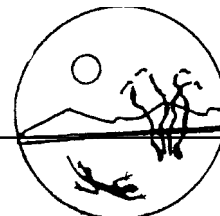


High on the Desert

Cochise County Master Gardener

Newsletter



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

Recycling

Each month I take a trip to the transfer station to drop off our garbage. My last trip on Monday, December 27th was a huge eye opener. There was a pile of garbage over 15 feet tall and probably twice that wide that amounted to about 40 - 50 tons of garbage. It was all over the floor and they were using a small front-end loader to move the piles around and into the trash receptacle and slowly crushing the mass into neat, tight bales. It made my stomach sink to think that we as a people of the world were dumping tons of garbage into the belly of our Mother Earth and at the wonder that she hasn't evicted us yet.

What amazed me was the amount of recyclable items in the piles. The following are the top three things I saw that could have been recycled.

Newspaper

- There are many recycling drop-off points in the city and county for recycling newspaper.
- Newspapers make great mulch in the garden. I run it through my chipper/shredder and use it as top mulch in the vegetable garden mixed with chopped hay and compost. Check with your instruction manual for directions on shredding newsprint.

- Newspaper is also good as a weed barrier—lay thick layers of newspaper on the ground and place more mulch on top to hold down.
- Make seed starter pots.

Corrugated Cardboard

- The transfer station on Highway 90 has two huge bins for cardboard drop off as well as a drop off point in the Safeway/Osco parking lot.
- Cardboard is great for laying under other mulches for weed control.
- Use as plant frost protectors.
- Cut sections of cardboard can be used for pressing flowers.
- I reuse cardboard rolls of toilet paper and paper towels for the garden. Cut into half or thirds to make cardboard rings. They make great indoor starter seed pots that can be transplanted into the garden seed and all. For direct seeding into the outdoor garden take the cut sections and push them into the ground with about half an inch above ground and plant seed into them and cover with soil. It helps keep the Curved-billed Thrashers from uprooting the seed and provides protection from cutworms when plants are seedlings.

Garden Clippings

First let me set to rest the rumors that, yes I have been seen crawling through the piles of garbage retrieving bags of leaves to take home.

- Garden clippings (except for Bermuda grass!) should go into the compost pile or chipped into small pieces and used as mulch. If you don't have a compost pile consider starting one. You will discover much of your garbage waste can be put into the compost pile. Contact the Cooperative Extension Office or request on-line at <http://www.ag.arizona.edu/cochise/mg/requestpublications.htm> for the publication *Home Composting in Arizona, The Lazy Way*.
- Ask a gardening friend who does have a compost pile if they would like your clippings—I assure you that if you offered them your “gold” they would jump at the chance to take it home.
- Take your clippings to the city compost facility.

Remember—Reduce, Recycle, and Re-use to Restore our Mother Earth!

Cheri Melton
Master Gardener

Cochise County Cooperative Extension

www.ag.arizona.edu/cochise/mg/

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(520) 384-3594

Palms for the High Desert

All palms planted at this elevation in the high desert will show some cold damage after a normal winter. Nevertheless, with proper selection and good cultural practices, several varieties of palms can be grown successfully in the local area. This is NOT South Florida or Tahiti; so be very, very careful when making the decision to add palms to your landscape.

Before making the decision to add a palm or two to your landscape, determine just how the palm will complement your total landscape. Select the site for the palm very carefully. Don't be fooled; the cutesy little #1 *Washingtonia filifera* you buy on a whim and plant right next to your custom Santa Fe will one day tower 40 - 50 feet and weigh hundreds of pounds, and in my humble opinion, will look as tacky in that location as a flock of plastic pink flamingoes outside your front door! Should you decide to remove this now towering behemoth, it will require professional expertise to keep from flattening your home and may necessitate a second mortgage to cover the removal expense. Nevertheless, as previously stated, with proper selection, siting, and care, palms can be a wonderful addition to your landscape and enhance the aesthetic beauty of your home.

Here are some palms to consider:

1. *Washingtonia robusta* (Mexican Fan Palm): These palms, as the name suggests, are native to Mexico and can tolerate temperatures as low as the high teens. However, the fronds will show cold damage with temperatures below

25° F. This means that you will have to trim all old fronds off every year unless you want the palm to have a "skirt." Remember, palm fronds do not fall off; they must be removed by you. This palm is more wind resistant than other varieties so that its fronds don't look tattered after one of our famous wind storms. This palm can get over 40 feet tall. These are the signature palms of the Los Angeles basin.

2. *Washingtonia filifera* (California Fan Palm): These are Arizona's only native palms. This palm is very similar to the *Washingtonia robusta*. The main difference is the girth of the trunk which is much larger and the fronds have more "hair." The cold tolerance seems to be slightly lower than the Mexican Fan Palm.



3. *Chamaerops humilis* (Mediterranean Fan Palm): This is the most cold hardy of the palms. They have been known to survive temperatures as low as 5° F. These palms also show the least cold damage and hold up well in high winds. This palm normally tops out at only 6 - 8 feet and is characterized by multi-trunks giving a mini oasis effect in the landscape. It can be kept as a single trunk by careful pruning and dusting the pruning cut with sulfur.

4. *Trachycarpus fortunei* (Windmill Palm): The Windmill Palm, a native of China, reaches 20 feet

and can withstand temperatures of approximately 10° F. These are the palms planted in front of the Sierra Vista Post Office. The palm is characterized by a trunk which is thicker at the top than at the base and is covered with dense, hairy-looking fiber. Do not plant these palms where they will be subjected to extreme high winds as their fronds can become tattered.

5. *Phoenix canariensis* (*Dactyloides*) (Canary Island Date Palm/Phoenix Date Palm): The date palm in the high desert can reach 20 feet and have a width of 10 - 15 feet. The Phoenix Date Palm is more slender than the Canary Island Date Palm and can survive colder temperatures but both experience severe frond dieback in the lower 20's and are slow to recover. I certainly would not recommend this palm for outlying areas or where cold air pools.

6. *Butia capitata* (Pindo Palm): The Pindo Palm, a South American native, is a very slow growing palm to 10 - 20 feet. It is hardy to 15° F. and has yellow to red edible fruits. Fronds somewhat similar to the date palms but not nearly as long. Difficult to find in the local nursery trade but an interesting addition to the landscape if available.

7. *Sabal palmetto* (Cabbage Palm): The Palmetto is the signature palm of South Carolina.

(continued on next page)

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Robert E. Call". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Robert E. Call
Extension Agent, Horticulture

Carolyn Gruenhagen
Editor

This palm is a very slow grower to 20 feet and it can withstand temperatures in the high teens for brief periods. (Oftimes cold tolerance is more a function of duration than absolutes.) Big, 5 - 8 ft. leaves grow in a dense globular head atop a slender stalk. Difficult to find locally but a real prize signature palm in the landscape.

All palms can tolerate varying degrees of aridity but will do much better with moderate supplemental water. A balanced fertilizer is beneficial in spring and summer. However, in the high desert, do not fertilize any palm after the first of September and begin to cut back significantly on supplemental water at that time. This allows the palm to “harden” for the onset of cold weather. And, do buy a very good pair of leather gloves when you put a palm in your landscape—most have nasty “sharks teeth” on the frond stems. And finally, NEVER, EVER buy a palm just because it was so pretty in Phoenix, Tucson, or California without checking its cold tolerance; *e.g.* *Syagrus romanzoffianum* (Queen Palm) will not survive our winters.

John Phillips
Master Gardener

February Reminders

- Winter pruning
- Prune rose bushes
- Cold-moist stratify seeds
- Plant bare-root trees
- Prepare spring planting beds
- Clean and repair drip irrigation systems
- Finalize spring garden plans
- Keep watering!!!

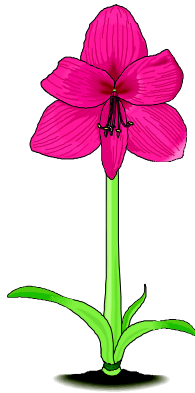
High on the Desert

Just a short time until the
High Desert Gardening & Landscaping Conference!!!
If you haven't registered yet, please use the form enclosed in this newsletter—
you won't even have to pay the late fee.
See YOU there!

Dear Master Gardener:

I recently received an amaryllis houseplant. How do I care for it properly?

Cheryl,
Bisbee, AZ



Dear Cheryl:
The amaryllis houseplant is in the genus *Hippeastrum*, which is native to South Africa.

Amaryllis should have several hours of sunlight or bright light all day. (This may be somewhat difficult in the canyons of old Bisbee.) Keep the soil evenly moist and feed the plant every other week, except during the fall. When the strap-like leaves begin to turn yellow, dry out the plant for at least two months after removing the dried leaves. Keep the plant in a cool, dry, dark place. After this rest period, which should be during late fall or early winter, repot the plant in a sandy soil mix adding bone-meal or superphosphate. Set the upper half of the bulb above the soil surface. Firm the soil and lightly water until growth restarts.

Be careful with the water because too much water can cause rotting.

After the plant has bloomed and when the leaves begin yellowing, start the process over again. The large flower stock topped with two to six huge trumpet-shaped flowers make this long-lived houseplant worth keeping.

Carole Beachamp
Master Gardener

Scholarships Awarded

Cochise County Master Gardeners Association has awarded scholarships to the Seventh Annual High Desert Gardening & Landscaping Conference to:

Edna Weigel
DeForest Lewis

Congratulations!



Winter Catalog Frenzy

Well, it's winter, and it's just too darn cold to go out and play in the dirt. The gardening marketers know this and boy do they respond with gusto. We have been receiving our catalogs, and this is the time to be dreaming about and planning our spring gardens. Even though we know spring is not usually the best time to plant here in the desert, we just cannot help ourselves, right?

I am going to emphasize the dreaming aspect, because after a weekend with the catalogs, enough dreaming has been done so that not only are our yards full, but so are those of the neighbors, not to mention any stretches of vacant land lying about the desert. The grass has been replaced with vegetables. Some people may laugh at the cucumber and tomato landscape, but we think we are ahead of our time and it will catch up with the rest of the neighborhood soon. Our cutting gardens will produce endless bounty of florist quality flowers and we will have enough cauliflower and sweet corn for everyone at a fraction of the price at the supermarkets. Our new water systems will be so efficient that our water bills will hardly have risen. We will have every type of flower and vegetable that can be grown in this climate and many that cannot. Our gardens will be perfect and there will not be any pests to speak of because we are armed with the latest and best pest controls.

Now it is time to start filling out the order forms. Of course, we fill them out for every catalog because no company can fulfill our

expectations. The total comes to just under . . . \$7,000.00! Uh! Oh! We look out into the yard and in a fleeting moment of clarity see that there aren't really fifty acres in our yard. It is more like fifty feet. So, we painstakingly trim the order by one eighth. There, that's better! We then put the catalogs aside until shipping dates get closer or until the next time we have an extra five minutes and we wait for spring.

One of the best things about spring is that we do not have to look at a calendar to know that it is here. We can tell by the flower displays at the nurseries. Every year we see those displays and we say that we can wait for our catalog orders that we haven't placed yet because we haven't found a way to tell the spouse, children, and the dogs that they won't be eating for a while. Every year we say this and every year we haul about twenty flats home and tell ourselves that these plants are just fillers and are temporary. We then see the new seed packet displays and they look almost as good as the ones in the catalog, so we better try a few (dozen) packets. We then find last year's stash of seed packets and remember the promise they held, and we save some room in the garden for them.

We start digging on the first fine day of spring, and the dirt smells so good that we decide we really don't need a tiller; that it feels pretty good to be turning the dirt ourselves. We plant what we have, and tell ourselves that, by gosh, "I'm getting tired, but next year I'm really going to outdo myself."

*Laura Ribic
Master Gardener Associate*

The Agent's Observations

Q I have several varieties of pecan trees. On several of the trees nearly all of the nuts have the dried, closed shucks still attached tightly around the nut. Also, some of the nuts have black spots on the outer portion of the nut meat. Others are small and shriveled. What causes this and how can it be prevented?

A Shucks that stick to nuts are called "stick-tights" or "blacks." This condition is caused by one or more of the following: poor pollination, poor watering practices, heavy aphid feeding, unusual weather, and varietal differences. Many stick-tights occur because of poor pollination and therefore the nut meats do not develop. If the nut meats mature but do not fill the shell it usually signifies a watering problem, meaning not enough water. Pecans need six-acre feet of water a year! Proper watering must continue through the end of October for the nut meats to fill the shell. Black spots on the nut meats are known as epicarp lesions. They are caused by the feeding of hemipterans, *i.e.* stinkbugs and leaf-footed plant bugs, among others. These insects feed on the developing meat before the shell hardens by piercing the green shuck with their piercing-sucking mouths causing damage and death of meat cells. When observed they need to be controlled. Aphids also need to be controlled. There are three aphid species that affect pecans in the Southwest.

(continued on back page)

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High on the Desert

Date _____

Name _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Telephone _____

Full Conference \$60.00

(After February 4, \$70.00)

Thursday & Friday

One Day \$40.00

Check 1: _____ Thursday _____ Friday

(After February 4, \$45.00)

Amount Enclosed _____

(No refunds after February 4, 2000)

Please make check payable to: **CCMGA**

Mail to:

CCMGA

1140 N. Colombo

Sierra Vista, AZ 85635

HURRY!

Register with this form and late fee will be waived!

Good only through Feb. 11!

To help with our planning, indicate preference for each session - this is very important this year!

	I	II	III	IV	V	VI
A		A	A	A	A	A
B		B	B	B	B	B
C		C	C	C	C	C

Handicap access for steps to dining room will be provided
_____ I will need handicap assistance

For information call:

The U. of A. Cooperative Extension Office
 Sierra Vista, AZ (520) 458-8278, Ext. 141

2000 Conference Program

Thursday, February 17

7:30 - 8:45 am Registration Breakfast

8:45 - 9:00 am Welcome

9:00 - 10:15 am General Session

Mary Irish, Author, Phoenix, AZ
Agaves and Yuccas

10:30 - 11:45 am Session I

- A. Cathy Cromell, *Desert Gardening for Beginners**
- B. Jack Kelly, *Desert Plant Propagation*
- C. Cheri Melton, *Hummingbird & Butterfly Gardening*

11:45 - 12:00 pm Exhibits

12:00 - 1:30 pm Lunch, Door Prizes & Exhibits

1:45 - 2:45 pm General Session

John Begeman, Pima County Horticulture Agent, Tucson, AZ, Garden Columnist, *Arizona Daily Star Weed Control in Landscapes*

3:00 - 4:00 pm Session II

- A. Ginger Maxey, *Xeriscape Gardening**
- B. Matt Johnson, *Desert Legumes*
- C. Russ Buhrow, *Free Water-Water Harvesting*

4:15 - 5:15 pm Session III

- A. Rob Call, *Controlling Vertebrate Pests**
- B. Gretchen Kent, *Water Management*
- C. Wynn Anderson, *Chihuahuan Landscape Plants*



Friday, February 18

7:30 - 8:45 am Registration Breakfast

8:45 - 9:00 am Welcome

9:00 - 10:15 am General Session

Jean Coté, Mountain States Wholesale Nursery, Litchfield Park, AZ
New Plants-New Ideas

10:30 - 11:45 am Session IV

- A. Mills Tandy Ph.D., *Landscaping with Huachuca Natives**
- B. Mike Kilby, Ph.D. *Grapes and Small Fruits*
- C. Nancy Stallcup, *Wildflowers of Arizona*

11:45 - 12:00 pm Exhibits

12:00 - 1:30 pm Lunch, Door Prizes & Exhibits

1:45 - 2:45 pm General Session

Ian Pepper, Ph.D. University of Arizona
Soil Microbiology

3:00 - 4:00 pm Session V

- A. Cado Daily, *Basic Landscape Design**
- B. Steve Priebe, *Pruning Trees*
- C. Donna DiFrancesca, *Proper Watering Practices*

4:15 - 5:15 pm Session VI

- A. John White, *Nut and Fruit Trees**
- B. Cecile Lumer, Ph.D. *Flowers and Sex*
- C. Peter Gierlach, *My Near Life Experiences with Native Plants*

5:30 - 7:00 pm Reception

*Denotes Basic Gardening Session

NOTE: ALL SPEAKERS, TOPICS, AND TIMES SUBJECT TO CHANGE WITHOUT NOTICE

They are: yellow, black-margin, and black aphids. The latter two cause the most damage, with the black aphid being the most serious. Start applications when aphids are seen on the undersides of the leaves. One or two black aphids per leaf, not leaflet, is enough for control measures to start. Care must be taken not to control predators also! Remember to treat pecan trees with a foliar zinc spray every two weeks beginning when the leaves are a 1/2 inch long in the spring. Continue zinc applications through July. Our alkaline soils bind up zinc in the same way as they bind up iron. Pecans need a lot of zinc for proper growth. Deficiency symptoms include short terminal growth causing rosetting on the terminals, small leaves and large brown and black necrotic spots between leaflet veins. Aphid damage causes smaller necrotic feeding spots on the leaflets.

*Robert E. Call
Extension Agent, Horticulture*

Fruit & Nut Tree Pruning Demo

Wednesday, February 23

2:00 pm

2370 E. Boone Trail, Sierra Vista
(South on Highway 92 to Yaqui, right on Yaqui to Cherokee, right on Cherokee to Boone Trail. House is 1st house on left at the corner of Cherokee and Boone. Please park on Cherokee.)

Demonstration given by Robert E. Call
Extension Agent, Horticulture
The U. of A. Cooperative Extension
458-8278, Ext. 141

Everyone is welcome!!!

ARIZONA COOPERATIVE EXTENSION
U.S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE
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