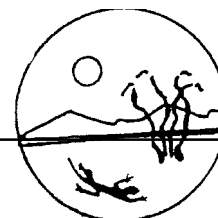


High on the Desert

Cochise County Master Gardener

Newsletter



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

Garden "Prep" Time

It is about time to start preparing your soil for your vegetable garden. Actually the ideal time for this is fall, but . . . we didn't do it either!

The ideal soil for planting vegetables in is a sandy, loamy type soil that holds moisture well and allows air and nutrients to circulate to the roots. Most people have either a clay soil or a sandy soil. A clay soil will have defined edges and will not break easily when turned with a shovel, will not absorb water quickly and will be slow to warm up in the spring. A sandy soil will dry out very quickly, will crumble easily and warm up quickly. The best way to improve either type of soil is to add organic matter.

There are many readily available types of organic matter that you can add to your soil. Here are a few of the more common ones.

1. Manure is inexpensive and available at most places garden centers. Fresh manure is great to add at this stage, but give it time to break down before adding plants because fresh manure is potent and will harm your plants.

2. Compost is probably one of the best additives, and if you don't already have a compost pile, now is a good time to start one. Compost piles can be

tricky here because of the dryness, but they can be done. You can also buy compost, and some cities (including Sierra Vista) have a recycling center with compost available for a nominal fee.

3. Peat moss is readily available although it tends to be more expensive. Peat moss contains little nutritional value, however it can hold up to twenty times its weight in water, and in this area that is extremely important. The following is a personal recipe: For each ten square feet add: ¼ to ½ of a large bag of peat moss, one or two bags of composted cow manure and one or two bags of compost.



growing condition for vegetables. This is what you will be aiming for. Soil that has not been amended with organic material will eventually be unable to support plant life. After you add your soil amendments, let the plot set for a while . . . oh, all right, we

know it has been perfect weather so go out and turn it every once in a while.

Laura Ribic
Master Gardener Associate

Cuttings 'N' Clippings

➤ Cochise County Master Gardeners Association will hold their regular monthly meeting on April 5 from 5:00 to 7:00 p.m. The location will be ACE Hardware's training room directly behind Domino's Pizza in the ACE shopping plaza on East Fry Blvd. Sierra Vista courtesy of ACE Hardware, Sierra Vista.

➤ **Water Awareness Week!** April 10 to 15 is Water Awareness Week! sponsored by the Water Wise Program and the City of Sierra Vista. This week-long event will help you learn about water and the role it plays in our lives. Free workshops (which will include some of our Master Gardeners), seminars, school programs, and a river walk will help you become more familiar with the wonderful place in which we live. Keep a look out for businesses and services that offer water conserving products to help you be Water Wise! Call the Cooperative Extension office for a schedule of these free activities

Cochise County Cooperative Extension

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

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(520) 458-8278, Ext. 141

450 Haskell, Willcox, AZ 85643
(520) 384-3594

Drip System Basics

Efficient use of scarce water resources should be the number one goal of all gardeners in the high desert. One can avoid relying on water harvesting techniques. Nevertheless, many of us will have plants on our land that appreciate/need some supplemental water to thrive. Also, during periods of drought (like right now), a lot of our native and adaptive plants also appreciate some additional water. One of the most effective ways to provide supplemental water in the landscape is by installing a drip water system.

Let me begin the discussion by saying that no irrigation system is maintenance free! A properly installed drip watering system will significantly reduce the sweat equity you have to invest in watering chores, but it will not eliminate totally the need for you to do routine maintenance and monitoring of your system and the plants it serves. You can reduce the amount of time and effort by properly installing and maintaining your system. Taking the time to do it right will save you unnecessary plant losses later.

Before you install a drip system, sit down and do a landscape design. This doesn't have to be something elaborate but should identify basic plant zones by water usage. This information will be crucial to the design of your system. In xeriscape landscape designs, plants are normally grouped by water requirement (i.e. high water use plants are near the dwelling with subsequent plant groupings

decreasing in water requirement as distance from the dwelling increases. Another consideration is plant type—trees will generally need much more water than shrubs or annuals. Each of these water needs groupings will constitute a different zone in your drip system. You cannot efficiently water all these different groupings on one system.

Next, using your landscape design, begin developing a drip system to supply the plant groupings you have identified. Determine where you will be purchasing your drip supplies. Unfortunately, not all components purchased from different sources are compatible. Therefore, find a good source and stay with it. You will need, at minimum: a hose bib connector (you can get a device that will allow up to four zone connections), a timer (I use a 9 volt battery operated device), a pressure regulator (will reduce pressure to 25 psi to avoid blowing out your emitters), a back flow preventer (required by building codes to protect the water supply), a screener (prevents soil particles from clogging your emitters), 1/2" water tubing (for main supply tubes), 1/4" tubing (for directing water to individual plants), hose to hose connectors, "t" connectors, drippers (various sizes), and end of line stoppers. Buy drippers that are resistant to clogging.

You do not need to bury dripper hose if it can be covered with rock or mulch. I have found that adjustments are much easier if you can find it! I do not attach drippers directly to the main supply hose but rather using connectors use 1/4" hose to bring the water to individual plants. This allows me to modify the position of drippers in relationship to the plant


easily. For trees and large shrubs, I use in-line drippers so that I can daisy chain them in a loop around the drip line of the plant.

It is much more efficient to have separate water needs zones for your plants. This requires more hose (and more digging) and connectors but allows you to avoid overwatering and underwatering. You can, if you must, use more and larger drippers for larger plants but this is far less efficient.

When watering with your system, water longer and more spaced out. Watering for 15 minutes every day is far less beneficial to your plants than watering for a couple of hours twice a week. I generally water large trees for 8 to 12 hours once every month in the heat of summer. I want to water to a depth of four feet all around the drip line. Watering daily for short periods is equivalent to tossing a cup at the tree and then wondering why it is water stressed. Duh!

Your local gardening centers have a plethora of information on drip systems. You can also contact drip manufacturers on the world wide web. One I know of (www.rainbird.com) will even design your system—for free! Bottom line, drip is a very efficient way to use our precious supply of ground water WITHOUT WASTE.

John Phillips
Master Gardener

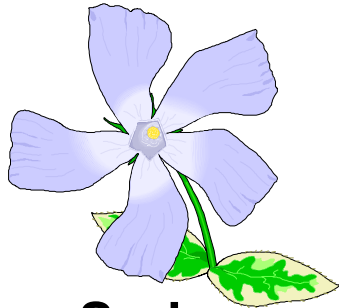


Robert E. Call
Extension Agent, Horticulture
Carolyn Gruenhagen
Editor

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Spring Plant Sales

March 11-12

Tohono Chul Park,
Tucson
(520) 742-6455

March 17 - April 2

Boyce Thompson Southwestern
Arboretum, Superior
(520) 689-2723

March 18-19

Tucson Botanical Gardens,
Tucson
(520) 326-9255

March 24-26

Desert Botanical Garden,
Phoenix
(602) 941-1225

April 1-2

Desert Survivors Nursery,
Tucson
(520) 791-9309

April 8-9

Arizona Sonora Desert Museum,
Tucson
(520) 883-1380, ext. 114

March Reminders

- ✓ Prune roses
- ✓ Start seeds indoors
- ✓ Check cactus for fungus
- ✓ Plant cool-season veggies
- ✓ Reconsider your water usage
(Call Water Wise for a free audit)
- ✓ Remove and replace
winter mulches

High on the Desert

Thanks to all the dedicated volunteers of the Cochise County Master Gardeners Association and The University of Arizona Cooperative Extension, the 7th Annual High Desert Gardening & Landscaping Conference was wonderfully successful! This year's attendance was 195 over the two days. From all reports everyone had a great time, learned a lot, and most people enjoyed the change of location.

Special thanks to our sponsors: **Arizona Landscape Contractor's Association, Phoenix; Bella Vista Water Company, Sierra Vista; and Desert Trees Nursery, Tucson.**

Thanks to the following:
Program Advertisers: ACE Garden Place, Sierra Vista; Desert Trees Nursery, Tucson; High Country Gardens, Santa Fe; Pueblo del Sol Water Company, Sierra Vista; ACE Hardware, Bisbee; Arizona Gardens, Hereford; The Bindery, Hereford; Bisbee Lumber, Sierra Vista; Butterfly Gardens, Inc., Sierra Vista; Dreeszen Landscape Materials, Sierra Vista; espial, Bisbee; The Arizona Folklore Preserve, Hereford; Native Seeds SEARCH, Tucson; Kazzam Nature Center, Patagonia; Rainy Day Gutter Manufacturing, Sierra Vista; Safeway, Sierra Vista; San Pedro House Books & Gifts, Sierra Vista; Southeast Arizona Butterfly Association, Hereford; Southwest Desert Images, Sierra Vista; Southwest Gas Corporation, Sierra Vista; Surplus City, Sierra Vista; and Whet-

stone Southwest Pottery & Fountains, Whetstone.

Exhibitors: AZIDA, Inc. Elfrida; Brec Tree Care, Sierra Vista; Desert Trees Nursery, Tucson; Diamond JK Landscape, Sonoita; Dorling Kindersley Family Learning, Gilbert; espial, Bisbee; Kazaam Nature Center, Patagonia; and The University of Arizona Bookstore, Sierra Vista.

Non-Profit Exhibitors

Door Prize Donors

Speakers: A great big thank you! We couldn't have done it without you!

Committee chairpersons and members who gave so much of their time, energy, and talents to make it all work: **Rob Call, Extension Agent and Program Chair**, Elisabeth Baker, Carole Beauchamp, Emily Boyd, Alice Christ, Cado Daily, Gwin Garcia, **Jan Groth, MC**, **Gary Gruenhagen, Registration Chair**, **Janet Jones, Treasurer**, **Barbara Kuttner, Sponsorship Chair**, **De Lewis, Facilities Chair**, **Ginger Maxey, Artist**, **Cheri Melton, Publicity Chair**, Giselheid Regner, Angel Rutherford, Cathy Stucky, Helene Wingert, and **Joyce Williams, Secretary**, Cooperative Extension, Sierra Vista, who does SO much for us.

Thanks to all of you!
YOU made it happen!

Carolyn Gruenhagen
2000 Conference Coordinator

Address Correction Requested

The Agent's Observations

Q How long can I wait to prune my fruit trees, ornamental shrubs and rose bushes? Some seem to have bud swelling occurring now

A With the warm winter we have had this year many plants have had their rest and much of the dormancy requirements meet. This does not bode well for the fruit crop this year because of the possibility of early bloom and freezing temperatures.

Fruit trees should have major pruning done during the dormant season, after rest is completed. In Cochise

County that is usually after the first of the year. If pruning is done too early plant damage from cold and freezes can occur. Fruit trees can be pruned until flower pedals fall. For stone fruits; i.e. apricots, almonds, cherries, peaches, plums and nectarines and for pome fruits; i.e. apples, pears, and quince pruning can continue until bloom is completed.

Small fruits, i.e. blackberries, grapes, raspberries, currants and gooseberries are best pruned during the dormant season. Grapes can be pruned through bloom but have a tendency to "bleed." This is not as detrimental as one might think and it is better to prune grapes a little late than let them grow into a knurled mass! Blackberries and raspberries bear fruit on one-year old canes. The two-year old canes need to be removed because they have born fruit and are dead. Thinning out weak

canes can also be done through bloom. Currents and gooseberries should be dormant pruned by removing wood that is three-years old by cutting it back to the base or to a main branch.

Ornamental shrubs generally are pruned after flowering, however some species have other requirements. Consult a good pruning book like *Sunset's Pruning Handbook* or call the Extension Office.

Roses are dormant-pruned except in the case of climbing roses which are pruned after flowering. A pamphlet entitled *Roses for Arizona* which discusses pruning different classes of roses, is available at the Extension Office.

Robert E. Call
Extension Agent, Horticulture