, barely hanging on in the heat. But such a scenario does not have to occur. To the rescue is a wealth of bulbs with handsome flowers and foliage. A little time and effort will discover beautiful bulbous plants to create lush tropical summer landscape.

The chief requirements for establishing such gardens are damp soils and deep mulches to keep the ground surfaces cool. Many summer bulbs appreciate afternoon shade, but others are tolerant of sunny sites.

Dahlias, gladiolus, and cannas are well known and easily grown in desert gardens. These plants are not true bulbs, but are usually treated as such. They can be left in the ground over winter and treated like perennials, which they are. Cannas are wonderful background foliage plants with bronze or gold-veined leaves. The bright flowers are a bonus. They make a bold statement in the garden where they can be combined with feathery grasses for nice effects.

Glads most often offered by local nurseries grow quite tall flowering spikes, which need to be supported by stakes. For those who detest staking, The Daffodil Mart of Torrington, CT offers dwarf hybrids whose flower stalks are only 12 in. - 18 in. tall. They bloom in mid-summer. Staggered plantings every 10 days or so can extend the period of bloom. These corms prefer a warm climate and do well in full sun. They should be planted 3 in. deep in friable soil and look best in groups among other summer flowering plants where they are happy with minimum care.

The Abyssinian gladiolus (*G. callianthus* 'Murielae'), formerly known as *Acidanthus*, has bright white flowers with a purple eye. They open at night in late summer, perfuming the garden with sweet fragrance. They can be grown in full sun in ordinary well-drained soil.

Canna



Dahlias are grown from tubers. Native to Mexico they bloom in mid-to-late summer, offering lots of large brilliant blooms. They are heavy feeders, happy in full sun to light shade with regular watering. Plants can be tall or dwarf and compact. The flowers vary from single-petalled to doubles and cactus-flowered. Jackson & Perkins are offering dahlia 'Collarette' in vibrant shades of reds, pinks and yellows. These plants can be grown in containers by gardeners with little space.

There are literally hundreds of dahlias to choose from. 'Bishop of Llandaff' is a beauty with dark mahogany leaves and semi-double orange-red flowers. It complements yellow or salmon daylilies which bloom at the same time. A tall (48 in.) striking one is 'Night Queen' with claret ball-form flowers. 'Park Princess' is a compact grower with cactus type bloom.

For a tropical look plant crinums with dramatic massive strap-leaved foliage and tall umbels of lily-like fragrant flowers, which shoot up surprisingly in mid-summer. These plants need lots of room, a protected sunny location in rich, well-drained soil. Once established they resent transplanting and continue to grow and grow and grow ever larger clumps. Good performers in this climate are 'Ellen Bosanquet' with dark rose flowers, 'J. C. Harvey' whose pink-flushed petals open only partway and 'Digweedi' with red stripes on white petals. A hybrid *Crinum x Powellii* is a repeat bloomer with many pale pink lily-like blossoms above a dense clump of leaves.

Very few true lilies can tolerate hot desert summers. Easter lilies are an exception. They will last for years in our gardens with bigger and better blooms each spring. An inexpensive way to establish these lilies in the garden is to plant bulbs of the plants purchased in grocery stores at Easter. Amaryllis, likewise, can be set out in the garden after bloom. They will bloom again year after year. Their regular blooming time is not at Christmas, however, but rather in the spring.

Watsonia is a pretty summer bloomer, resembling gladiolus. In a sunny protected location clumps get bigger each year. The flower spikes in reds, pinks, and white are like glads but last longer in bloom. This plant came from South Africa to English gardens in 1750. It is very tender and must be protected from frost.

Tulbaghia is known as society garlic. Native to South Africa, its grasslike foliage with clusters of lilac-scented and lilac-colored flowers are foils in later summer for pink-flowered *Oxalis bowiei*, also grown from bulbs. *Tulbaghia* is a foolproof drought-tolerant bulb, great for cutting when grown in a flower border.

Crinum



Continued on page 5.