



High on the Desert Cochise County Master Gardener Newsletter

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

14th Annual High on the Desert Conference

Santa's elves are not the only ones busy at this time of year. Cochise County Master Gardener Association members are also hard at work preparing for the 14th Annual High Desert Gardening & Landscaping Conference. The conference—to be held at *Simply the Best* at The Palms, Sierra Vista's new Special Events Center on the 15th and 16th of February—will feature an outstanding lineup of speakers presenting on a wide range of topics. If you've never attended, you have missed an exceptional conference celebrating the unique High Desert we live in, and at a bargain price. There is still time to apply for a scholarship (see details on next page). Here is a taste of what to expect if you attend.

Thursday morning, Dr. John Ware, Archeologist, and Executive Director of the Amerind Foundation located in the Dragoon Mountains east of Benson, will lead off with a general

session talk on innovative water harvesting and gardening techniques used by prehistoric Indians of the Southwest to coax a livelihood from arid desert soils. These techniques have withstood the test of time, are still used by Native American farmers today, and can be used by you too.

The second general session speaker on Thursday, Scott Calhoun, is a Tucson garden designer, nurseryman, and author of the prize-winning book *The Story of a Gardener's Obsession That Got a Little Out of Hand* as well as numerous articles in *Horticulture* and *Sunset* magazines. He will wow conference attendees with pictures and stories excerpted from his new book of chasing wildflowers in the Southwest due out in March.

The general sessions on Friday will begin with a presentation by University of Arizona climatologist, Dr.

(Continued on page 2)

Inside this issue:

Scholarship Application	2
In a Desert Garden	3
Herbs that Encourage	3
Cuttings 'N' Clippings	4
January Reminders	4

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(Continued from page 1)

Michael Crimmins, who will explain why Arizona's climate is so consistently inconsistent. His presentation will help you understand how our local climate is connected to global atmospheric circulation patterns and why it is so difficult to make long-range weather forecasts for this area.

The final general session on Friday will feature the ever-popular "Know it all panel" of "experts." The panel will attempt to answer questions from the audience. The challenge is to ask them a gardening question they can't answer—not likely.

As if the general sessions were not enough, there will be eighteen practical "how-to" breakout sessions explaining composting, propagating native plants, water harvesting, constructing a gravity-fed drip system, gardening on rainwater alone, growing nut trees, landscaping for color, controlling weeds, coping with desert soils, and dealing with cactus pests and other problems. In addition, there will be educational sessions on the glassy-winged sharpshooter, bacterial leaf scorch diseases, and the ecology of the San Pedro river.

Also included in the conference fee are two Continental breakfasts, two buffet lunches and a closing reception. There will be exhibitors, vendors, and lots of door prizes. The Sierra Vista Farmer's Market will be open on Thursday for the benefit of attendees.

We hope to see YOU at the conference! More information is available at the web site:

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

The Virtual Gardener will return next month. Until next time...Happy Surfing.

*Carolyn Gruenhagen, Conference Co-Coordinator
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High on the Desert

High Desert Gardening & Landscaping Conference Scholarship Application

The Cochise County Master Gardeners Association (CCMGA) is awarding up to three full scholarships to the 2007 High Desert Gardening & Landscaping Conference to be held at The Palms, 255 West Wilcox Street, Sierra Vista, AZ, February 15 & 16, 2007. Applicants are invited to submit an essay on one of the following topics:

Gardening for food production
Landscaping with native plants
Environmental stewardship

Essays must meet the following criteria:

1. 750 to 1,000 words in length.
2. Double spaced and typed on plain bond paper — if possible a disk or CD included.
3. Represent original scholarship and be suitable for publication. All references and authorities cited must be properly attributed.
4. Entries must be accompanied by an official cover sheet available from the Cooperative Extension Office at the University of Arizona South campus or from the web site: www.ag.arizona.edu/cochise/mg
5. Entries must be received at the Cooperative Extension Office, 1140 N. Colombo, Sierra Vista, AZ 85635 not later than close of business on January 15, 2007.

Entries will be judged by the Cochise County Horticultural Extension Agent and a committee of Master Gardeners appointed by the President of CCMGA. The awardees will be notified not later than January 26, 2007 and their names published in the February 2007 Master Gardener Newsletter.

In a Desert Garden

Hop Bush – *Dodonaea viscosa*

This month I am writing about a shrub I actually have no experience with. I do not grow it in my yard, yet. One of my favorite pastimes is cruising the nurseries to see what is available. Not that I really have the space to add to my collection, but there is always room for change or to tuck a little plant in here or there. At a nursery on Highway 92 I wandered the aisles filled with shrubs, and I came across a row of lovely specimens of Hop Bush – *Dodonaea viscosa*. It was love on first sight. I read about this shrub sometime ago in *Native Plants for Southwestern Landscapes* by Judy Mielke, but never had seen one available. By the way, this book is a must have for every desert gardener. Of course Judy Mielke lives in Phoenix and that has to be taken into consideration, but a lot of plants described in her book do well in our High Desert area and there are nice photographs of the plants.

Anyway, back to the Hop Bush. This plant grows in elevation from 2000' to 5000', in canyons and along arroyos. It is native to Arizona, the Southwest, and Hawaii where the fruits are used for leis. There are also varieties found in Australia and warmer countries around the world and even in the Tropics. Hop Bush grows in full sun or partial shade. It is cold tolerant to 15° F. It is not



picky about soils and does well in rocky or clayish soil. It even is not fussy about irrigation, from minimal (once established) to generous. Hop Bush grows to 10' – 15', but takes well to pruning and can even be pruned into a formal hedge, which I despise—I love the natural, open growth of it. How fast it will grow depends on how much water it gets. The Arizona native variety has bright green leaves that are evergreen and they give the shrub a very lush appearance. The leaves are about 3 inches long and ½ inch wide and shiny, with a resinous coating. The shrub produces small unimpressive yellow flowers. The winged fruit is more noticeable. The bush is green and turns to rose or tan in fall. *Dodonaea* was named Hop Bush because the Indians used the fruit to make beer. The seeds are eaten by doves and quail. This is a tough shrub that can withstand drought, winds, poor soils, heat and cold.

Cruising the nurseries I found *D. purpurea*, purple Hop Bush. A cutting grown variety “Saratoga” is uniformly deep purple. Now this is a shrub that is absolutely stunning and I will find room for it in my crowded garden. I love purple plants. I have been told this variety needs full sun to produce the purple foliage. In the shade it will convert back to green. Seedlings will vary greatly in color.

Angel Rutherford, Master Gardener

Herbs that Encourage Wildlife

There are many reasons to grow herbs in the garden. These can be grown for the same reasons one grows vegetables: health, self-sufficiency, economics and relaxation. One additional reason for growing herbs is to encourage wildlife to visit the garden. Butterflies, hummingbirds, beneficial wasps, and bees are constantly searching for nectar. This sweet liquid is abundant in most herb flowers. In *The Successful Herb Gardener*, Sally Roth recommends 10 herbs almost guaranteed to attract hummingbirds and butterflies. Five of these herbs are also low-water use plants (*).

Common Name	Scientific Name
Agastache*anise hyssop	<i>Agastache</i> spp.
Beebalm	<i>Monarda</i> spp.
Blazing Star	<i>Liatris punctuata</i>
Coneflower	<i>Echinacea purpurea</i>
Goldenrod*	<i>Solidago</i> spp.
Hibiscus	<i>Hibiscus</i> spp.
Hyssop	<i>Hyssop officinalis</i>
Lavender*	<i>Lavandula</i> spp.
Rosemary*	<i>Rosemarinus officinalis</i>
Salvias*	<i>Salvia</i> spp.

While it is important and fun to attract dancing winged hummingbirds and other zippy-winged birds to nectar, it is also important to provide ‘host’ plants for insects. They will lay eggs on these plants and/or provide for their young caterpillars and larvae to feed on and mature. Examples of host plants are parsley, dill, and carrots. To help encourage a variety of visiting wildlife, plant a variety of herbs.

David Davis, Associate Master Gardener

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Cuttings 'N' Clippings

* The next CCMGA meeting is 5:00 p.m. Thursday, January 4, 2007 at the University of Arizona South campus, Room 508. The speaker will be De Lewis, Master Gardener on Garden Tool Maintenance.

* The January Water Wise lecture will be held Saturday, January 6 from 9:00—11:00 a.m. at the University of Arizona South Campus. The speaker is Dr. Mike Crimmons on *Global Warming: Implications for the Southwestern U.S.* For information on the 2007 schedule contact Cado Daily at 458-8278, Ext. 2139 or check the web site: www.ag.arizona.edu/cochise/waterwise

* Due to popular demand, the Sierra Vista Farmers Market will be open the first Thursday of each month this winter. The next market day is Thursday, January 4 from noon to 4:00 p.m. at the corner of Wilcox and Carmichael. For more information e-mail vallimac@cox.net or call 266-1976.

* Christmas trees may be recycled by dropping off at The Mall of Sierra Vista through January 15.

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February 15 & 16, 2007



January Reminders

- ◆ Winter pruning
- ◆ Remove old mulch/replace
- ◆ Dig tree holes
- ◆ Prepare soil for spring
- ◆ Water periodically
- ◆ Stratify seeds
- ◆ Fertilize asparagus
- ◆ General garden clean-up