



## Events & Activities

MG Association Meeting, No meeting this month, come to the Highland Gardening Conference instead. Register NOW!

YAVAPAI ROSE SOCIETY October 18, 11:30 PM for lunch. This is in lieu of the regular meeting. Regular meetings will resume in November. For more information call 771-9300,

Prescott Area Gourd Society, 7pm, at the Smoki Museum, Prescott. Thee third Tuesday of the month.

Pond Club -An informal group that meets every couple of months, usually the 3rd week. Email [aquaticgardens@esedona.net](mailto:aquaticgardens@esedona.net) for more information.

The Organic Gardening Club meets on the 3rd Saturday of the month, 2215 E. Aspen St, 3pm. For directions call 928-649-3451.

Prescott Orchid Society, meets 3rd Sunday of the month., 2pm at the Prescott Library, call Cynthia for more information. (928) 717-0623

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University of Arizona Yavapai County Cooperative Extension

# *Yavapai Gardens*

Master Gardener Newsletter

October 2004

## Conference Highlights

### Cacti

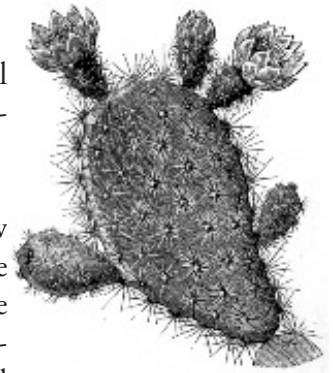
(The Master Gardener Conference will feature two speakers on cacti and succulents, so don't miss them!)

You can't be in Arizona more than a few minutes and not be aware of cactus. We use them extensively in landscapes. We use them representationally in architecture, in art, in our homes, businesses and even along freeways. It's tough to escape them unless you move to Iowa. (Even then you may come across them somewhere; certain species of prickly pear tolerate some extreme conditions.)

Cactus come in a large variety of forms and shapes and generally have spectacular flowers, which may be small but they tend to be beautiful. However, like the rose, that beauty comes with a price; cactus are also known for their large quantities of spines. In their defense though, take some time to look at the spines, they are interesting and even beautiful in their own right.

Just so you know, there are plants that look just like cactus but aren't. These are generally referred to as succulents but I'm saving that for another article. Cactus are members of the Cactaceae family. This is a family that is in some disarray, I understand, so I am not going to go into any detail of the confusing Latin names at this point but you are familiar with many of the cactus groups. Opuntias consist of the prickly pears and the chollas, Cereus include saguaros and organ pipes. Echinocereus are many of the small cactus that include hedgehogs. Mammalarias include the tiny cactus that you find for sale in stores, including some of the pincushion (Escobaria species are also called pincushion cactus) cactus and golf ball cactus.

The spectacular flowers give way to some equally interesting fruit. Generally large and colorful (and prickly,) the fruit is often edible. Native Americans used cactus fruit to supplement their diet. Fruit from the saguaro and prickly pear are the ones commonly collected. Today you find prickly pear jelly for sale in stores.



Since most of the people reading this are living in Arizona, you are familiar with the growing conditions of cactus. They are normally desert dwellers; enjoying life in the sun and dry air, although some do prefer some shade. Good drainage is essential, wet roots are a death sentence. Now, you can kill cactus by not watering them, especially those in containers, but don't overdo it. They need lots of air around their roots and hate being waterlogged. During the spring and summer, to keep them in the best shape, they do need additional water. Fertilize sparingly. Most commercial fertilizers are too strong for cactus. Use something like kelp fertilizer or compost tea sparingly. Fertilizer burn damages the stem, which is difficult to impossible to reverse—remember they have no leaves to quickly regenerate. Plant after any danger of frost is past, late spring or early summer. Wash the roots off before putting in the ground and trim any that are dead. This helps the roots move into the soil.

To find out more, attend the Master Gardener Conference.

## Grasses

Native grasses for landscaping are surging onto the gardening scene. It wasn't that long ago that putting in "ornamental grass" wouldn't have even occurred to gardeners. But today that is all changing; they are becoming an important part of the landscape. The best part, at least for me, is that they don't usually need to be mowed (or trimmed) except maybe once a year.

Native grass lawns are a good choice as an alternative to the midwestern ethic of that massive green expanse of grass that is only maintained by repeated applications of pesticides, herbicides, water and mowing. While that nice cropped lawn makes a nice play surface for the kids, consider something different if that is not a consideration.

Most of the native grass species used in lawns are warm-season grasses. (NO mowing in the winter



— hurr-ray!) They will go dormant in the winter. Today there are more showing up on the market, but the most familiar are blue grama grass and buffalo grass.

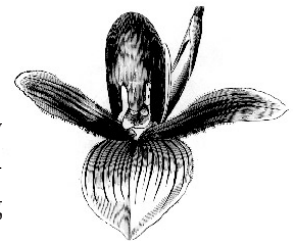
One of the other ways to create a grassy meadow is to use many different species to create a meadow or prairie effect. While Arizona has never been called a prairie state, it might surprise you that large parts of Arizona were covered with grass. The Verde Valley first attracted grass cutters looking for feed for the army who had large numbers of horses to take care of. There were other parts of the state that were filled with miles of grass. Prescott Valley and Chino Valley supported thousands of antelope and deer on its extensive grasslands, all of which are disappearing today. Southeastern Arizona still has large expanses of grass. Many of the natives disappeared because they couldn't withstand heavy grazing and today housing developments fill these once grass-filled valleys. While we can't recreate those massive landscapes, even our small landscapes can be filled with exciting and interesting grasses. We can reduce our water use and our labor by adding more ornamental grasses to our yard.

Grasses come in different forms. Running grasses are those that spread by creeping stolens or rhizomes. These types can be invasive but will form a dense turf lawn. Clumping grasses grow in tufts otherwise known as bunch grass. They form mounds which can be quite small or very large. Pampas grass is a large bunching grass.

Within these categories there are many shapes and sizes. The grasses can appear upright, mounded, arching, tufted and variations on those forms. There is a shape for every landscape. If you want to know more, John Greenlee one of the foremost experts on grasses in the landscape, will be speaking at the Master Gardener conference—BE THERE!

## Orchids

Gosh, I can't even count on how many I've killed, it's frightening, but I foolishly keep trying to grow them because I am entranced, astonished and continually amazed at the many forms, shapes and colors that orchids come in. And that's without considering some of their truly bizarre life-styles. The reward comes when one of my severely abused plants springs forth a spike of incredibly gorgeous flowers. It makes the struggle less painful.



Orchids (Orchidaceae) constitute the largest family of plants in the world. They grow in nearly every country in nearly every climate you can imagine. There is even one in Australia that I've heard about that doesn't even grow above ground except to flower, if I recall correctly.

Growing orchids is a challenge in Arizona. Our generally extreme temperatures and very low humidity make it difficult, but not impossible. In my greenhouse a *Cymbidium* does the best but they are poor bloomers in other parts of the State because they need some cool weather to initiate the blooming cycle. *Cattleyas* are the big, fancy blooms that decorated every woman's dress at special events like Mother's Day, prom night, weddings and so on. Today the *Cattleya* family has been expanded beyond those big splashy purple flowers and are available in lots of colors, shapes and sizes. *Phalaenopsis* are the varieties most often seen in stores like Home Depot and Wal Mart. They are common because they are some of the easiest to grow in your home. They have spectacular blooms that are very long lasting. *Phragmipedium*, *Paphiopedilum* and *Dendrobiums* are also commonly grown. Want to know more? Come by the session on Orchids at the Master Gardener Highland Gardening Conference.

## Trees

Consider the tree. Much beloved, in fact so beloved that it tears at our soul to cut one down even when the reasons are sound. Unfortunately, the tree is sorely abused by good-meaning people. You've seen them, trees with their tops chopped off, 20 foot tall trees with tree wells the size of a postage stamp, tree roots tilting sidewalks and foundations because the trees were planted too close to the building. (I've seen eucalyptus trees planted within three feet of a house; can you imagine what a nightmare that turned out to be!) Then there are the trees planted in truly inappropriate places—planting spruce trees in Camp Verde is not a good idea! There are a lot of nightmare stories out there and I think a lot of you may recognize yourself in these descriptions. If so, you really need some help. Surprisingly enough, it is at your fingertips. Just fill out the form for the Highlands Garden Conference and then you can attend Terry



Mikels tree talk—"You Did What????!! How Trees Survive in Spite of Us!

## Iris and Roses

They are two big winners for our southwestern gardeners. Both of these plants do very well in most areas in Arizona. From Phoenix to Flagstaff, you can find iris and roses growing. But are yours a bit lackluster? Do they bloom well or are they skimpy or even nonexistent? In the scheme of things, iris (in my opinion)



are so simple to grow even the most challenged black thumb kind of person can grow them. Roses can present a few more difficulties but are easy keepers, also. Iris are particularly wonderful because they are extremely hardy and fit well into low water use (xeriscape) gardens. Surprisingly, roses, while they need a bit more water than iris, are tough plants that with mulching and drip irrigation can be grown in a low-water garden.

Peggy Hughes, of the Prescott Area Rose Society and proud owner of LOTS!! of roses, will be talking at the conference on some of her work with growing roses. This past summer she has been experimenting with different fertilizing practices for roses and will be talking about her results. Barry Golden, from the Prescott Iris Society, has a small commercial nursery where he sells iris each spring. Barry has scraped out his garden on some hardscrabble property where we wouldn't think of putting in a commercial nursery, but it works! Come hear how to grow iris from an expert!

This is just a small sample of the speakers at the conference. I never mentioned Tim Crews, from Prescott College, who's going to talk on soils, and where would we be without soil. There is Leslie Honaker, who grows scented geraniums, and what a lovely plant to grow. One of the more vexing issues in preserving natural landscapes and even your landscape are invasive weeds. Wade Albrecht from Coconino County Extension will be speaking on the latest on the battle against weeds. Like lasagna? That wonderful layered concoction of tomatoes, cheese

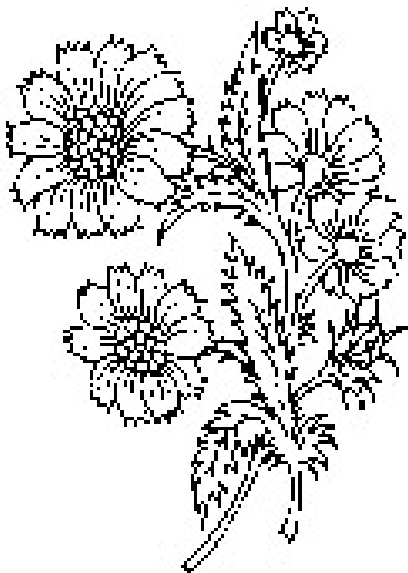
and pasta that makes me hungry just thinking about it. Well how about garden lasagna—no you can't eat it— but take that layered concept outside and use it to improve your garden. Kim-Howell Costian will be there to tell you how.

Looking for something new and different? How about olla gardening? Don't know much about this but think the idea is intriguing. This is about using large pottery containers (ollas) in your garden. Dr. Curtis Smith, from New Mexico State University and Cooperative Extension, has been experimenting with this technique and is coming here to talk about it.

Have you been looking for professional help in designing your garden? Well, we have two of the best coming as our keynote speakers. Scott and Lauren Springer Ogden are nationally known for their landscaping expertise. They advocate plant-driven design and this is your chance to hear what they have to say, ask questions, talk to them and purchase some of their books. I don't know where you can get a better deal on for gardening help. It's your last chance to sign-up for the Highlands Garden Conference. ***Do it Now! Its going to be a great couple of days.***

## **Garden Tours**

I forgot to mention that on Sunday we will have a great garden tour for conference attendees only. **YOU MUST** pre-register and the cost is \$10.00. This gives you access to three of the best gardens in Sedona. Once you have registered, you will be sent a confirmation and map of the sites. This is really a great deal and a fun way to spend a Sunday afternoon.



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## **Hot Garden Treat**

I'm going to let you in on a little secret of mine. When I'm desperate to finish the newsletter and running out of time and energy to finish it, I throw in a recipe. An easy way to fill up space but I also hope I find something you like. I also have a new cookbook and, while I haven't tried this recipe, give it a try. Experimenting can be fun.

### **Salsa Fresca con Chipotle**

1/2 red onion, diced  
3 cups fresh tomatoes, diced  
2 Tablespoons chopped cilantro  
4 chipotle peppers, hydrated and minced (canned or dry)  
1 teaspoon salt  
1 teaspoon sugar  
juice of one lime  
a few drops of mescal (optional)

Remove seeds and stems from the chipotles. Hydrate the dried chipotles by placing them in enough water to cover. Bring them to a boil, turn off the heat and let them sit until they cool. After mincing them finely, add all the ingredients together. Let the salsa sit for at least a half-hour before serving. From: Hellish Relish by Sharon Niederman.

# It's Bulb Planting Time

By: Jeff Schalaus, County Director, Agent, Agriculture & Natural Resources

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As we start preparing our gardens for winter, make some time and space in the garden for some bulbs. They do require some soil preparation and a little care, but the rewards are guaranteed: excellent spring and summer color. The term "bulb," is often used to describe a plant which utilizes an underground plant part to store energy to enable them to survive periods with less than optimal conditions (i.e., drought, freezes, fires, etc.). From a botanical perspective, what most people call "bulbs" can be either true bulbs, corms, tubers, or rhizomes.

Onions, lilies, daffodils, and tulips are examples of true bulbs. From the plant science perspective, a true bulb is a large bud that consists of a very short stem with fleshy leaves or scales. Energy (sugar and/or starch) is stored at the thickened bases of the leaves. Roots grow from the base of the stem.

Corms appear similar to bulbs but differ by having thinner, smaller leaves which have no energy storage function. Instead, energy is stored within the stem of the corm. Gladiolus, crocus, and cyclamen grow from corms.

Tubers are swollen underground roots that have buds or "eyes" as found on potatoes. Each bud produces a separate plant. Dahlias and some begonias grow from tubers. Rhizomes are very similar to tubers, are usually found growing near the soil surface and in a horizontal position. German irises grow from rhizomes. Both tubers and rhizomes serve as energy storage structures.

The science lesson is not over yet. It is important to understand the energy storage function of any plant to ensure it's success. For instance, if a German iris had the leaves cut back severely during spring and early summer, then it may not produce large, showy flowers during summer. The leaves conduct photosynthesis to produce the energy needed for flowering and to satisfy the metabolic needs of the plant during dormancy. By promoting leafy growth, you are also allowing the bulbs, corms, tubers and rhizomes to store energy for the future.

The University of Arizona Cooperative Extension has an excellent publication for the Verde Valley called: "Bulbs for Southern Arizona." In general, bulb enthusiasts should select well-drained sites, plant varieties that are well adapted to the desert, plant at the proper time and depth, amend soils, water adequately, and be prepared for interested vertebrate pests such as gophers, javelina, rabbits, etc.

Avoid planting bulbs in areas with shallow caliche or otherwise restricted drainage. Likewise, avoid areas where bermuda grass is present. Root knot nematodes can also cause problems with bulbs. Many readers are probably thinking I've just exclude 90% of the Verde Valley, but there are solutions to these problems and it does get better from here. For instance, most bulbs prefer full sun during the late winter and early spring.

Organic matter additions are necessary improve drainage, increase nutrient holding ability and help acidify our alkaline soils. Manure will work, but it must be well decomposed and should be worked into the soil six weeks before planting. Phosphorus fertilizer is also beneficial to bulbs. Remember to consider planting depth when preparing soil. It should be prepped deep enough to have a significant effect on the rooting zone. For instance, it would do little good to improve the soil to a depth of six inches and then plant the dahlia tuber six inches deep.

Some bulb flowers can get very tall while others are quite compact. Plan accordingly by grouping taller plants at the rear of the bed. Small plants look nice when planted in small clusters or among rocks. Time of blooming is also variable. By doing some research and trying to visualize the results, one can design a bed that will have color throughout the growing season. This article is enough to get most people going. If you are apprehensive, then start small and see how it goes.



# Arizona Gardening

By Nora Graf

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When winter hits the northern plains and East, people hibernate. Their world stops for a few days before any movement is seen. Then a thickly wrapped body is seen shoveling the driveway. A brave soul is attempting the icy streets. You will see a few kids out with sleds. When our winter begins, we get the shovels out and a few other garden tools. Here there are winter vegetables to plant, soil to be turned and compost added for early spring. Trees need to be watered and there's pruning to do.

I may be prejudiced but I much prefer the second scenario to the first. Even when summer hits I've never regretted living and gardening in Arizona. We may have 100-plus temperatures but it is true—"It's a dry heat." It really makes a difference. Once the humidity gets above 25, I begin to wilt. I've been in the Midwest and South in the middle of the summer and have felt like that soggy piece of lettuce you find in the bottom of the refrigerator drawer when you clean. You can't seem to escape the humidity, night or day. At least here I can get up early and enjoy a few hours of delightful weather. When the monsoon comes, you know it's temporary. Besides, I've always found it difficult to be unhappy about rain in the desert.

Early spring—otherwise known as the mud season in other parts of the country—I'm out planting early vegetables, lettuce, spinach and peas. As the temperature rises [in the Midwest known as the rain & humidity season] there are tomatoes, peppers, squashes and melons. Sunflower and cosmos go in. I keep trying beans, unsuccessfully and might try them again. The garlic is pulled. Summer [more humidity season in the midwest] really arrives but the hot dry weather gets those tomatoes moving. Summer energizes the squash, soon to take over the garden. As the monsoons pass, the last sunflower seeds are picked out by the finches and Verdins. Fat plump pumpkins are ripening and the tomatoes are threatening to overwhelm the cook. For those that plant zucchini—this is about the time you leave gifts (anonymously) on strangers' doorsteps.

Now its truly autumn [Midwestern for the prepare for winter season] and the tomatoes are still rolling in, no frost yet and the garlic is in the ground and the smell of fresh compost and tilled soil fills the air and fall vegetables are planted. Which brings us back to winter [or the hibernation season. See the first paragraph] Where would you rather live?



## Compost Woes

Have you ever watched your compost pile? It's just sitting there—doing nothing—day after day. The dust settles on it. You spray some water over it, then go out to buy a bag of stuff at the nursery. On goes the kitchen scraps, coffee grounds; there's some grass clippings, prunings and there it sits. If you are lucky, a lizard might take-up residence nearby, looking for more insects.

Summer comes—it dries out and sits there. Fall comes and it's still sitting there. You pray for snow to hide it. (well maybe not—just go buy a tarp.) Then there is a small perceptual shift; is it smaller? Has it changed? Time to dig the shovel out—a tentative poke reveals a nugget of gold—gardener's gold. A few more pokes and the magic is exposed. From a pile of waste, you have fostered an entire living community. All from a garbage heap.



# **MG Association News**

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## **Master Gardener Picnic**

**November 6, 1pm at Windmill Park in Cornville. Mark your calendar. Next month's newsletter will include a map.**

## **Meeting Schedule 2005**

**January 19, Cottonwood  
February 16, Prescott  
March 16, Cottonwood  
April 20, Prescott  
May 18, Cottonwood  
June 15, Prescott  
July 21, No meeting  
August 17, Cottonwood  
September, Picnic in Prescott  
October 19, Prescott  
November 16, Cottonwood, elections  
December, No meeting**

**FROM THE EDITOR:** Please send or email articles and announcements to the address below. Long articles will go in as soon as possible, announcements must be in by the 15th of the month to be included.

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