



## The Virtual Gardener— This Little Piggie . . . Ate My Garden!



One Sunday morning a few months ago while my wife and I were doing some yard work, she glanced up just in time to see a javelina running out of an open door to our garage.

The javelina vacated the garage but refused to leave the yard. I spent most of the rest of the day trying to chase the beast away, but it kept returning. I made loud noises, threw stones, and waved my arms all to no avail. The animal was not aggressive but neither was it frightened enough to flee. Instead it just ran from place to place in the yard, always keeping me at a safe distance.

I called the Sierra Vista Police Department and asked what to do. The lady who answered the call said there was nothing they could do and suggested calling the Arizona Game and Fish Department office in Tucson (On a Sunday afternoon? . . .right!) Finally the animal left of its own accord. Since that time it or its friends have returned to our front yard several times, destroying almost every one of our hesperaloes and plowing up several planting beds.

The name “javelina” is derived from the Portuguese word for peccary, *javali*. The javelinas or collared peccaries (*Pecari tajacu* [Linnaeus, 1758]) found in Arizona are members of the New World pig family *Tayassuidae* and are distantly related to the Old World pigs, *Suidae*. Collared peccaries—so named because of the band of white or yellowish fur around their necks—are one of three (maybe four) species of New World pigs that collectively inhabit large areas of South, Central, and North America from Argentina to the southwestern United States. Their taxonomy is a little confused at this time, with some taxonomists placing each of the three generally recognized species into its own genus and others placing them into the same genus and species but differentiating them as subspecies.

Like Old World pigs, they have snouted faces, small eyes, and walk on two toes. Unlike pigs, they have scent glands located below each eye and on their backs, giving them the nickname

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COLLEGE OF AGRICULTURE  
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“skunk pig.” The powerful scents produced by these glands are used to mark their territories and to recognize fellow members of their herds. They have highly developed senses of hearing and smell but notoriously poor eyesight.

Peccaries, like pigs, are omnivorous foragers and will eat meat but prefer vegetation. Javelinas will eat many types of vegetation but have a special taste for cactus and other juicy succulents. Unlike pigs whose tusks are long and curved, javelinas have relatively short, straight, thick tusks that are well-adapted for digging and crushing. The tusks also make fearsome defensive weapons against their chief predators: coyotes, bobcats, and mountain lions.

Javelinas usually travel in small family groups of from 6 to 12 individuals but larger groups—up to 50—have been reported. They have been known to attack humans and dogs, especially when they feel threatened. Despite their ungainly appearance, they are surprisingly agile and have been clocked running up to 35 mph!

The biggest threat to gardeners from javelina, however, is not one of bodily injury but of garden destruction. A herd of javelinas visiting a garden can cause thousands of dollars’ worth of damage in a single visit. They do not seem to be deterred by cactus spines and will devour your prickly pears and other cactus as well as less well-armed plants such as hesperaloes and yuccas. And, as if that were not enough, they will often attack in the wee hours of the morning, ploughing up your planting beds, pooping all over the place, and declaring ownership of your yard by marking it with their disgusting scent.

So...what’s a gardener to do?

Although you may feel like shooting, trapping, or poisoning them, that can get you in a lot of trouble, even in rural areas. Javelina are considered game animals in Arizona and can only be legally taken in season (January and February) by licensed hunters using approved techniques.

According to the Arizona Fish and Wildlife Service, the best defense for your property is a sturdy, well-anchored, metal fence or a solid brick wall. Or alternatively you can replace all the plants that javelina like to eat with ones they don’t like. If you don’t like those options, you can try to scare them off with coyote or mountain lion scents, although most experts don’t believe this is really an effective deterrent.

Coyote or mountain lion urine can be purchased in powder or liquid form. Some people swear it works well to deter javelinas and others have found it to be ineffective. Although in sufficient quantities the smell might be effective in deterring people from walking around in your yard! I suppose its effectiveness with javelinas might depend on the prior experiences of the animals themselves. Urbanized javelinas may not have had too much experience fighting off coyotes and mountain lions.

Another dubious suggestion I read online was to mix the feces of large dogs in water and splash the mixture around the yard. Presumably the size of the dog is discernable from the smell of this concoction. I guess that means that toy poodle poops won’t work.

All I can say, dear readers, is that I hope your gardens never come under javelina attack and if they do, may the Force be with you.

Until next time, happy surfing!

Gary Gruenhagen, Master Gardener  
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## In a Desert Garden

### *Tillandsias*: Air-plants

On my first trip to Florida, more than 25 years ago, I saw my first air-plants and I was so intrigued. We had planned a vacation on the Florida Keys and stayed overnight on one of the first keys. In the morning there was a farmers market, and a lady was selling orchids and air-plants. I was in plant heaven. I bought a whole bunch of air-plants in different shapes and leaf shades, and one orchid that was mounted on a piece of tree bark. I still have the orchid growing on that same piece of bark. The air-plants I gave away when I left the east to move to the west.

What are *Tillandsias*?

For those of you who are not familiar with them, they are also called air-plants as they do not require soil and get all their nutrients



from the air. Of course, as they are jungle plants and thrive in tropical conditions, one would think that growing them under desert conditions would be impossible, but that is not so. *Tillandsias* must be the most adaptable plants there are.

I attended this year’s High Desert Gardening & Landscaping Conference, an event I always enjoy. One of the vendors was selling air-plants that were placed in old glass containers which made them really attractive. Of course, I could not go home without some—actually, I bought five. Air-plants are a good plant to grow for the novice gardener as they are very undemanding. In their natural habitat they nest in tree branches

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## This Month In the High Desert Garden

**(Editor's Note:** This article written by Bill Schulze was adapted from a June 2011 article published in the *Sierra Vista Herald*.)

June can be a tough month in the high desert garden. It's typically our hottest month and it's usually a dry one to boot. So, with apologies for being repetitious, keep watering slow and deep and mulch, mulch, mulch to conserve soil moisture. If you're lucky enough to have pine trees in your yard, use fallen pine needles for mulch. Just spread them no more than a couple of inches deep around your plants and trees. As with any mulch, don't get too close to the plant stems or tree trunks since holding moisture against trunks and stems can promote rot and disease.

Deadhead roses and other flowers. We're not talking about Jerry Garcia and the band here; in gardening lingo, deadheading is the removal of spent flower blooms. Deadheading has a couple of advantages. First, removing spent blooms, which are often unattractive, enhances the beauty of the plant. It also can increase vigor as the plant spends less energy producing seeds, rose hips, and the like, and instead directs its energy toward producing more foliage and flowers. To deadhead a rose, snip the stem with a sharp pruning shears below the spent flower, about one quarter of an inch above the first set of four or five leaves. Also, deadhead annual and perennial flowers, removing enough of the stem below the spent flower to yield an attractive plant. Stop deadheading roses and other perennials about a month before freezing weather to give the plants a chance to harden off for winter. The tender new growth that follows any pruning is much more susceptible to freeze damage than older growth. Generally, don't prune any plants in late summer or fall; wait until

they're dormant in January or February to do your pruning. Many desert adapted plants, however, can be pruned in summer as the heat aids in healing.

You can plant cacti and other succulents this month as the warm weather will stimulate root growth to allow the plants to absorb the coming monsoon rains. You can plant trees, shrubs, and perennials now, but it's better to wait until September or October to minimize the transplant stress which is aggravated by hot, dry weather. Plant annual flowers now, but keep them well watered and mulched.

There is still plenty of time to plant warm season vegetable crops like melons, peppers, sweet potatoes, beans, cucumbers, squash (summer and winter), and tomatoes. For regular tomatoes, try hybrid varieties like 'Early Girl' and 'Celebrity', both of which produce reliably and throughout most of the summer. 'Patio' is a very compact variety yielding smaller tomatoes that would do well in a large container on your patio. More and more, nurseries are carrying old heirloom varieties such as 'Brandywine', 'Cherokee Purple', and 'Black Krim', which, in my opinion, give incomparable flavor but tend to not produce as heavily as the hybrids. Heirlooms are definitely worth a try if you have the extra space for them, but stick with the hybrids if you can only plant one or a few plants and want more certainty of a decent sized crop. Temperatures above 90°F tend to inhibit tomato pollination, so don't worry if your plants slack off a bit during hot weather. Keep them well watered and they'll start producing once things cool a bit. Cherry and paste, or plum tomatoes, tend to do very well here. Look for cherry varieties like 'Sweet 100', 'Sweet Million', 'Yellow' or 'Red Pear', and 'Sun Gold'. Most of these yield very heavily and you'll have little salad tomatoes all summer long, with plenty left over to give to the neighbors. For paste varieties, try 'Roma', 'La Roma' (a heavy yielder), or 'San Marzano'. Be sure all of your



tomatoes get at least six, and preferably eight hours of sun each day. It's a plus to give them some shade in the mid to latter part of the day.

*Bill Schulze, Master Gardener*

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where the hairs (trichomes) on their leaves extract nutrients from the air. They do not harm their host, just use the tree as a place to rest. By the way, the more familiar Spanish moss is in the same category of plants.

Air-plants come in different shapes and color shades, and the flowers are amazing and very beautiful. The flowers can be bright red and purple or orange and yellow and everything in between. As they don't need a container to grow in or soil to stabilize them, they can be displayed in all sorts of fancy containers or mounted on wood, metal, or stone.

Now, how does one water a plant that does not grow in soil? It is an easy task. Simply immerse the plant in some water for a few seconds and let it dry before mounting it back. This should be done twice a week, or if you have a humidifier, once a week will do. I prefer to use the rain water I collect in my rain barrels. Once a month I add some all purpose fertilizer. The air-plants like fertilizer high in ammonia. These plants like bright light, but not direct sunlight. Every rosette will always only bloom once, but the plant will continue to grow and make pups that can be separated and grown alone.

*Angel Rutherford, Master Gardener  
Photographer*



# Ready, Set . . . Grow!

New cultivar releases are always fun to read about and to try out in our gardens! These new releases were in the spotlight of the August 2014 issue of *HortScience* which is one of the publications of the American Society for Horticultural Science.

Walnut cultivars ‘Sava’ and ‘Krka’ have been released and were developed by researchers Anita Solar, Robert Veberic, and Franci Stampar at the Biotechnical Faculty of Slovenia. A quick “need-to-know” of walnut if one is thinking of planting: it is a monoecious tree which means that a single tree contains both the male and female flowers, **and** it is also a dichogamous tree which means the period when the male and female flowers are mature (either shedding pollen or receptive) are different on the same tree. If the cultivar has male flowers maturing first, it is known as a protandrous (Type I) cultivar, and if the female flowers mature first, it is known as a protogynous (Type II) cultivar. It is recommended to plant both types in order to yield good fruit.

The ‘Sava’ cultivar has a late leaf-bud burst so it is not susceptible to late spring frosts, and also has low susceptibility to walnut blight and walnut husk fly. However, this cultivar is protandrous which means the male flowers mature first (as stated above) therefore one must also plant a protogynous cultivar so they may fertilize each other and have successful fruit set. The recommended protogynous types to plant with the ‘Sava’ cultivar are the ‘Meylannaise’, ‘Ronde de Montignac’, and ‘Elit’. The nut of the ‘Sava’ is medium to large size and the kernel percent is 38 to 49%.

The ‘Krka’ cultivar that was developed goes completely against what was stated about the dichogamous habit of walnut. This new cultivar is actually homogenous so the pollen shed of the male flowers coincides with female flower receptivity and therefore assures self-pollination, which makes this cultivar a great tree for the home landscape. The tree is vigorous, with dense branching habit (great for shade), and medium susceptibility to walnut blight and walnut husk fly. The yielding habit is high and regular (lots of nuts to harvest) but the nut size itself is described as small to medium, however, the bright kernel removes easily and the kernel percent often exceeds 50%.

A new thornless trailing blackberry has been released and is named ‘Columbia Star’. It was developed by researchers from the U.S. Department of Agriculture—Agricultural Research Service (USDA-ARS) breeding program in Corvallis, Oregon and is being released in cooperation with Oregon State University’s Agricultural Experiment Station. Researchers include Chad Finn, Bernadine Strik, Brian Yorgey, Mary Peterson, Jungmin Lee, Robert Martin, and Harvey Hall. ‘Columbia Star’ is a very high quality and high-yielding blackberry with firm, sweet fruit and similar in



quality to industry standard cultivars ‘Marion’ and ‘Black Diamond’. It is important to note that since it is a trailing cultivar it is important to

give it a trellis. In the field trials, ‘Columbia Star’ was the higher yielding cultivar than the current industry standards and also had the highest rating for flavor.

*Joshua Sherman, M.S.  
Commercial Horticulture Area Agent*

## Cuttings ‘N’ Clippings

✿ The Cochise County Master Gardeners have changed their monthly meeting schedule. They now meet on the **Second Thursday of the month, from 2:00—4:00 PM in the Public Meeting Room (PMR) of the University of Arizona South**. Check the web site for the next scheduled event or contact Valerie at:

[valeriedavidson@email.arizona.edu](mailto:valeriedavidson@email.arizona.edu)

✿ The Master Gardeners have returned to the **Sierra Vista Farmers Market on the first Thursday of each month**.

✿ The next free Water Wise presentation will be Saturday, **June 6 from 9:00—10:30 AM** in the Public Meeting Room of Groth Hall, UASV. The topic will be *Super Succulents*. Satisfy the urge to plant this month by choosing from a fascinating world of plants well suited to our dry, hot climate. Learn which succulents do well, how to propagate, plant, and care for them. Check the Water Wise 2015 schedule on their web site:

[waterwise.arizona.edu](http://waterwise.arizona.edu)

For more information contact Valerie at:

[valeriedavidson@email.arizona.edu](mailto:valeriedavidson@email.arizona.edu)

Cochise County Master  
Gardener Newsletter Editor  
Carolyn Gruenhagen

## At a Glance Box

### It's a Bloomin' Cochise County Native Plant of the Month

**Plant:** Agaves

**Description:** Palmer and Parry agaves

**Use:** Excellent landscape accent plants

**Culture:** Little to no care

**Learn more:** Cochise County Herbarium, [www.cochisecountyherbarium.org](http://www.cochisecountyherbarium.org)  
For an in-depth article, see below.

*Cado Daily*

*Water Resources Coordinator, Water Wise Program*

*University of Arizona Cochise County Cooperative Extension.*

## Admired One

Admired One. According to *The Names of Plants* by D. Gledhill, this is what “agave” means in English. Works for me! Given its fierce terminal spine, “agave” can certainly mean “Respected One!”

I am sure you all have been watching the agaves shoot up their flower stalks. Usually hidden by grasses, when the agaves start the flowering process, it is hard to miss those spectacular asparagus-like stalks. Agaves are so much like a giant asparagus that botanists recently moved the agaves out of the *Agavaceae* plant family into the Asparagus family, *Asparagaceae* (the desert spoons (*Dasyliirion*), *Hesperaloes*, and *Yuccas* are also now in the Asparagus family). If the agave stalk wasn't so enormous, I would be tempted to chop it off and roast it up for a BBQ.

I wouldn't be alone if I had done that. Agaves have been utilized as a food plant for as long as humans and agaves have been co-existing. Not only have agaves supplied native peoples with sugary pulp from the roasted stalk, but with fiber for shoes, sewing needles and thread,

paper, musical instruments and mescal or tequila. Not only are agaves important to humans, but they are vital as a food source for the Lesser long-nosed and Mexican long-tongued bats as they migrate through this area in the summer.

Here in the Sierra Vista valley, Huachuca and Mule mountains, there are two very common agaves – Palmer agave (*A. palmeri*) and Huachuca agave (*A. parryi* spp. *Parryi*) - (synonyms include *A. huachuensis* and *A. parryi* var. *parryi*). If you see an agave in this part of Cochise County, have confidence that there is a very good chance it is a Palmer agave or a Huachuca agave.

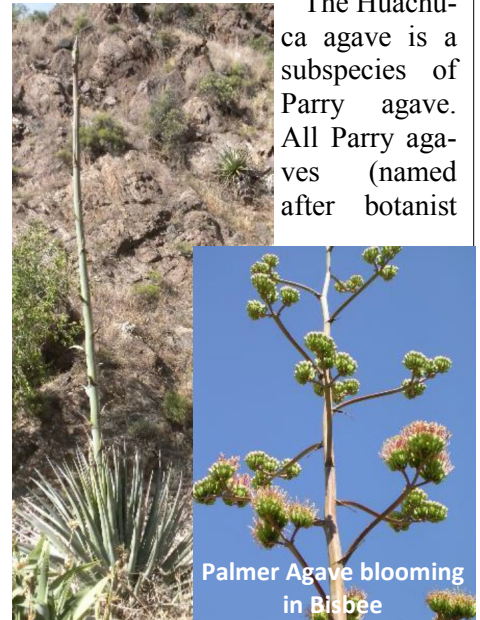


Huachuca Agave blooming on UA South campus

Distinguishing between the two species is easy.

Huachuca agave is the easiest to identify. It has a tight rosette with wide leaves and looks like a giant artichoke. It is often used in low water landscapes because of its handsome form.

The Huachuca agave is a subspecies of Parry agave. All Parry agaves (named after botanist



Palmer Agave blooming in Bisbee

Charles Parry) produce offsets (the little agaves that grow around the mother plant), are one of the cold hardiest of the agaves (good to at least 10°F), are moderately slow growers (agaves can bloom anywhere from 5 to 30 years but there was an *A. Americana* in the Matthaei Botanical Gardens that bloomed after 80 years!), have compact rosettes, and are light gray to green in color. Parry agaves also have a beautiful but fierce terminal spine that is a gorgeous dark color.

The *A. palmeri*, named for botanist Edward Palmer, has longer, narrow-

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er leaves than the Huachuca agave. It does not produce off-sets. Although Palmer agave looks less cultivated than the Huachuca agave, it has a lot of variation. I have seen mature 2 feet and 4 feet tall (and as wide) Palmer agaves. It can also cross with other agaves which can affect its form. Palmer agave can be a great accent plant in a natural landscape.

Agaves have shallow roots and can be easily transplanted if they are less than 1 foot or so in height. Any bigger, the transplant shock can cause them to stalk. Also, don't limit yourselves to just these two agaves. There are many wonderful species to use in landscapes!

When the agaves bloom, take a moment and study the buzz of activity around the flower. Not only are the flowers visited at night by bats, but in the daytime hummingbirds, bees, and many other insects compete for the flower nectar.

I don't want to end this story on a sad note, but I have to. The spectacular agave bloom signals the death of the plant as most agaves die after flowering. Because all the plant's sugars are stored in the plant's base ready to produce the stalk there isn't anything left to sustain the plant. But for those of you who like tequila, this ending isn't all sad. Agaves fat with sugar can mean the beginning of the ancient art of fine mescal production.

*Cado Daily, M.A.  
Water Resources Coordinator*



**Palmer agave flower stalk**

## June Reminders

- ◆ Check tree ties
- ◆ Remove stakes if tree can stand alone
- ◆ Mulch trees and shrubs
- ◆ Remove faded flowers & fertilize roses
- ◆ Stake tomato plants and watch for curly top — remove
- ◆ Prevent blossom end rot by even watering
- ◆ Water! Water! Water!