

High on the Desert Cochise County Master Gardener Newsletter

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

Houseplant Symptoms, Causes, & Cures

Because it's too hot to work in the garden in June, I thought it would be a good time to focus on our indoor plants. This month is a good time to gather all the houseplants and do an "annual check-up." Chores include removing the plant from its pot and checking the rootball to see if it needs to be transplanted into a larger container, pruning off old or dead leaves, fertilization, and inspection for pests or diseases. Here are the most common houseplants ailments to watch for:

LEAF EDGES CRISP AND BROWN (NEW GROWTH MAY QUICKLY WITHER)

CAUSE(S) REMEDY:

- too much heat → move plant to cooler location
- too low humidity → increase humidity around plant
- uneven soil moisture → water the soil thoroughly and more often
- excessive salts in the soil → leach out soil

by watering pot thoroughly

LOWER LEAVES YELLOW

CAUSE(S) → REMEDY:

- insufficient light dry air → increase light or humidity
- age of particular leaf → old leaves may be clipped off the plant
- heavy, tight soil → repot plant into fresh potting soil
- nitrogen deficiency → check watering and fertilization practices

LEAVES APPEAR LIFELESS, LIMP AND THE PLANT WILTS FREQUENTLY

CAUSE(S) → REMEDY:

- growing container too small → repot into larger container
- poor root activity due to improper watering → check watering practices
- too much fertilizer → fertilize lightly/no

(Continued on page 2)

Inside this issue:

Cuttings 'N' Clippings	2
Garden Tip 8704	3
Call's Comments	4
June Reminders	4
Sunsites Library Garden	5
Smith School Garden	5

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(Continued from page 1)

fertilizer during winter

disease → check and treat for diseases

NEW FOLIAGE IS YELLOW

CAUSE(S) → REMEDY:

alkaline soil → apply chelated iron
inadequate light → move plant to brighter light location

poor root activity → repot plant into larger container

SPINDLY “LEGGY” PLANTS

(PLANTS MAY BE LEANING TOWARD A WINDOW OR LIGHT SOURCE)

CAUSE(S) → REMEDY:

insufficient light → provide better light or select low-light tolerant plants.

PLANT PRODUCES NO FLOWERS

CAUSE(S) → REMEDY:

not enough light → adjust light requirements for plant

too much water → check watering practices

too much fertilizer reduce fertilizer if growth is lush and rapid



FLOWER BUDS OR LEAVES FALL OFF

CAUSE(S) → REMEDY: poor growing conditions → avoid rapid fluctuations in temperature/heat
new plant → it is normal for new plants introduced into the home to experience flower/leaf drop

*Cheri Melton
Master Gardener*

“All my life I have tried to pluck a thistle and plant a flower wherever the flower would grow in thought and mind.”

Abraham Lincoln

Cuttings ‘N’ Clippings

* The next regular meeting of Cochise County Master Gardeners Association will be September 5 at the Sierra Vista Library.

* Curious to know what landscape plants do well for us here in Cochise County? Then come to a free workshop on Saturday, July 7 from 9:00—10:00 a.m. at the University of Arizona South (1140 N. Colombo behind Cochise College. Larry Park of Zamp Country Nursery will be presenting this hour long workshop. The workshop will be held in the conference room and is sponsored by the Water Wise Program.

* The Sierra Vista Plant Sciences Center needs clean baby food, pint-size and quart-size glass jars without the labels and with lids for their seed collection. If you would like to recycle your jars, please call the Cooperative Extension office in Sierra Vista or drop them off at the center at University of Arizona South.

* Got bugs? The University of Arizona Department of Entomology’s Insect Identification Line can be reached at (520) 621-5925. E-mail queries can be sent to

bugman@ag.arizona.edu

If you want a bug identified, you will need to bring the bug to the main UA campus in Tucson.

* Cochise County Master Gardeners Association elected new officers for the 2001—2002 year. They are:

President: Cheri Melton

V. President: Helene Wingert

Secretary: Liz Kras

Treasurer: Janet Jones

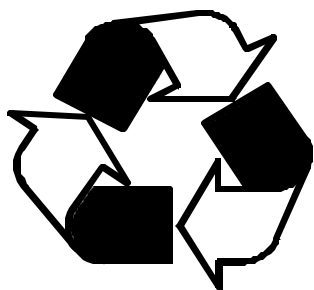
Thank you past officers for your service!

Robert E. Call
Robert E. Call
Extension Agent, Horticulture
Carolyn Gruenhagen
Editor

Garden Tip 8704

In an unending quest to bring his readers high tech solutions to every gardening problem, your Virtual Gardener has done it again. This time the tip is especially for the oenologists among my readers.

Though extensive experimentation (all in the name of science, of



course) the Virtual Gardener has discovered a reuse for the bladders

that are used to hold wine in certain brands of boxed wines, specifically bladders of the twist and pour type. Unfortunately it will take additional research to adapt bladders of the squeeze and squirt type. I call this device the Bladder-fed Portable Dripper (BLADPOD).

Once the bladder has been emptied of wine, the bladder can be removed from the box and the valve extracted by inserting a broad bladed screw driver under the edge of the black plastic valve mechanism and gently twisting the screw driver. The valves are securely seated in the bladder opening with a friction fitting and it may be necessary to move the screw driver around the edge of the valve mechanism and twist at several locations to finally remove it.

When the valve has been removed from the bladder opening, you should rinse any remaining wine from the bladder by filling it with water and emptying it several times. You may then fill the bag with

water and reinsert the valve mechanism into the opening. I have found that it is not necessary to insert the mechanism all the way into the opening. Just push it in until it first snaps. This facilitates removing it when the bladder needs to be refilled.

After filling the bladder and replacing the valve, you now have a portable watering system that can deliver up to 5 liters of water to a plant at a precisely controllable rate. The valve can be opened slightly to allow the water to drip out over several hours or it can be opened all the way to dump all of the water in a matter of seconds. Since the bladder is pliable it collapses on itself as the water drains out and never becomes blocked by air pressure.

As frivolous as it may sound, the BLADPOD works very well and can be used to drip irrigate plants that are not accessible from an existing drip system. It is perfect for irrigating newly installed plants that will only require water until they are established. Also, BLADPOD can be used for fertigation by placing a few drips of fish emulsion or other soluble fertilizer in the water.

The other day I discovered yet another use for a BLADPOD. The soil in my yard is highly compacted clay, and it usually requires explosives to excavate a hole more than 3 or 4 inches deep. I had a requirement to dig a planting hole for a salvia and was not looking forward to the job when I thought of using a BLADPOD to moisten the soil. Five liters of water and a couple of hours later, I had soil soft enough to

dig with a trowel.

I do have one word of caution, however. Although the bladders are made out of heavy gauge polyethylene plastic, they are not bullet proof. Use them carefully around cacti, mesquite, or other thorny plants. I punctured one bladder and so far have not been able to find a fix for the leak. Fortunately the pinhole puncture in the bladder is small enough that it delivers a very tiny stream of water so I can continue to use it.

The Virtual Gardener— House Plant Care

Cheri's article this month provides some excellent tips on the care of house plants. If you would like additional information on this topic, check out

<http://www.plantcare.com/>.

The PlantCare database contains information on over 1300 species of house plants and provides information on up to 18 topics for each plant, including watering, lighting, fertilizing, *etc.* You can search the database by common or Latin name or by one of 19 different plant types. The site also includes information on six common pests of houseplants and the means to control them. In addition, there is a Chat Room and Message Board where you can get in contact with other gardeners and exchange information with them.

Until next time, happy surfing.

Gary A. Gruenhagen, Master Gardener
gruenha@sinosa.com

Call's Comments. . .

A good method of controlling woody plants including desert broom, Siberian elms, mesquite, and others is by using the herbicide glyphosate. This herbicide is marketed most widely as Roundup®. Prepare a small container and place some concentrated glyphosate in it. You must purchase 18 or 41% concentrate Roundup®, not the diluted 0.96%, ready-to-use products. Cut down or prune back the plant to be removed close to the ground. Leave a stump if you plan on pulling it out later when the roots have died. With a paint brush or sponge apply the concentrated Roundup® to the cut surface immediately after cutting down the plant. Do not wait or the plant will heal over and decrease the effectiveness of the herbicide. If regrowth occurs prune it back and paint again. Best results are obtained when the plant is actively growing. This treatment is on the Roundup® label under "Cut Stump Treatment." **Always read the label of pesticides and use them accordingly.**

Robert E. Call
Extension Agent, Horticulture



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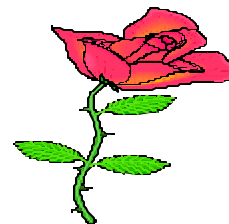


Africanized Honey Bees Outdoor Recreation Safety Tips

1. Look out for honey bee colonies when outdoors.
2. If you find a colony of bees, leave them alone and keep others away.
3. Keep your dogs under control.
4. Wear light colored clothes, including socks.
5. Avoid wearing scents of any sort when hiking
6. Be particularly careful when using any heavy equipment that produces sound vibrations.
7. Keep escape routes in mind.
8. If you know you are allergic always have someone with you when doing outdoor activities.

June Reminders

- 🌹 Check tree ties
- 🌹 Remove stakes if tree can stand al one
- 🌹 Mulch trees & shrubs
- 🌹 Remove faded flowers & fertilize roses
- 🌹 Stake tomato plants & watch for curly top—remove
- 🌹 Prevent blossom end rot by even watering
- 🌹 Water! Water! And water some more!



Phenology Update

Last March I wrote a Virtual Gardener article about phenology and asked my readers to let me know if they were interested in contributing to a phenology database. Unfortunately we Master Gardeners have been a little slow off the blocks with this one, and I want to apologize to those of you who wrote to me expressing interest in participating. We are working on a phenology program but it is taking more time to get organized than I originally anticipated. Stay tuned for more developments. Thanks.

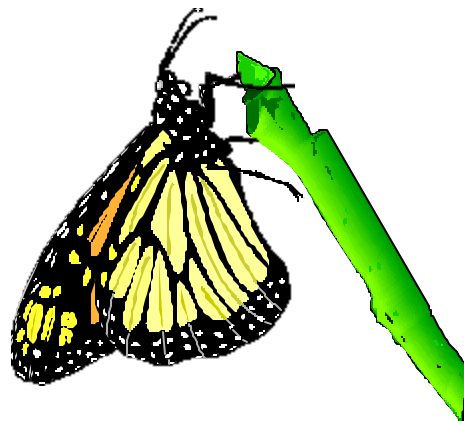
Gary

Sunsites Community Library Xeriscape Garden Project Ribbon Cutting

Congratulations to Barbara Cain, Julia Johnson, and Rebecca Reed who were awarded their Master Gardener Badges after volunteering collectively over 200 hours. They received their badges at the ribbon cutting ceremony April 22. They designed and completed the Sunsites Community Library Xeriscape Garden Project. Afterward an Ice Cream Social was held for community members and library patrons. Barbara, Julia, and Rebecca completed the 1999 Fall Master Gardening Class held at Sunsites Seniors Community Center.

created and a bench was placed under a large Mexican palo verde tree where patrons can read and relax. Copper labels identify all plant species found in the garden. A three-fold pamphlet was printed with a description of the plants, their virtues, and a history of the Sunsites Community Library Xeriscape Garden.

Robert E. Call
Extension Agent, Horticulture



Smith Middle School Habitat Garden

During the summer of 2000 the new Master Gardeners, with supervised inmates from the State Prison at Douglas, did a lot of physical labor. They removed gravel and black plastic replacing it with decomposed granite. River stones were used to construct drainage channels through the garden. The topography of the garden was redesigned both to drain rainwater away from the rammed-earth wall of the library and to accentuate the natural beauty of the garden. The irrigation system was broken five years ago but some of the original plants survived and were incorporated into the garden. The design utilized these surviving plantings and added new desert adapted species. Paths were also

On Thursday May 17th Mrs. Wickizer, Mrs. Bradley and Mrs. Hawker's classrooms planted the Smith Middle School Habitat Garden on Fort Huachuca. The school maintenance/custodial crew spent over three weeks digging out Bermuda grass and breaking up the compacted soil and adding compost to prepare the three garden plots for planting.

The two outside plots each contain an existing mature tree and desert native plants such as salvias, penstemons, verbena, dalea, creosote bush, bear grass, and woolly butterfly bush was planted into these plots. The center plot consists of two herb gardens on the outer bed and the center is an open area

that will change every year as students plant the area with annual flowers and vegetables.

Desert plants and herbs were purchased from Diamond JK Nursery, who gave a generous discount on the plants. The garden is irrigated with water conserving soaker hoses and sand will be used as the mulch.

By creating this "learning lab" students will learn lessons about:

The importance of regional native flora and fauna

How plants provide humans with food, fiber, and medicines

Regional/global environ-

(Continued on page 6)

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(Continued from page 5)

mental and conservation issues

Identification of good bugs vs. bad bugs and when to use pest and disease control management

Foster appreciation and respect for others

Basic problem solving skills

Encourage students to think about career paths in horticulture, agriculture, environmental or other related fields

Related curriculum involvement includes:

Classroom lessons provided by the Water Wise Energy Smart Program, Fort Huachuca which assist teachers with specific curric-

ula about energy and water designed to satisfy one or more state standards in math, science and/or language arts.

Classroom Activities such as: Seed Collecting; The Benefits of Mulch; Diagnosing Plant Problems; and The Importance of Pollinators in the Garden.

Participation in the Monarch Watch Program. Teachers and students capture, tag, record information, and release Monarch butterflies assisting the program in its conservation efforts and research.

The garden will offer 4H members opportunities to submit entries such as Fine Arts, Floriculture, Photography, and Herbs and

Vegetables exhibits into the Cochise County Fair.

Many thanks to Master Gardener Associates John Andrews, Judy Darby, Anne Hughes, Roxanna Huish, and Helen Sisney, who volunteered their time and expertise teaching the students on how to plant.

And a BIG thank you to the Cochise County Master Gardener Association for the School Garden Program grant money, which helped make the garden possible!

*Ginger Maxey
Cheri Melton
WWES, Fort Huachuca*