



## The Virtual Gardener—Snapshots

**Mea Culpa.** There were two errors in last month's article on *Echinopsis*. First, I referred to *Echinopsis* as "hedgehog cacti." *Echinocereus* are hedgehogs, not *Echinopsis*, and that is what the sentence first stated. Later, when I proof-read the article, I spotted the anomalous reference to "*Echinocereus*" and without thinking changed it to "*Echinopsis*." Come to think of it, I'm not sure how a sentence about hedgehogs got in there in the first place.

Elsewhere in the article I stated that some of the first *Echinopsis* hybrids were created by crosses with "*Lobilia*." Well, in the first place, there is no genus *Lobilia*. The closest would be *Lobelia* (AKA Indian Tobacco, Pukeweed, Vomitwort), and that, indeed, would be a remarkable plant to cross with a cactus. The correct genus is *Lobivia*.

**Upside Down Tomatoes-an Update.** The tomatoes were doing OK last month, although the plants were smaller and less prolific than my conventionally grown tomatoes, but then disaster struck. I went out one morning last week to water them and found most of the leaves gone. Tomato hornworms! I removed the caterpillars and the plants

are starting to recover, but they have a long way to go. I doubt I will see many more tomatoes from them.

All in all, I would give this experiment a C minus. But the flowers planted above the tomatoes are doing great!



Tomato hornworm  
(*Manduca quinquemaculata*)

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**Rain Gardens.** A couple of weeks ago I ran across a reference to “Rain Gardens” and Googled the term. From a Wikipedia article, I found that a Rain Garden is a “planted depression that is designed impervious urban areas like roofs, driveways, walkways, and compacted lawn areas.” The article went on to say that the concept originated in Prince George’s County, Maryland in the 1990s and has since spread to Minnesota, Washington State, Michigan, Georgia, Oregon, and Delaware.

Although a program called “Rainwater Gardens” may have originated in Maryland, the concept of in situ rainwater harvesting and rainwater-only gardening has been around for a long time here in the arid Southwest. Native Americans have been doing it for hundreds, if not thousands, of years. Nevertheless, there are some good how-to-do-it ideas on the Web for creating rainwater gardens. One of the best is a 56-page manual called *Rain Gardens, a How-to Manual for Homeowners* produced by the Cooperative Extension of the University of Wisconsin (<http://cleanwater.uwex.edu/pubs/pdf/home.rgmanual.pdf>).

The manual addresses where to locate the rain garden, how big to make it, and what to plant in it (if you live in Wisconsin). Native plants are recommended. In addition, the manual contains descriptions of construction techniques and shows many plans to help you design your garden.

All in all, this is a great document and is worth looking at if you are interested in creating a rain garden.

Until next time, happy surfing.

Gary A. Gruenhagen, Master Gardener  
virtualgardener@cox.net

## Fall Landscape Tour

The 2008 Fall *WaterWise*/Master Gardener Xeriscape Tour, Sunday, September 7 from 1-4:00 p.m. is going to be fabulous! Our hard-working committee had so many great choices that five yards were chosen. Each yard is completely different yet has water conserving features from plant choices to beautiful hardscapes to rainwater collection systems.

Unlike the spring tour that features smaller in-town landscapes, the fall tour emphasizes larger landscapes in the grasslands. We live in beautiful grasslands, and it is great to show how larger lots do not have to landscape the entire area but can incorporate a landscape into the natural area. The yards are in the Pueblo del Sol Village One and Huachuca Mountain Village area—affectionately referred to by Master Gardener Joyce Gay as “The Reservation.” I’ll let you figure it out!

Here are some highlights from the yards:

Yard #1 is surrounded by natural grassland. Unfortunately, I can’t say “native” grasses as the majority of grass here in the Sierra Vista Sub-watershed is Lehmann lovegrass originating from South Africa. This grass was introduced to the United States in the 1930’s to restore grasslands and did so well it spread and



Lehmann lovegrass

has taken over native grasses. However, it does provide food for birds, erosion control, and looks lovely blowing in the wind.

The three good characteristics of Lehmann lovegrass is what the owners of Yard #1 wanted to enhance with their landscape. They have left the majority of the large property to the grass and have added wildflowers, shrubs, a tree or two, and cacti to the small landscaped area immediately around the Santa Fe style home. The owner doesn’t pull a plant until she knows what it is, and is often surprised that what appeared to be a “weed” turned out to be a valuable food plant (an example is the *Hymenothrix wislizenii*, “Yellow thimblehead” which is a Lesser Goldfinch favorite).

Yard #2 is a complete opposite of Yard #1. It is well manicured with mowed grass and a tidy, graveled landscaped area. This owner doesn’t pamper the plants accenting the grassed area, but has an amazing green thumb. The area isn’t on a drip system, and he has grown a good sized Chaste Tree from a cutting, has a lantana at least five feet wide (no supplemental water), grew a five foot tall desert willow from seed that didn’t receive supplemental water after the first year or so, and has well pruned Arizona rosewoods (among other shrubs). Inside the back courtyard his wife has discovered the High Country Gardens catalogue. Need we say more?

Yard #3 is a mix of the two yards with hardscapes mixed in. A lightly mowed “back 40,” an outdoor fireplace room, a rainwater fountain, rain containers and rain

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chains, beautiful sandstone patio and walkways, and colorful painted wall accents make this property fun, practical, and jazzy. Six irrigation valves for the drip system allow the owners to water in hydrozones during the hot and dry seasons. Oh, did I forget the plants? The plants are the “sugar roses” in this landscape. They are the beautiful accents that enhance the landscape “cake.”

Right next door to Yard #3 is Yard #4. This is a front yard only, but no more is needed. Wow! Talk about color. This is a mature butterfly attracting garden that is chock full of plants. It is like one of those look again pictures, because the more you look, the more you see.

Although Yard #5 doesn't incorporate the grasslands into it, the tour committee couldn't resist including it on the tour. It is just too beautiful. It was on the fall 2004 tour when it was newly planted with the front lightly landscaped. Now that it is complete and mature it is like a botanical garden. A small pond (shaded to reduce evaporation) and meandering walkways draw you into the yard. Lower branches on the back wall shrubs are left touching the ground to hide the quail who love to feed in the yard. Unseen berms and swales make sure no storm-water is leaves the property.

Don't miss this great self-guided tour by getting a map from [jwilliam@ag.arizona.edu](mailto:jwilliam@ag.arizona.edu) or call the Cooperative Extension office at 458-8278 x 2141. If you are unable to get a map before the tour, they will be available during the hours of the tour at 4146 Pauite Way or 5043 S. Laguna Ave.

*Cado Daily, WaterWise Educator*

## September Reminders

- ◆ Keep on watering!
- ◆ Plant cool-season flowers and veggies
- ◆ Start shopping for bulbs (The bulletin *Bulbs for Southern Arizona* is available from the Cooperative Extension offices.)

## 2009 International Master Gardener Conference

On-line early registration is now available for the conference scheduled for March 22—26, 2009 in Las Vegas, NV. For information and video go to: [www.unce.unr.edu/imgc](http://www.unce.unr.edu/imgc). The conference is sponsored by the Master Gardeners of Southern Nevada.



*Robert E. Call*

Robert E. Call  
Extension Agent, Horticulture

Carolyn Gruenhagen  
Editor

## Cuttings 'N' Clippings

\* The next CCMGA meeting is 5:00 p.m. Thursday, September 4 at the University of Arizona South campus Public Meeting Room. The speaker will be Rick Weisberg on *Rainwater Harvesting*.

\* A free Landscape Tour sponsored by *WaterWise* and the Cochise County Master Gardeners will be held on September 7 from 1—4:00 p.m. and will feature low water use landscapes. Master Gardener docents will be at each yard to answer questions. Plant lists will be available. For a map call 458-8278, Ext. 2141 or e-mail [jwilliam@ag.arizona.edu](mailto:jwilliam@ag.arizona.edu). See Page 2 of this newsletter for more information.

\* The Cochise County Fair will be held September 25—28 at the fair grounds located in Douglas, AZ. Fair books are available at the Cooperative Extension offices.

\* The 5th High Desert Garden Fair will be held October 18 from 8:00 a.m.—1:00 p.m. at the University of Arizona South Campus. This event is free to the public and will feature three workshops, vendors offering plants, garden equipment, arts and crafts—all things garden related. If you would like to be a vendor or for more information contact Sarah Turan at (520) 803-0718 or [asmcran@cox.net](mailto:asmcran@cox.net).

## Construction of a Simple Propagation Box

Propagation of plants at home is an extremely economical process that provides you with a wealth of healthy seedlings. Vegetative propagation by cuttings will produce exact biological clones of the parent plant, to include the sex of that plant if dioecious in nature.

The instructions presented here may be altered to meet your circumstance or budget, but the box will be durable enough to withstand many enjoyable years of meeting your desires.

1. Acquire a 10-gallon aquarium, typically, 20" long x 10" deep x 12" high. A larger size will be too heavy and a smaller size is usually not high enough.
2. Thoroughly wash the inside and outside of the aquarium with ammonia /water mix, or glass cleaner to ready for painting. Using 1" masking tape, equally tape off the outside bottom of the aquarium so that once painted there will be

painted and non-painted striping. About 2" from bottom of aquarium apply a strip of 1" masking tape around all four outside sides of glass.

3. Using exterior grade white (gloss or flat) spray paint, paint the entire exterior of the aquarium. One 12 ounce can of paint should provide needed coverage. Please read instructions and paint professionally. Once the paint is dry, pull the tape. This process will allow enough light in for photosynthesis, but not so much as to burn or over-heat plant tissues.

4. Make a frame from common, untreated, 1" x 4" pine that is one inch larger in dimension on the inside than the length and depth of the outside of the aquarium. This will allow a 1/2" space between the frame and the aquarium when project is complete.

5. Cut and staple 1/8" – 3/16" hardware cloth to one side of frame. This will be the bottom of the box.

6. On top of hardware cloth place 1 x 4's, cut the width of the frame, two inches in from the short edge

of frame and attach with screws; this will provide an area for your fingers when lifting the box. Add one or two more 1" x 4" slats between the edge ones and secure. Do not close off entire bottom of frame. Good drainage is essential.

7. If a sandy rooting medium (recommended) is used, cut to size and insert a piece of fly screen on top of hardware cloth on the inside of frame.

Add rooting medium for specific intent to the top of frame, water thoroughly, place aquarium upside down and inside frame. See Figure 1.

There you go, a mini, portable greenhouse, great for propagating cuttings for about twenty bucks!

Volume of box (if sized as above) will be approximately 563 cubic inches. That is about four three pound coffee cans full.

Depending on medium used, sand, peat, perlite, vermiculite, or a mixture the box will weigh 30 – 35 pounds when wet.

Rarely is there a greater gift than that of a home grown plant.

*DeForest S. Lewis, Master Gardener*

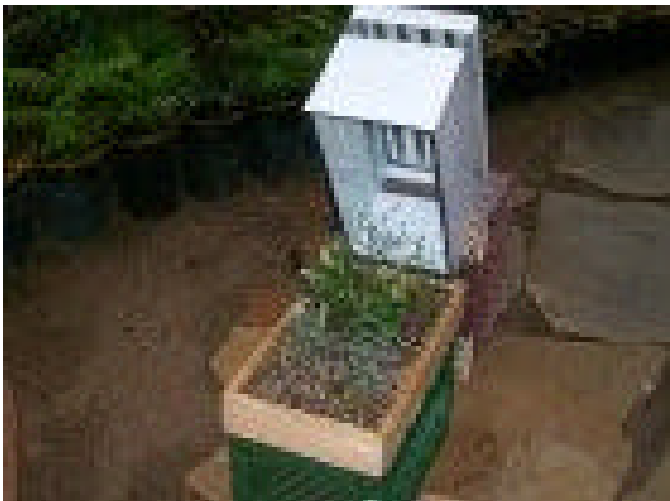


Figure 1: Simple Propagation Box

***"I have learned that talking to plants doesn't do squat for them. Watering does. If you don't believe me take two plants. Water one. Talk to the other."***

***—Jim Koweek  
Just Add Water***



## Call's Classic Comments

Fall is my favorite time to garden in Southeastern Arizona. Many of the cool-season crops, those that can withstand freezing, do very well in Cochise County during the fall. In fact, the fall in Cochise County is generally a better time to raise cool-season crops. These vegetables include the cabbage family, *i.e.*, broccoli, cauliflower, kale, and cabbage among others. Also, spinach, small beets, peas—both snap and edible pod—turnips, radishes, lettuce, mustard greens, and other greens can be planted. The onion family does best when planted in the fall and then overwintered and harvested in early summer. Members include garlic, leeks, onions, and chives. If planting bulb-type onions be sure they are short-day types. Prepare and plant during the last week in August or first two weeks in September. I have had broccoli, cabbage, cauliflower, and onions growing the whole winter long during mild winters, pulling the plants out in May to make way for warm-season crops. During the cold winter months of January and February they did not grow much but they survived.

*Robert E. Call*  
Extension Agent, Horticulture

*Note: Reprinted from the September 2002 Cochise County Master Gardener Newsletter. Rob Call is currently on a University of Arizona sabbatical.*

## Garden Tip #4837



Zucchini grows from seed to maturity in about 50 days. That means that if you were imprudent and planted your zucchini as early as possible, you might be well into harvesting your second ton of this squash by now—assuming of course that you only have one plant. It also means that you have had a chance to try hundreds of recipes—except for the color, the zucchini frozen yogurt with basil and brown sugar isn't really as bad as it sounds—and you are looking through your senior year high school annual to see if you can find someone you know who has not already been the lucky recipient of a “gift” from your garden.

Well, have I got a tip for you! (I must confess, that this one is not original. It came from the November 1989 issue of *National Gardening*.) You can use zucchini to treat your aching tootsies—no, you do not have to submerge your feet in chilled zucchini slush. Believe it or not, someone has discovered that zucchini can be used to stretch your shoes.

Here's how:

First you have to coarsely chop up a large zucchini and boil it until it is sort of squishy. Next you have to scoop out the squishy part and drain it in a large strainer for a while. After some of the excess water has drained off, spoon the stuff into a freezer bag—the original article suggests using two nested bags to assure that none of the squish escapes. Finally, stuff the bag(s) into a shoe that you want to stretch and put everything into the freezer overnight. The next morning...voilà. Your shoe is slightly larger than it was the night before and now fits like a glove. Of course you have to wait an hour or so for the slush to thaw enough to extract the bag before you can try on the shoe.

An added benefit to this method of shoe stretching is that you still have a bag of squished zucchini when you have finished with your shoes. This combined in a sauce pan with a quarter pound of tofu and some grated rutabaga . . . \

*Gary Gruenhagen, Master Gardener*

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# Cochise County Fair

September 25—28  
Douglas, AZ

Don't miss the *Waters Wise* and Cochise County Master Gardeners

FALL



## LANDSCAPE TOUR

Sunday, September 7  
1 to 4 pm

Beautiful low water landscapes in the Sierra Vista area will be open to the public for this self-guided tour.

Cochise County Master Gardeners will be at the sites to answer questions and point out the features of each landscape.

For a map to this *free!* tour, call *Waters Wise* at

458-8278 x 2141

or email [jwilliam@ag.arizona.edu](mailto:jwilliam@ag.arizona.edu)

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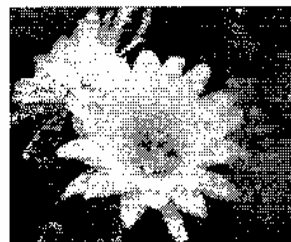
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The University of Arizona Cooperative Extension presents . . .

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## The 5<sup>th</sup> High Desert Garden Fair

October 18, 2008

8:00 a.m. — 1:00 p.m.



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