



High on the Desert Cochise County Master Gardener Newsletter

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

The Sierra Vista Library Garden

Next time you're at the Sierra Vista Library, take a few extra minutes to stroll through the gardens on the south side of the building. There you will not only find a great collection of native and adapted plants—many identified by their Latin and common names—but also a beautiful graveled path to stroll along and some strategically placed benches to sit upon and take it all in. If you are unable to take a physical stroll through the gardens, you can also take a virtual stroll from the library Web site.

To take the virtual tour, select the link to "Plants of the Sierra Vista Library" from the library home page (<http://www.ci.sierra-vista.az.us/SVLibrary/plants.htm>) and kick back for a beautiful and informative virtual tour. The plants are described in an eight page pdf (Adobe Portable Document Format) document beautifully illustrated with photographs of the plants and often close ups of their blossoms as well. Twenty-eight plants are featured.

The descriptions begin with the common and Latin names of the plants and the name of the botanical family they belong to. This is followed by general description of the appearance of the plants, information about their native habitats, their cold and drought tolerances, and other interesting facts about them such as their attractiveness to birds and butterflies.

In addition to its value as a thing of beauty, the library garden also provides a useful resource to local gardeners. There gardeners can see first-hand the kinds of plants that grow well in this area, what they look like in a true garden setting, and the kinds of environments they do best in. Armed with their own observations of the garden and the information in the on-line document, local gardeners are well-prepared to create their own xeriscape gardens. (Hint: if you are not familiar with the term "xeriscape" check out the document for a definition.)

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In a Desert Garden

Carolina Jessamine—
Gelsemium sempervirens and
Cat's Claw Vine—
Macfadyena unguis-cati

This month I am writing about two climbing vines that are similar but completely different. One has to be trained and blooms in late fall and winter and the other one climbs with tendrils and blooms in late spring and early summer. Both have a similar flower and are worth growing. In our mild weather I like to see color also in the winter months. That is why I have planted many evergreen shrubs and vines. Nothing looks sadder than a garden on a sunny winter day with nothing more than bare branches to look at.

A good plant to have for these winter months is the Carolina Jessamine—*Gelsemium sempervirens*. Apart from having evergreen foliage, this vine awards me with beautiful trumpet-shaped flowers in fall and spring. This year, being so warm, I have enjoyed these flowers since November. The flowers are slightly fragrant. This is a vine that sends out long streamers that twine around its support. It grows slowly to about 20 feet. This plant is a Southeastern native but does very well here in the Southwest. It can take some drought once established. Train on a trellis and let it cascade or grow on a chain link fence or to cover a wall. My neighbor has two of these plants growing on his wall and I enjoy them cascad-

ing over the wall into my garden and giving me beautiful color right now. Keep in mind, all parts of this plant are poisonous. This vine looks pretty climbing into a tree and as it is not heavy it cannot hurt a grown tree. I would not advise that with a Wisteria. The plant does best in full sun, but afternoon shade is all right and keep roots well mulched and shaded.



The other great vine, Cat's Claw Vine—*Macfadyena unguis-cati*, is evergreen in a mild climate and looks good all year in my yard. It likes to grow by attaching itself to a surface and is ideal for an empty wall. It grows using its claw-like tendrils a lot like ivy does. It is not a good choice for a stucco wall because if you ever had to take it down the stucco would come off too. The vine starts blooming around May and has lovely big trumpet shaped flowers. The best example of it is at Sierra Vista Regional Health Center where it grows on a very tall wall, an ideal location for it. This vine climbs 20 to 40 feet and it loves heat.

Angel Rutherford, Master Gardener



How Can I Become a Master Gardener?

One becomes a Master Gardener by taking a 13-week County training program and successfully passing a final exam. You first become a MG Associate and after completing 50 hours of volunteer service, an Associate becomes a full-fledged MG. Topics covered in the classes include Botany, Soils, Pest Management, Vegetables, Plant Problem Diagnosis, Ornamentals, Fruit and Nut Trees, Plant Propagation, and Irrigation and they are taught by University of Arizona Extension professionals and other horticultural experts. Cost of the training program is \$120.00 which includes the training manual. The Master Gardener Program promotes food production, landscaping with native plants, and environmental stewardship. The next class is scheduled to begin March 8 at 10:00 a.m.—1:00 p.m. For more information or to sign up for the class, call Joyce at the Cooperative Extension office, 458-8278, Ext. 2141.

Robert E. Call

Robert E. Call
Extension Agent, Horticulture

Carolyn Gruenhagen
Editor

Cuttings 'N' Clippings

* The next CCMGA meeting is 5:00 p.m. Thursday, February 2, 2006 at the UAS campus, Room 503. The speaker will be Dr. Bob Stoltz, retired entomologist, speaking on *Beneficial Insects for Gardeners*.

* The February *Water Wise* workshop, *Drip Irrigation 101*, will be held February 4 from 9:00—11:00 a.m. at Cochise College Room 314. Cindi Wilkins and Cado Daily, UA Extension *Water Wise* Specialists, will help demystify the parts and pieces of a drip irrigation system.

* On February 18 from 9:00—11:00 a.m. a *Hands-On Drip For the Mechanically Challenged* workshop will be held at the Plant Science Center at the University of Arizona South. Penny Artio will show you how to put together a simple drip irrigation system from gluing parts to replacing emitters.

* The New Mexico Organic Farming Conference “billed the Southwest’s Premier Conference for Organic Agriculture” will be held on Friday, Feb. 24 and Saturday, Feb. 25 at the Hilton Hotel in Albuquerque. Go to www.farmtotable.info/organicconferenceprogram2006.pdf for more information.

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The Virtual Gardener—Internet À la Carte

Have you been to CafeSierra yet?

No, I’m not talking about the latest trendy bistro in Sierra Vista but about the Sierra Vista library’s new Wi-Fi (Wireless Fidelity) network—called CafeSierra—that allows high speed access to the Internet. Although the library has long had its own set of computers you could use in-house to surf the Net, there were only a few and there was often a wait to use one of them. With CafeSierra there’s no waiting. You can now bring your own computer to the library and surf from anywhere inside the building. All you need is a laptop with a Wi-Fi connection capability. Most newer laptops come with that capability built in.

If you’ve never used a Wi-Fi connection before, no sweat. Ask the librarian for an instruction sheet that tells you exactly how to set up your computer to link to CafeSierra. The details vary slightly depending on the operating system your computer uses, but the instructions are detailed and easy to follow. If your laptop is already set up to connect to a wireless network as mine was, all you need to do is turn on the computer and connect.

Most of the time my dialup connection at home is sufficient for me, but occasionally I want to download a large file or use a service such as Google Earth that requires a high-speed connection. Rationalize as I might, those occasional requirements do not justify the extra expense of a subscription to a high-speed service at home. CafeSierra is a

perfect solution to the problem. I simply keep a folder on my laptop that contains URLs (uniform resource locators) to the large files I would like to download or to services I would like to access that require a high-bandwidth connection. The next time I go to the library I take my laptop along, connect to CafeSierra, and grab the files or use the services.

Proceeds from the Friends of the Library bookstore pay for CafeSierra, so don’t forget to drop in and browse their collection for some great bargains. You can often find books and magazines on gardening at prices anyone can afford. If you’re not in the mood to buy, you can always donate some of those books you read long ago that are still lying around the house gathering dust. The store is located in the library building complex and is open every day of the week except on public holidays.

Until next time, happy surfing!

Gary A. Gruenhagen, Master Gardener
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The Agent's Observations

Q

How and when should I prune roses?



A

Roses (tea and floribunda) should be pruned each winter to improve their appearance, quantity, and quality of flowers. If roses are not pruned, they soon grow into a bramble patch. The flowers will be small and poor quality. Remove dead and diseased wood, thin out weak and crossing canes, remove sucker canes (tall, straight growth), head back more vigorous growth to an outward facing bud and shape the bush. When older canes fail to produce good blossoms they should be cut back to several inches above the ground so new canes will grow to replace them. New flowers will not be produced until next year with this extreme pruning. Rose pruning is not difficult, but most individuals do not prune enough wood out of the plant. Use sharp shears and do not leave bare stubs when pruning. Make all cuts to a cane or to a strong outward facing bud. If you prune heavily, you would leave only three to four healthy canes that are six to eight inches high. This will produce fewer, showy, long-stemmed large blooms. Moderate pruning would leave five to twelve canes about 24 to 28 inches high, producing more blooms of moderate size. This is

probably the best method for most gardeners. Light pruning and clipping of old blooms can be done all year long. Climbing roses should be pruned just after they have flowered. This stimulates new cane growth and development on which next year's flowers will be borne. In spring, remove dead canes and weak branches. Prune sparingly. Removal of too much wood in the spring will reduce flower production of climbing roses.

Q

How and when should I train and prune grape vines?



A

Most grape vines are never pruned back enough. There are exceptions when people get too wild with the pruning shears, but most need more canes cut out each year. A newly planted grape vine should be cut back to one strong main trunk with two buds. Once a new grape vine has grown through one season, select two to four lateral canes near the top of the trunk and cut off all other canes. Select two buds for vigorous growing grapes and four buds for less vigorous vines. The remaining canes should then be cut back to the two buds. After the grape vine is three or four years old and growing vigorously, it should be pruned back each year. The light-colored canes are last

year's growth and will bear the next year's fruit. Select two to four light-colored canes and prune out all others. Leave two to four two-bud spur canes as replacements for the longer light colored canes that remain. The end of the long canes should be cut off to leave about three-foot sections that have 5 to 8 buds that will produce grapes the coming season. These remaining light-colored grape producing canes should be trained to a wire or trellis. If you have an arbor, the lowest canes could be cut. Remaining canes should be shortened and left on the main trunk but the older wood that bore fruit should be removed from the main trunk.

Q

How and when should I train and prune young fruit trees?



A

If new fruit trees are planted during the dormant season, it is important to prune and shape the tree for the next two or three seasons. It is critical for the lifetime production of the tree. If a tree grows large and has never been pruned or shaped since planting, it is almost an impossibility to do anything except thin it out. At

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planting time, most new fruit trees (especially bare root) should have from one-third to one-half of the top growth cut off. A good height is 2½ to 3 feet above the ground. Even if you have only a single three-foot stick left after cutting the top off it will be fine. After the first season of growth, you should select three to six evenly shaped limbs to form the canopy. These are called “scaffold” Peaches, nectarines, and Japanese plum are trained to an open center with 3 to 5 scaffold limbs, with 4 being ideal. This allows sunlight to penetrate the center of the tree. Apples, pears, and Asian pears are pruned to a central leader, (like a pine tree), with 4 to 6 scaffold limbs, 5 being ideal. All other deciduous fruit trees should be pruned to a modified central leader form. This is the same as the central leader but the leader is tipped back to a side shoot each year. Scaffold limbs should be about the same diameter and length and spaced evenly around the trunk of the tree. Leaving one or two larger scaffold limbs will produce a lopsided tree as it grows. Cut all other limbs at the trunk. When leaves are present in the spring-spread the scaffold limbs away from the tree using “spreaders.” The angle formed between the trunk and scaffold limbs should

be no less than 45°, and its called the “crotch angle.” Following the second and third growing season prune off any excessive limbs and train to the final form.



How and when should I train older fruit trees?



If older deciduous fruit trees have been pruned and trained in the first three years of growth with their shape established, they don't need much pruning until they start to bear large amounts of fruit. Pruning helps thin out the fruiting wood so that the tree won't overload and break limbs or bear small fruit. However, thinning is needed after the fruit has set in the case of apples, pears, peaches, and nectarines trees. Pruning also allows foliage exposure to sunlight and promotes fruit growth on the inside of the tree. Excessive pruning can remove too many leaves and lead to sunburned fruit. Pruning stimulates growth of new fruiting wood each year. If it is not pruned annually a fruit tree's production will decrease over

time. No more than one-third of the total diameter of limbs should be removed each year. Also cut out dead, broken, diseased, parallel (one limb on top of another; remove the least desirable one) limbs that form weak or tight crotch angles or crossing limbs. If three limbs are too close to one another, removing the middle one will usually solve the problem. One more thing, do not tip branches if they are too long. Remove the whole limb where it is attached. Tipping will cause more growth and longer shoots than leaving the offending limb alone.

ACKNOWLEDGMENT: Dr. Randy Norton, Graham County Extension Agriculture Agent, contributed to this article.

Robert E. Call
Extension Agent, Horticulture

Call Before You Dig!

Underground utilities are buried everywhere, often where you don't expect them. If your project includes underground excavation, Call Before You Dig. It is free, not just a good idea, but it is also the law!

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* The Second Annual Gila Valley Gardening & Landscaping Conference will be held at Eastern Arizona College in Thatcher, AZ on February 25, 2006. The one-day conference is sponsored by The University of Arizona Cooperative Extension and the Graham County Master Gardeners Association. Registration forms are available at the Cooperative Extension offices.

* The Sierra Vista Farmers Market will open on Earth Day, Saturday, April 22, in conjunction with the West End Block Party to mark Sierra Vista's 50th anniversary. The regular farmers market vendors will be there as well as Earth Day demonstrators and exhibitors at the same location, the NW corner of Carmichael and

Wilcox, that the market was held at last year. The hours will be from 10 a.m.—3 p.m. After this opening the farmers market will revert to Thursdays, beginning April 27 and probably to mornings, from 8 to noon, instead of afternoons to avoid the monsoons. For information contact Valerie McCaffrey, Manager, Sierra Vista Farmers Market at (520)378-2973 or vallimac@cox.net.



High on the Desert

The 13th annual High Desert Gardening & Landscaping Conference sponsored by Cochise County Master Gardeners Association in conjunction with the University of Arizona will be held Friday afternoon, May 5 and all day Saturday, May 6, 2006 at Buena High School in Sierra Vista. Registration forms will be in the March Master Gardener Newsletter. There is a fee for this conference.

The spring Water Wise/Master Gardener Xeriscape Garden Tour will be held on Sunday, May 7 from 1 to 4:00 p.m. This is free and open to the public. Contact the Cooperative Extension for maps about the middle of April.