



The Virtual Gardener —



For those of us who live in southeastern Arizona, the monsoon is like a party—Mother Nature’s big annual bash. We love the green hillsides, the bright flowers, the dramatic skies, the soft tropical breezes, and the evening sound and light shows. But every good party leaves a mess to be cleaned up when it’s over, and Mother Nature’s is no exception. I was reminded of this in spades this year as I cleaned up the bumper crop of mesquite bean pods my trees produced this summer. So far we have hauled pickup loads of beans to the city composting facility, and we’re not finished yet. After collecting the easily raked pods, I’m still left with those that have fallen into areas that cannot be raked or blown clean and have to be removed one at a time by hand or with salad tongs.

As I sit for hours picking pods from cracks and crevices between rocks with salad tongs, I have lots of time to think. And one of the themes that occupied my thoughts was a principle of landscape design I’ve never seen listed in any

guide—*maintainability*. Over many years I’ve read long lists of landscape design principles—unity, line, form, texture, color, scale, balance, *etc., etc., etc.*—but I’ve never seen *maintainability* listed as a principle to be observed in creating a landscape.

What do I mean by *maintainability*? I mean thinking ahead when you create your masterpiece design and remembering all the mundane chores that will have to be done in the future to keep your masterpiece looking its best—weeding, trimming, pruning, raking, sweeping, delimiting, washing, irrigating, mowing, and seasonal plant replacement to name a few. A good design recognizes these requirements and facilitates their accomplishment or at least does not complicate doing them.

Violating the principle of *maintainability* is expensive. The expense may be measured by your own added effort and time. Or it may be measured in dollars if you pay someone to maintain your landscape. Or it may be measured by the

(Continued on page 2)

Inside this issue:

October Reminders	2
Thank You	2
New MG Craft Team	2
Discovery Gardens Opening	3
Cuttings ‘N’ Clippings	3
Arizona Poison Control	4
What is That Weed?	5
Discovery Gardens Photos	6



Cochise County Cooperative Extension
www.cals.arizona.edu/cochise/mg/

1140 N. Colombo, Sierra Vista, AZ 85635
(520) 458-8278, Ext. 2141

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



The Virtual Gardener at work!

(Continued from page 1)

resulting unsightliness when a too-difficult-to-do maintenance task is left undone.

The principle of maintainability might be expressed in an often repeated cliché—PLAN AHEAD! If you violate the principle to achieve some look you simply must have, at least be aware of what you are doing and be prepared to accept the cost.

Here are a few examples to keep in mind as you plan your landscape.

Don't create rock gardens under mesquites (or conversely, don't plant mesquite trees in rock gardens). This concept also applies to creating cactus gardens under mesquites. Leaves and other plant litter can usually be removed with a blower but the bean pods can't.

Remember to make paths wide enough to accommodate the width of the tools required to maintain them. If your path needs to be raked, it needs to be at least as wide as the rake. If the path will be used to move things in a wheelbarrow or wagon, make sure it is wide enough for that purpose.

Don't install plants—especially pointy, thorny ones—where they will overgrow into walkways, especially public sidewalks. This mistake is most often made when gardeners forget that cute little baby cacti or other plants can grow into hulking monsters. For example, I have a neighbor who planted a row of tiny agaves only inches from the public sidewalk in front of his house. They have now grown into the walkway and pose a hazard to pedestrians walking by.

These are only a few examples and I'm sure you can think of more. The bottom line is to never forget to...PLAN AHEAD!

Until next time, happy surfing!

Gary Gruenhagen, Master Gardener
virtualgardener@cox.net

October Reminders

- ◆ Be ready for the first frost
- ◆ Thin seedlings
- ◆ Over seed lawns
- ◆ Plant spring bulbs
- ◆ Divide perennials
- ◆ Don't let weeds go to seed

Thank you!

Our 3rd Annual Master Gardener Fall Plant Sale on September 16 was a wonderful success. A heart felt thank you to all of you who came out to support the sale which benefits the continued development and maintenance of the Discovery Gardens. Thank you to those of you who purchased plants to add to your gardens. Thank you to all the wonderful Master Gardener volunteers who worked like a machine at the plant sale to produce a successful event!

New MG Craft Team

Several of the Master Gardeners have wanted to start a "Craft Team" for quite a while where folks would get together to build bird houses, make bee houses, paint Mandala rocks, make rain chains, paint garden posts, and other creative garden art projects. Our goal is 3-fold: 1) to make fun pieces to sell at our High Desert Gardening & Landscaping Conference, 2) to produce pieces to be used out in the Discovery Gardens, and 3) make an occasional fun piece to take home for our own gardens.

The Master Gardeners voted to develop a small start-up budget for the Craft Team. Mary Jackson took the proverbial bull by the horns, headed up the project, put together a fun craft supply set, and led our first Craft Team session on Friday, September 22 in the Discovery Pavilion in the Discovery Gardens.

We all enjoyed it so much we plan to meet there every other Friday morning at 9:00 AM. The Craft Team sessions will be posted on our Master Gardener website so that you may confirm Friday session dates,

<http://cals.arizona.edu/cochise/mg/>
 or you can always call 520-559-7078. Everyone is welcome! Come join us!

Jan Groth, Master Gardener
 Program Coordinator

Discovery Gardens Grand Opening!

After two years of planning, planting, building, and nurturing, the **Discovery Gardens at UA Sierra Vista** will have its **Grand Opening** to the public on **Saturday, October 14, 10:00 AM to 2:00 PM**.

This is Sierra Vista's newest educational demonstration botanical garden with multiple theme gardens, a 20,000 gallon rainwater harvesting tank, and a beautiful new Discovery Pavilion which houses workshops, classes, weekly Seed Library and Plant Clinic activities, and a variety of other events.

The Discovery Gardens Grand Opening will feature live music, food, garden docents, and a variety of activities for adults and children. We'll even be grilling hot dogs for the first time on our new outdoor kitchen in the Discovery Pavilion!

Our grand opening will be paired with the **20th Annual Water Wise Xeriscape Garden Tour** on October 14. Together, the events will form a **Xeriscape Celebration** of Campus Gardens. We have invited Cochise College to display their lovely gardens as well. The Xeriscape Tour will feature campus garden vignettes throughout UA Sierra Vista and Cochise College, as both campuses offer a wide variety of interesting plantings and features. Docents will be available at the various sites to answer any questions you may have.

Your visit should begin with festivities in the Discovery Gardens where you'll be given directions for the Xeriscape Garden Tour through both campuses.

Please mark Saturday, October 14 on your calendars. See you there!

*Jan Groth, Master Gardener
Program Coordinator*

Cuttings 'N' Clippings

✿ The next CCMGA meeting will be on **Thursday, October 12 at 2:00 PM**. For information contact Valerie at: valeriedavidson@email.arizona.edu or the Cochise County Master Gardeners web site at:

<http://cals.arizona.edu/cochise/mg/>

✿ The 20th Annual Water Wise/Master Gardener Xeriscape Grand Garden Tour Celebration is on **Saturday, October 14, 10:00 AM—2:00 PM**. Contact the UA Cooperative Extension for more information at 458-8278, Ext. 2141 or valeriedavidson@email.arizona.edu Check out the Water Wise web site for their 2017 schedule at:

<http://waterwise.arizona.edu/>

✿ Water Wise will sponsor a free Arizona Domestic Well Owner's Workshop on **Saturday, October 28,**

9:00 AM—Noon. Learn the basics of well maintenance and wellhead protection. Location is the Sierra Vista Public Library. For information contact: 458-8278, Ext. 2141 or valeriedavidson@email.arizona.edu Check out the Water Wise web site for their 2017 schedule at:

<http://waterwise.arizona.edu/>

✿ Remember every Wednesday, plant clinic and seed library in the UA Sierra Vista Discovery Gardens Pavilion 10:00 AM—1:00 PM. Everyone welcome!

✿ AZ Native Plant Society Meeting, **Friday, October 20, 5:00 PM**, Cochise County Community Development Office, 4001 E. Foothills Drive, (Corner of Highway 92 and E. Foothill Drive), Sierra Vista.

Speaker and Topic: Dr. David Hembry, Department of Ecology and Evolutionary Biology. "Smartweed Leaf Flower (*Phyllanthus pillygonoides*): Its distribution, status, evolution, and interactions with insects in Arizona and the greater Southwest."

For more information, follow AZ Native Plant Society on their web site:

<http://www.aznps.com/chapters/cochise/cochise.htm>



**October 14
10:00 AM—2:00 PM
Grand Opening of
The Discovery Gardens at UA Sierra Vista &
20th Xeriscape Garden Tour:
A Xeriscape Celebration of Campus Gardens!**

**Contact the UA Cooperative Extension for more information at
458-8278, Ext. 2141**

valeriedavidson@email.arizona.edu

Arizona Poison Control Center— The Gardener's Best Friend

A friend of mine, Susan, was bitten by a bark scorpion. This happened in her home in Sierra Vista. Susan saw the little critter and immediately called the University of Arizona School of Pharmacy's experts on drugs and venomous creature bites and stings. She reached them at an easy number to remember: (800) 222-1222. A few days later she called to tell me about the Arizona Poison Control Center. And thank goodness she did.

The legislature created the Arizona Poison Control Center and gave them the mission to stand by 24/7 at the University of Arizona Medical School in Tucson to provide free and confidential information to the public and fellow professionals. I checked out their website and learned you can call them if:

- You think someone has been poisoned with anything
- Someone has taken too many drugs or unknown medications
- You need to know more about a drug
- You or your pet has been bitten or stung by a poisonous creature
- You have been bitten by something, even if you didn't see what bit you, and it hurts or you are having a reaction you are not comfortable with
- You need information about preventing accidental poisoning or bites
- You have questions about medications, household products, venomous insects and reptiles.

This information came in handy in early August. I, unwisely for sure, went out into the front yard in my Crocs, lured into the soft morning sun by the cotton candy clouds, pink and lavender, that preceded a golden sunrise over the Mule Mountains. The birds were noisy



and the fragrance from the big desert willow in my front yard affirmed that all was indeed right in the world. I couldn't resist dispatching a few weeds as I walked around the yard planning what I would do that day after breakfast. Then I felt a nasty sting or bite on the top of my left foot. I immediately lifted my foot and jerked off my Croc. I didn't see anything on the ground near my feet and I didn't have a clue what bit or stung me. My foot smarted for a while but eventually it stopped hurting, and I put on sneakers, gloves, and my big sun hat and went about sprucing things up in the yard.

The next day we left on a long road trip. While we traveled and visited with friends and family around the country, my foot puffed up a bit and it hurt some, too, when I put on sneakers. I had no trouble breathing or any of the symptoms of anaphylactic shock. And who wants to whimper about your foot hurting when you can be eating ice cream and going on long bike rides with grandnieces and nephews. But these symptoms continued for several days and the joints in my

foot started to ache after I stood for a while.

Finally, some three weeks later, the aching got a little worse and the swelling turned to a hard knot in my foot. This was scary, but naturally, I thought that whatever it was that bit or stung me had deposited some sort of toxin in my foot and that it was doing its evolutionary duty to remind me to be more careful in the future. I didn't expect the hard knot. When I called the Poison Control Center, they were very helpful. They asked a long list of questions and suggested that I email or text them a picture of my foot which I did. After looking at the images of the knot on my foot and sympathetically listening to my whimpering, they concluded that the hard knot was simply a natural reaction to the prolonged swelling. They said it was my body's means of repairing the damage to tissues in my foot. They recommended keeping my foot elevated and soaking it in warm water. (Hot tub, yes!) They wouldn't speculate on what creature did this to my foot. But we did safely rule out snakes because I would have certainly felt even a baby snake in my Croc. Their reassurance put my mind at ease. I called them from Casper, Wyoming, where my husband and I observed the total solar eclipse. After their reassurance, I spent some time in the hot tub at our hotel and went about the business of celebrating the wonders of the universe. And I didn't worry anymore about my foot.

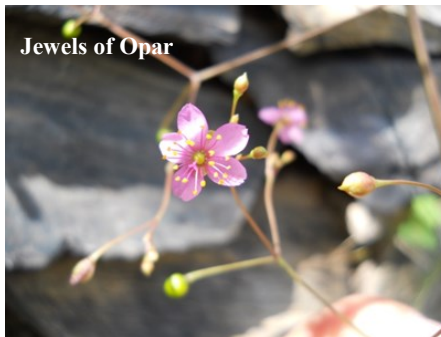
Terrie Gent, Master Gardener

What is That Weed?

Here are a few of our common late summer “weeds.” Of course, I always ask what is a weed? For me, a “weed” is an introduced plant that overstays its welcome. Two key words here: “introduced” meaning not locally native, and “overstay.” A good example is Bermuda grass. No more needs to be said about that plant! Another introduced aggressor is a plant sold for landscapes, “Feathertop grass” (*Pennisetum villosum*) native to north-eastern Africa. It has escaped, has deep and persistent roots, and is a very invasive plant. Bufflegrass, another drought tolerant and flammable grass from Africa is taking over the desert in the Tucson area. Fountaingrass (*Pennisetum setaceum*), purple or green, is an African landscape grass now escaping. To me, local native plants are not weeds—even if they hog my space. They are in balance with the local web of life as insect larvae eat the plants then metamorphose into lovely moths, beetles, or butterflies who then may use the flowers for food. If the native plants move into my territory with seeds that stick to my socks or pokey thorns, I selectively manage them.

Jewels of Opar, *Talinum paniculatum* (tah-LYE-num pan-ih-cool-AYE-tum). *Talinaceae* family (used to be in the *Portulaca* family). Succulent leaves that splatter when crushed. Tall, thin flower stalk with small pink flowers followed by small round seeds. Perennial native from Florida to Arizona, south to tropical America (Kearny

and Peebles, *Arizona Flora*, 1951). Not a weed in my book—it is a jewel! Photo credit: L. Makings SEINet.



This next one is hands-down a weed. It has chaff-y seeds that get stuck in your socks. However, you shouldn't be walking around in socks in your yard anyway. Very bad idea.

Khakiweed, creeping chaff weed, *Alternanthera pungens* (alter-nan-THERE-a PUN-gens). *Amaranthaceae* (Amaranth) family. Illustrated as far back as 1732 by the botanist Johann Jacob Dillenius in a catalogue of rare plants growing in a collection in London. Who the heck chose that plant for a collection? Native of tropical Americas, perennial. (K. Parker, *An Illustrated Guide to Arizona Weeds*). Photo credit: Zoya Akulova SEINet.



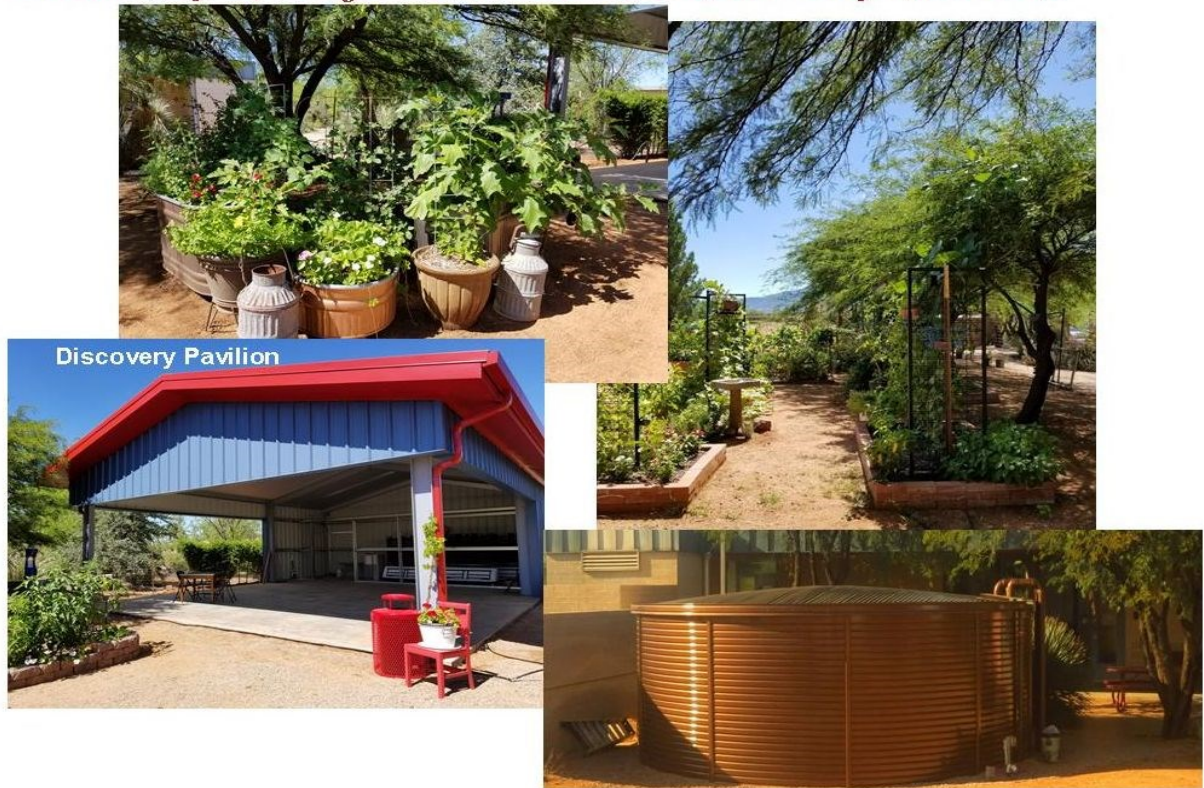
Red spiderling, *Boerhaavia coccinea* (boar-HA-vee-ah co-SIN-ee-ah). *Nyctaginaceae* (four o'clock) family. Perennial native, prostrate plant, trailing stems with small, bright fuchsia flowers. Small sticky seeds. This is a plant to manage if it is in your yard because the seeds will stick to you (they brush off pretty easily though). But keep it around as it is a great larval food plant for the variegated fritillary butterfly. Photo credit: Sue Carnahan, SEINet.



There are always exceptions to the rules, right? The next two plants are mine. You can have two exceptions also. I call them weeds but they are local natives. They have, however, overstayed their welcome by about a million years or so. **Bigelow's beggarticks, Spanish needles, *Bidens bigelovii*** (BY-dens BIG-low-vee-i) with five white ray petals, yellow disk flowers and **few-flower beggarticks, *Bidens leptcephala*** (BY-dens LEP-toe-seh-fal-ah)—inconspicuous yellow flowers with few ray petals.

(Continued on page 6)

University of Arizona Sierra Vista Discovery Gardens



(Continued from page 5)

Bigelow's beggarticks



Both are horrible plants. Bigelow's beggarticks have a very cute flower that turns into a nasty ball of black needle-like seeds. Thank goodness they are annuals, but they make up for a short life by producing prolifically all over the place. If you chop their cute flowers off, they grow two flower heads with double the amount of seeds. PULL THEM OUT BEFORE THEY SET SEEDS or you

will be very sorry because they are in the *Compositaceae* (sunflower) family and have A LOT of seeds. I even pull them out when I am hiking which is a rather pathetic obsession. Photo credit: Sue Carnahan, SEINet.

Silverleaf nightshade, *Solanum elaeagnifolium* (so-LA-num ee-lay-ee-gan-ih-FOL-ee-um). *Solanaceae* (Nightshade) family. Native perennial with rhizomes. Purple flowers with bright yellow male flower parts. Immature fruits are green and striped, and when mature become bright yellow. Yes, the plant does have ouch-y hairs on the stems. I never really liked the plant until my friend's children made a flower arrangement for the dining room table. It was lovely! I enjoy the plant because it livens up barren wasteland areas and helps to break up compacted soil. Although poisonous, the plant has been used in

food and as a medicine. (Tomatoes and eggplants are in the Nightshade family too!) Photo credit: M. Licher, SEINet.



Cado Daily, Guest Author
Water Resources Coordinator,
Water Wise Program – Retired!
University of Arizona Cochise
County Cooperative Extension

Cochise County Master
Gardener Newsletter Editor
Carolyn Gruenhagen