



# 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 Virtual Gardener—HOTD XIV

Here I go again attempting to summarize a High Desert Gardening & Landscaping Conference and answer some of the comments we received on this year’s conference in a short article. Where to begin?

As regular readers of this newsletter are undoubtedly aware, this year’s conference was held at The Palms in Sierra Vista on the 15<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> of February. We had a total of 175 speakers, vendors, and attendees at the conference this year, 21 of whom were speakers—exceptional speakers, I might add!

Like many conference attendees, I too was frustrated that occasionally I couldn’t be two places at the same time when topics interesting to me were being simultaneously presented in different rooms. For example, I really wanted to hear DeForest Lewis’ presentation on composting, but I opted to go to Duncan Livingston’s talk on gravity-fed drip irrigation systems because that topic also interested me. Such is the nature of conferences of

this sort. The choices for the planners are to have simultaneous sessions, short sessions that run consecutively, fewer topics, or a longer conference. The first option is not ideal but the best we can do to please the most people. If you attended and missed a topic you really wanted to hear about, come back next year.

The Palms brings a new, and much needed, venue to Sierra Vista. If the Cochise County Master Gardeners Association had been given a large sum of money to build the perfect facility in which to hold our conferences, we probably would have ended up with something very similar to The Palms. The large meeting rooms are adequately sized. The smaller rooms we used as classrooms for our breakout sessions were perhaps a bit tight for some of the sessions but by and large adequate. And the kitchen, thanks to the Chef and his staff, is capable of producing great meals. That said, the facility and its staff were not perfect.

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Both are new and have a few wrinkles to work out. We wish them the best of luck.

Food! Nothing elicits more comments. Some like it hot; some like it cold. Some don't like this food; some hate that food. It is only possible for us conference planners to try for the middle ground.

In my humble gastronomic opinion, the lunch buffets both days of the conference—also open to the public—were outstanding. The first day had a German theme and included schnitzel, sauerbraten, brats, more vegetable dishes than I can list, and a huge array of desserts. The second day was a “Surf and Turf” menu with deep-fried breaded shrimp, tilapia filets cooked in a couple of different ways, chicken, and again a large assortment of cooked and fresh vegetables. Once again, the dessert array was awesome, including some sugar-free desserts for those of us watching our carbs. One of the comments we received complained that there was too much food! Discipline, discipline—the key to survival at a buffet.

And that brings us to the breakfasts. Whew! That's a tough one. The breakfast we ordered and which was clearly advertised in the registration form (those of you who missed that take another look at the registration forms in previous newsletters) was a “continental” breakfast. According to my dictionary, that means a light breakfast consisting of breadstuff and coffee, tea, or other liquid as opposed to a hearty “English breakfast.”

The biggest problem with the breakfast was that the staff of The Palms clearly underestimated the appetites of hungry gardeners. I'm not sure how many scones, muffins, cups of coffee, and glasses of juice were planned for each diner, but it was clearly not enough. Some of us found the table empty when we arrived. Next year we will have to decide whether to forego breakfast altogether and pass the savings on to our attendees or to order up one of those big artery-clogging breakfasts and pass along the extra costs.

Despite a few bumps, this year's conference was a great success thanks to the hard work and dedication of the Master Gardeners of Cochise County. All of us who enjoyed the conference owe them a big hand. It remains for them to assimilate this latest experience and begin planning for next year. Hope to see you there.

Until next time...Happy Surfing.

Gary A. Gruenhagen, Master Gardener  
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*Robert E. Call*

Robert E. Call  
Extension Agent, Horticulture

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Editor

## In a Desert Garden

### Jerusalem Sage – *Phlomis*

About ten years ago I went to my first “High on the Desert” Conference. I liked this event so much that I haven't missed one since. I always find something interesting and a lot to learn. Plus the fellowship and the good food makes this a memorable event.

When I moved here to the High Desert, I knew gardening would be a challenge and as I wanted to do my own landscaping I had to learn a lot. The first thing I did was take the Master Gardener's course only to decide that I might as well hire a Landscaper to do the hard work, like grading and making islands and gravelling everything and of course digging the really big holes for the trees and putting in the irrigation system. Once I had the backbone of my yard I could go ahead and put in the plants I wanted to grow. I found out that it was a lot easier to dig the holes after the yard had been graveled as the gravel retains moisture and that makes it easier to dig.

Now I was ready to get some really neat plants. I found just what I was looking for at the High on the Desert Conference. The vendor there had plants one couldn't find at that time in the local nurseries. Of course, that has changed somewhat. One of the plants I purchased was Jerusalem Sage – *Phlomis russeliana*. There is a variety of *Phlomis* species, most are shrubs, but I have never come across any of them. There are only two perennials.

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## Cuttings 'N' Clippings

✱ The next CCMGA meeting is 5:00 p.m. Thursday, March 1 at the University of Arizona South campus, Room 508. UAS Interim Dean "Skip" Jubb will be the guest speaker.

✱ The March Water Wise lecture will be held Saturday, March 3 from 9:00—11:00 a.m. at the University of Arizona South Campus. The speaker is Robert Reaves, The Toro Company, Irrigation Division on *Get Smart With Smart Irrigation Controllers*. For information contact Cado Daily at 458-8278, Ext. 2139 or check the web site: [www.ag.arizona.edu/cochise/waterwise](http://www.ag.arizona.edu/cochise/waterwise)

✱ Also on Saturday, March 3, a Fruit Tree Pruning Demo will be held at 26 Pronghorn Lane, Elgin, AZ from 10:00 a.m. until noon with Extension Agent, Rob Call. See back page of this newsletter for directions.

✱ 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, March 1 from noon to 4:00 p.m. at the corner of Wilcox and Carmichael. For more information e-mail [vallimac@cox.net](mailto:vallimac@cox.net) or call 266-1976.

✱ The 2007 Master Gardener class begins March 14 and runs every Wednesday for 13 weeks from 10:00 a.m.—1:00 p.m. There is a fee for the class. For information contact Joyce at the Sierra Vista Cooperative Extension office at (520)458-8278, Ext. 2141.

## Climate Modeling

Climatology is a fascinating subject. One of the most popular speakers at the High Desert Gardening & Landscaping Conference was University of Arizona climatologist, Dr. Michael Crimmins, who explained why Arizona's climate is so predictably unpredictable. The basic reason is because we live on a kind of weather frontier between equatorial and mid-latitude atmospheric circulation patterns. Like many frontiers, ours is the site of battles that rage back and forth with first one side and then the other controlling our weather patterns. The progress of these battles, we learned from Crimmins, are often controlled by circulation patterns in the oceans thousands of miles away.

Recently climate modelers at Columbia University succeeded demonstrating how changes in one place on the earth can telegraph their effects around the globe. In this case their model

showed how massive outflows of fresh water into the North Atlantic would disrupt deep circulation patterns in the Atlantic and rapidly depress temperatures throughout the Northern Hemisphere. Surprisingly, the model did not show that the cooling extended to the Southern Hemisphere.

More than a century ago geologists found that as the Ice Age glaciers retreated, melt waters ponded in two giant lakes in the northern interior of the continent—Lakes Agassiz and Ojibway. These two lakes, with a combined area of nearly a million square kilometers, were larger by far than all the lakes in the world today put together. Scientists believe these massive lakes were trapped behind glacial ice dams that prevented them from draining into the ocean. When the dams broke, much of this fresh water was dumped into the North Atlantic in a matter of months or perhaps even weeks.

The Columbia computer model supports earlier hypotheses that such a flood of fresh water would disrupt deep water circulation patterns in Atlantic and lead to global cooling. The success of the model in producing results that closely mirror real-world data provides strong support for the earlier hypotheses and indicates that scientists are gaining a grasp on the mechanisms that have controlled global climate in the past, giving them a better chance of predicting what may happen in the future.

*Gary Gruenhagen. Master Gardener*

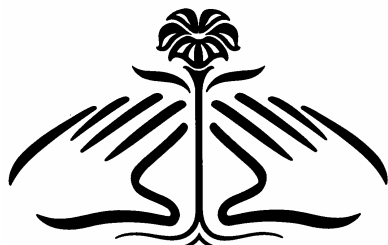
## March Reminders

- ◆ Prune roses
- ◆ Start seeds indoors
- ◆ Check cactus for fungus
- ◆ Plant cool-season veggies
- ◆ Reconsider your water usage (Call *Water Wise* for a free audit—458-8278, Ext 2139)
- ◆ Remove and replace winter mulches

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*P. russeliana* is a Mediterranean plant found in the mountains of Syria. My plant thrives on neglect. In 10 years, I have to admit I have never fertilized it and it seems to do just fine. It is planted in my front yard, tucked in between huge prostrate Rosemary, another Mediterranean plant, and a small Crape Myrtle. The Crape Myrtle is deciduous and as I never remove the leaf litter, the Jerusalem Sage gets enough fertilizer to live on. It is very drought tolerant, but a little extra water will bring more flowers. This is really an unusual looking plant, 2 feet high and now 3 feet wide. The leaves are gray-green and velvety and the flowers stalks are whorls of soft yellow flowers that are still attractive after they fade. I read that cutting the spent flowers will produce a second flush, but I never find the time to do it and I love the dried flowers just as well. This sage is, of course, not a real sage; I think it got the name because the flowers resemble those of the Chaparral Sage. I love the gray-green foliage that looks like velvet between the deep green of the Rosemary and the reddish green of my Crape Myrtle. I only wish this plant would be more readily available.

Angel Rutherford, Master Gardener



Master Gardener

## High on the Desert

Our 14<sup>th</sup> Annual High Desert Gardening & Landscaping Conference has come and gone. From all reports everyone had a great time and learned so much. It is with great pleasure that we say, "Thanks! Job well done!" to all the dedicated volunteers of the Cochise County Master Gardeners Association!

Special thanks to our supporters

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Ace Garden Place, Angel Rutherford Gardening in Water and Nature Photography, The Bindery, Desert Trees Nursery, Farmer's Insurance, Fry's, Joan Wakefield, Illustrator, Mountain View Koi Fish Nursery & Aquatic Plants P's Gardens, and Sierra Vista Area Garden Club.

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### Businesses and Organizations that made the registration gift bags possible

### Speakers

A great big THANK YOU! We couldn't have done it without you!

### Committee chairpersons and CCMGA Members

Thanks to all the committee chairpersons and members who gave so much of their time, energy, and talents to make our 14<sup>th</sup> Annual High Desert Gardening & Landscaping Conference successful: **Rob Call, Extension Agent and Program Chair, Penny Artio, Sponsor Chair, Dave Barry, Conference Co-Coordinator, Barbara Beckner, Rosemarie Burke, Publicity Co-Chair, Jim Byrum, Facilities Chair, Dave Crandall, Felice Dayhoff, Deke Descoteaux, "Goodie Bags, Peggy Descoteaux, Beth Dilley, Linda Gleason, Anita Gollwitzer, Finance Chair, Carolyn Gruenhagen, Conference Co-Coordinator, Gary Gruenhagen, Registration Chair, Karl Hallsten, Larry Kovarcik, De Lewis, Cheri Melton, Publicity Co-Chair, Angel Rutherford, Doug & Eleanor Templeman, Sarah Turan, Joan Wakefield, Artist, and the Cooperative Extension Staffs in Sierra Vista and Willcox. A special thank you to Master of Ceremonies Cado Daily and Jim Koweek!**

**Thanks to all of you!  
YOU made it happen!**



## The Agent's Observations

**Q** I have a small pomegranate bush that I planted about five years ago. It is currently about four feet high. I fertilize every spring. This plant had a couple of blossoms the second year. The last two years there were quite a few flowers, but not many fruits. How do I get more pomegranate fruit?

**A** Be patient! Pomegranates do well in the high desert. As your pomegranate bush becomes more mature it will produce more and more flowers and then fruit. There is nothing you have to do but wait. As the plant matures remember to dormant prune each winter by removing a couple of the largest ground shoots. Those that are over five years old tend to be less productive. Younger branches produce better fruit. However, do not prune until the plant starts fruit production. To prune your young plant remove only problem branches. This will help encourage earlier maturity of the plant and flowering. Heavy fertilizing slows maturity and fruiting of trees and plants. Apply small amounts of nitrogen fertilizer in the spring, perhaps a couple of tablespoons, depending on the fertilizer. Too much fertilizer will slow down fruit production and increase vegetative growth. Pomegranates require regular applications of water similar to an apple tree or non-desert landscape shrubs.

**Q** We have a large ash tree in front of our home growing in the lawn. It's about 20 feet tall. When I walked across the lawn last year I noticed a very large root was just under the surface of the grass. It's lifting the concrete ring that's around the tree. Can I cut that root out or will a part or the whole tree die?

**A** You can cut the root. The tree will not die. Cutting one root may or may not affect the water and nutrient uptake going to the side of the tree where the root was removed. You will see the effects of root removal this summer if branches, shoots and leaves die. Leave the cut end exposed for a few weeks before covering it again with soil. This will give the tree a chance to seal and heal. Try to keep the cut as clean as possible. The real cause of this problem is that the tree is not being watered adequately, only the lawn. Make sure the water penetrates the soil at least two feet, a couple of times a month. This will cause the tree roots to grow deeper into the soil. Turfgrass has a shallow root system and if it is watered only the tree roots will grow where the water is. A brochure titled, *Watering Trees and Shrubs* is available on-line

at: <http://cals.arizona.edu/pubs/water/az1298.pdf> or from an Arizona Cooperative Extension Office.

**Q** I've been mulching our shrubs and trees for some years now with wood chips. I found that generally the mulched ground has become much softer and pliable. This year I plan on mulching again. I noticed that the mulch has not broken down as in previous years. The shrubs appear to be thriving and are now starting to bud out. I have not changed the mulch or fertilizer products, watering approach, or maintenance procedures. I am assuming that the ground is now "mulched out." Can I now foregoing the mulch application and just fertilize? Can the ground get too much mulch?

**A** Mulch improves soil conditions and microbial activity, while conserving water and discouraging weed growth. Once a soil starts breaking down it can only handle so much mulch at a time. So initially a soil with little organic matter will break down mulch rapidly. Over time mulch will still break down but at a slower rate. So the annual addition of mulch or organic material to the planted area will be smaller than  
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the initial couple of years. By skipping this year's mulching you may see the existing mulch decrease dramatically. Generally speaking, maintain a mulch depth of about four inches. Mulching deeper than four inches may cause problems particularly on smaller and younger plants.

**Source:** Xtreme Horticultural-  
[www.unce.unr.edu/southern](http://www.unce.unr.edu/southern)

*Robert E. Call*  
*Extension Agent, Horticulture*

## Free!!! Fruit Tree Pruning Demo

**Saturday, March 3, 2007**  
**10:00 a.m.—Noon**  
**26 Pronghorn Lane, Elgin, AZ**

**Demonstration by**  
**Rob Call**  
**Extension Agent, Horticulture**

**Everyone Welcome!**

### DIRECTIONS TO THE FRUIT TREE PRUNING DEMONSTRATION by Rob Call, Cochise Co. Extension Agent Saturday, March 3, 2007, 10 am 26 Pronghorn Lane, Elgin, AZ

