



## The Virtual Gardener—Skin Cancer—Part 2

Last month we learned that sunlight comprises a mix of radiation of different wavelengths and that the short wavelength radiation we can't see—ultraviolet (UV)—can harm us. This month I want to explore some of the harmful effects of exposure to UV radiation.

As mentioned in last month's article, there are three basic types of skin cancers: melanoma, squamous cell carcinoma (SCC), and basal cell carcinoma (BCC).

Of the three types of skin cancers, melanoma is the least common but the most serious form, causing 75 percent of deaths due to skin cancer. Although melanomas can develop in mucous tissues and in the eyes, the most common type is cutaneous melanoma, a cancer of the cells in your skin that produce your summer tan. It begins on the surface of the skin and grows downward where it can enter the bloodstream or lymph system and travel to other parts of the body such as the liver, lungs, or brain. Although deadly if left untreated, melanoma is curable when treated early.

As might be expected, cutaneous

melanomas are most likely to develop in areas of the body most exposed to the sun—head, face, back, chest, and legs. People with darker skin colors are at lower risk than those with fair skin but still may develop melanomas where the pigmentation is lighter such as on the palms of their hands, soles of their feet, and even under their nails.

Melanomas usually first appear as new spots on the skin or an unusual change in an existing mole but may also be manifested as sores that do not heal or a spot surrounded by redness or swelling. The Skin Cancer Institute recommends using the ABCDE Rule to recognize potential melanomas.

- A for asymmetrically shaped moles
- B for moles with irregularly shaped borders
- C for moles with changes in colors
- D for moles with diameters larger than a quarter inch
- E for moles that are evolving or changing in size, shape, color, or elevation.

*(Continued on Page 2)*

### Inside this issue:

<a href="#">This Month in the Garden</a>	3
<a href="#">September Reminders</a>	3
<a href="#">Cuttings 'N' Clippings</a>	4
<a href="#">Joyce is Retiring!</a>	4
<a href="#">Ask a Master Gardener</a>	4
<a href="#">At a Glance Box</a>	5
<a href="#">Three Great Ones</a>	5
<a href="#">SAVMC Video</a>	6
<a href="#">Master Gardeners at Work</a>	6



COLLEGE OF AGRICULTURE AND LIFE SCIENCES  
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Cochise County

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(Continued from page 1)

Squamous cell carcinoma (SCC) is the second most common form of skin cancer. It affects the outermost layers of our skin which are composed of flat, scale-like cells called “squamous cells,” hence the name of the cancer. This cancer is mainly caused by cumulative UV exposure to areas of skin over long periods of time, but it can also occur anywhere on the body, including some places “where the sun don’t shine.” About 700,000 cases are diagnosed each year in the United States and about 2,500 of them will be fatal.

According to a [website](#) of the National Institutes of Health (NIH) squamous cell cancers usually occur on the face, ears, neck, hands, or arm. The earliest symptom is a growing bump with a rough, scaly surface and flat reddish patches, often larger than an inch. A sore that will not heal may also be a sign of this cancer.

Again according to the [NIH](#), basal cell carcinoma (BCC) is the most common form of cancer in the United States and occurs on skin that is regularly exposed to UV. Although it also can occur in younger people, it is most common in people over age 40. It may be expressed as a bump, growth, or sore that can range in color from pearly or waxy white to light pink, to flesh-color, or to brown. As a sore it may bleed easily, fail to heal, ooze and crust over, appear to be a bruise, have irregular blood vessels in or around it, or have

a depressed area in its middle. Basal cell carcinomas almost never metastasize but can grow into surrounding tissues or bone and cause disfigurement.

Treatments for SCC and BCC may include excision, scraping the cancerous cells away, electrical desiccation, freezing with liquid nitrogen, or treatment with light (photodynamic therapy). One of the newest techniques is Mohs surgery which involves removing a very thin layer of skin, immediately examining it under a microscope, and repeating the process until no more cancer cells are found. This surgical technique leaves the least traces of the surgery and is often used on the head and face.

**... Pima, Cochise, and Santa Cruz Counties have incidence rates considerably higher than the national average ...**

Treatments for melanoma range from simple excision of a non-invasive melanoma done under local anesthesia in the doctor’s office to the full range of treatments used for other cancers, including major surgery, chemo-, and radiation therapy if it has metastasized. Early detection and treatment can save your life.

You may read [reports](#) that it is a myth that Arizona has a skin cancer rate second only to Australia and that in fact 35 other states have higher rates. Those reports are false and reflect under-reporting rather than actual incidence rates. The [University of Arizona Skin Cancer Institute](#) gathered extensive data on the incidence of all types of skin cancer in Arizona from 1985 to

1998 and found that Pima, Cochise, and Santa Cruz Counties have incidence rates considerably higher than the national average for the United States although much lower than for Australia.

Risk factors for developing skin cancer fall into two categories: environmental and personal.

Environmental factors include low latitude, high altitude, clear skies, season, and time of day. The higher the sun in the sky, the more intense the sunlight. Ultraviolet radiation is most intense during the summer between the hours of 10 AM and 4 PM.

Personal factors include skin color, age (the older you are the greater the total lifetime dose of UV), history of sunburn, gender (the incidence rate for men is about twice that of women, probably a behavioral rather than physiological problem).

The Skin Cancer Foundation recommends you perform a monthly head to toe [self-examination](#) of your skin to look for signs of cancer using mirrors to examine areas that can’t be viewed directly. In addition to looking in the obvious places, you should also examine the areas between fingers and toes, the soles of your feet, palms of your hands, and under nails. Be aware that nail polish can mask cancers growing under nails and should be removed for the exam. Should any signs of cancer be discovered during your exam, your next step should be to make an appointment with your physician or a dermatologist.

Next month we will take a look at some of the ways of protecting yourself from skin cancer while working out in the garden.

Until next time, happy surfing!

Gary Gruenhagen, Master Gardener  
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## This Month In the High Desert Garden— The Time Is Right to Plant a Garden for Fall

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

Typically, September will see our temperatures moderate a bit, with a corresponding drop in rainfall and humidity. That means you'll need to be more vigilant about watering, although if your monsoon was anything like my monsoon, you really didn't get much help from the rains this summer anyway. Pay special attention to trees, shrubs, and other perennials planted within the last year or so as their root systems probably still aren't well enough established to tolerate periods of drought. This is true even for desert adapted plants.

As the temperatures drop, it's a good time to plant trees, shrubs, and other perennials that are frost hardy. This includes landscape trees, fruit trees, and shrubs like red-tipped photinia and Texas ranger. Don't plant winter sensitive perennials such as lantana, salvia, or verbena that will die back when the first freezes hit; they simply won't have adequate time to root well. Wait until spring to plant these. For a lengthy list of plants that do well in our high desert climate, read "Recommended Plants for Sierra Vista, available online at:

<http://ag.arizona.edu/cochise/mg/PlantLists.htm>. It's a great reference as is the *Sunset Western Garden Book*, which is a must-have for any gardener, no matter the skill level.

When planting perennials, dig the hole for your new plant only as deep as the containerized root ball—no deeper. If the hole is too

deep, the soil will gradually settle and the plant will sink down, thereby leaving the bark or stem susceptible to disease and rot. Stems and bark just aren't meant to be covered with soil or mulch. Dig the hole 3 or 4 times larger in diameter than the root ball (I must confess that I cheat a bit on this recommendation, especially if it's a big hole I'm digging) and don't bother wasting money by amending the soil, just refill the hole with the soil you dug out, perhaps minus the rocks. Research has shown that it's best to use only the native soil that the plant will live in. This isn't true, by the way, for vegetables and annual flowers, which do benefit from a richer soil than you'll generally find in our neck of the woods.

It's getting too late to be planting summer vegetables, but if you want a winter garden, start it now. Cool season crops like peas, beets, chard, kale, lettuces, carrots, broccoli, cauliflower, and cabbages are all appropriate choices if grown from seed. If instead you're buying nursery plants, wait a few more weeks for cooler weather. Take note, though, peas will be killed by the first freeze we get. In late October or November, you can plant garlic, onions, and bulbing flowers such as daffodils and tulips, so order them soon. For a list of seed, bulb, plant, and garden tool resources, consult these two articles from the *Cochise County Master Gardener Newsletter*:

<http://ag.arizona.edu/cochise/mg/pdf/Jan10#page=3> and <http://ag.arizona.edu/cochise/mg/pdf/Feb11.pdf#SeedSources>.



Speaking of the newsletter, there's been one published every month for over 22 years. It's available online on or about the first of each month at:

<http://ag.arizona.edu/cochise/mg/> and it's filled with up-to-date information on all things gardening in Cochise County. As a bonus, you'll also find old issues going all the way back to 1999. It'll make great reading on the next rainy day, which I hope comes soon!

For those of you lucky enough to be harvesting your own tomatoes, here are a couple of tips. First, if your tomatoes are cracking, splitting, or being attacked by birds or bugs, try picking them when they're partially ripe, say 50% colored. They'll ripen on your counter top and be just as tasty. Do keep them out of direct sunlight and don't ever refrigerate a tomato. Also, if your tomatoes do have cracks, for goodness' sake, don't throw them away. Just cut off the damaged part and eat or cook away. While some tomato varieties are naturally more prone to splitting than others, you can often minimize the damage by evening out your watering schedule. Long periods without water, followed by a lot of water or a heavy rain definitely aggravates the condition.

Happy gardening!

*Bill Schulze, Master Gardener*

### September Reminders

- ◆ Keep on watering!
- ◆ You can always plant something—try cool season veggies
- ◆ Start shopping for bulbs

## Cuttings 'N' Clippings

☼ CCMGA will hold its next meeting on **Thursday, September 4** at the UASV Groth Hall Public Meeting Room at 5:00 p.m.

☼ The next Water Wise event will be a well owners workshop in October. For information call (520) 458-8278, Ext 2141, or contact Valerie at:

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

You can visit Water Wise at:

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

☼ Sierra Vista Area Gardeners Club Fall Plant Sale will be held on **Thursday, September 25** at the Sierra Vista Farmers Market from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. There should be many houseplants, perennials, as well as herbs, for purchase. As usual, packets of seeds from native plants to vegetables will be available for free. For information contact Diane Levine, Chairman at:

[bob4dian@mindspring.com](mailto:bob4dian@mindspring.com)

☼ The 90<sup>th</sup> Cochise County Fair will be held at the fairgrounds in Douglas on **September 25—28**. For information go to:

[cochisecountyfair.org](http://cochisecountyfair.org)

☼ Cado Daily reports that about 90 people toured the 5 beautiful low water gardens on the 17<sup>th</sup> annual Water Wise/Master Gardener Xeriscape tour Saturday, August 23. Many thanks to the homeowners and docents who helped to make it successful!

Back garden on Brewer St., one of the homes on the tour.



Photo by Gary Gruenhagen

## Joyce is Retiring!

### Thank You and So Long – Joyce Williams!



We would like to dedicate this issue to Joyce Williams, who retires on August 29<sup>th</sup> after 21 years of service with Cooperative Extension. Joyce has gone from typewriters and Wite-Out, to word processing, spell check and the backspace key; and from a 2.2 person office to well over a 16 plus person office. Joyce has been an invaluable member of the team since she joined in 1993. Joyce has been a key contact for all the Master Gardener volunteers and for clientele needing assistance. To recognize her outstanding service Joyce was awarded the title of “Honorary Master Gardener” in 2011. Her departure will leave a

huge void that will be extremely difficult to fill. It will be hard to replace 21 years of experience, her proofreading skills, her rapport with the employees, volunteers, and clientele, and her unique methods of dealing with the challenges of Cooperative Extension. Joyce has such a wealth of knowledge that will be deeply missed (we will have to have her on speed dial). As Joyce departs we extend our deepest gratitude for a job well done and for her many years of making us all look good. May her years that lie ahead be filled with family and friends, laughter, happiness, and all the best. We say “so long” but, not farewell!

### Welcome – Valerie Davidson

Please join us in welcoming Valerie Davidson to the Cochise County Cooperative Extension Office Team! Valerie started on August 18<sup>th</sup> as our new Administrative Assistant to allow for some overlap in her being hired and in Joyce retiring. Valerie can be reached at 458.8278 x 2141 or [valeriedavidson@email.arizona.edu](mailto:valeriedavidson@email.arizona.edu)

*Susan Pater, Cooperative Extension Director, Cochise County*



### Ask a



Cochise County Master Gardeners are available to answer your gardening questions either by telephone call to the Cooperative Extension Office or on-line on our web site at:

<http://ag.arizona.edu/cochise/mg/question.htm>

## At a Glance Box

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

**Plant:** Jewels of Opar, *Talinum paniculatum*

**Description:** Fleshy perennial

**Blooms:** Tiny pink flowers mid-to late summer

**Use:** Wildflower garden

**Culture:** Adaptable. Sun or part shade.

**Plant:** Arizona caltrop, *Kallstroemia grandiflora*

**Description:** Large annual

**Blooms:** Prolific orange flowers late summer

**Use:** Natural landscape area

**Culture:** Full sun. Well-draining soil

**Plant:** Velvet-pod mimosa, *Mimosa dysocarpa*

**Description:** Small woody shrub

**Blooms:** Prolific pink flowers late summer

**Use:** Natural landscape area

**Culture:** Full sun. Well-draining soil.

**Learn more:** Cochise County Herbarium,

[www.cochisecountyherbarium.org](http://www.cochisecountyherbarium.org)

For in-depth articles, see below.

*Cado Daily*

*Water Resources Coordinator, Water Wise Program*

*University of Arizona Cochise County Cooperative Extension*



“one of the most attractive annuals in the southern part of the state” by Kearney and Peebles, co-authors of *Arizona Flora*, the bible of native plant enthusiasts. Calling it a poppy is a misnomer because it isn't in the poppy family, but rather in the Caltrop (*Zygophyllaceae*) family. Thus, the more appropriate name for the Arizona poppy is Arizona caltrop.

The cantaloupe-orange flower of the Arizona caltrop is relatively grand at almost 2 inches in diameter. Multiple flowers cover the 4 to 5 foot diameter and 2-foot high plant. It is interesting to note that some *K. grandiflora* researchers remark on the ultraviolet reflective pattern of the petals as seen by

the insect eye, yet some of the 46 species of bees, wasps, butterflies, and flies visiting the flower avoid the pollen and only access the nectar. There is a theory that the flower attracts nectar-eating non-pollinators to reduce the nectar quantities forcing pollinators to visit more flowers.. (Foraging behavior of some bees and wasps at *Kallstroemia grandiflora* flowers in southern Arizona and New Mexico. American Museum novitates; no. 2546. Cazier, Mont A.; Linsley, E. Gorton (Earle Gorton), <http://hdl.handle.net/2246/5450> 1974.)

The third plant is the Velvet Pod Mimosa, *Mimosa dysocarpa*. This is a 2 to 3 foot high woody shrub found along roadsides, in grasslands and canyons with powder-puff pink flowers. The short-lived flowers cover the plant in a gorgeous bloom, but don't touch the stems or you will get poked by short, stout spines! If you want this

*(Continued on page 6)*

## Three Great Ones!

Lately, three plants in full bloom have come up in conversation at the office. Because of all the interest, I just can't resist writing about all three of these great local natives.



The first plant is “jewels of Opar” *Talinum paniculatum* (TAL-eh-nam pan-eh-kah-LAY-tum). Considered a stubborn, perennial weed by some because of a thick tuberous root, a web search indicates that some people covet it! Despite being splattered with its juice when weed whacking, I too rather like the plant.

The juiciness of the jewels of Opar is characteristic of its family, Portulacaceae (Portulaca). Most of the *T.*

*paniculatum*'s, many 4 to 5 inches long and 1 to 2 inches wide fleshy dark green leaves are clustered in a rosette around the base of the plant, but high enough to catch the weed whacker.

The three or so foot long delicate flower stalk has tiny (about ¼ inch long and wide) dark pink flowers daintily dangling from the sides. If pollinated, small berries follow the flowers. As for its common name, if you believe what you read from Wikipedia, the name is attributed to a *Tarzan and the Jewels of Opar* novel written by Edgar Rice Burroughs. Right or not, how cool is it to have a plant associated with Tarzan?

When in bloom, the second plant is a head-turner. The Arizona poppy, *Kallstroemia grandiflora* (Kal - STREE-mia) is described as,

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## Southern Arizona Veterans' Memorial Cemetery

Take a tour of the beautiful, award winning Southern Arizona Veterans' Memorial Cemetery located in Sierra Vista, AZ [here](#). The original song *May They Rest in Peace Renewed* sung to the tune of *Amazing Grace* was written and performed by Arizona's Official State Balladeer, Dolan Ellis, at the dedication of the Historical Cemetery located within the SAVMC in 2009. The Cochise County Master Gardeners Association donated money for the plants in and around the Historical Cemetery and the planting was coordinated by Master Gardener, Jan Groth.



### Master Gardeners at Work

When dozens of trees, shrubs, and other plants arrived to beautify the area around the newly dedicated Veteran's Chapel at the Southern Arizona Veterans' Memorial Cemetery, Master Gardeners volunteered to help install the plants. The effort was led by Master Gardener Jan Groth who has been involved in many other beautification projects at the cemetery.

(Continued from page 5)

plant in your landscape, tuck it away from walkways and near an ever-green plant. Additionally, you may not want to smell the velvet fruit if the botanical name *dysocarpa* is a correct nomenclature. *Dyso* means evil-smelling and *carpa* means seed. However, it is worth it all for the flower show!

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



Cochise County Master  
Gardener Newsletter Editor  
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