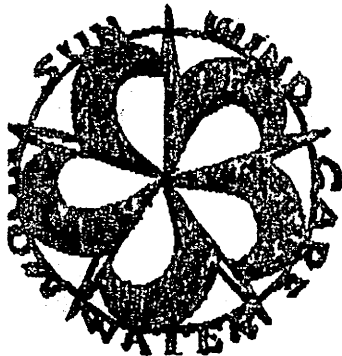


# COOPERATIVE EXTENSION

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



the Cochise County Master Gardener

## NEWSLETTER

VOL. 2, NO. 5

APRIL 1991

### THE PLANT OF THE MONTH

Peter Whitman  
Staff Writer

The plant of the month this month is a little known tree that I think you will all be interested in . . . the California laurel (*Umbellularia californica*).

For anyone who has tried to grow their own bay leaves (*Laurus nobilis*) and failed, the California laurel is the perfect substitute. The leaves are the same size and shape as true bay leaves and have a very similar flavor. Unless you were to taste them together you would not be able to tell the difference. Or you may think, as I do, that they taste even better than the regular bay leaves.

Unlike the *Laurus nobilis*, however, the California laurel, native to the Sierra Nevada and California coastal ranges, is perfectly suited to our climate. It grows very slowly to about 75 feet tall (only about 1 foot each year), but with a lot of water and good soil it will grow faster. None-the-less, it will grow in almost any condition, full sun or shade, drought conditions or regular water. If you don't want to wait 20 years or so to get a wonderful shade tree, it is well suited for use as a tall hedge or as an addition to your landscape in the form of an "edible", and beautiful evergreen tree.

So, for those of you who have tried to grow bay leaves for your kitchen and been unsuccessful, or would like to grow something a little flavorful, or if you just need a versatile evergreen landscape plant, California laurel is the one to try.

UNIVERSITY  
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## APRIL REMINDERS

WATCH OUT FOR LATE FROSTS  
STAKE NEW TREES  
PLANT COOL SEASON VEGETABLES

(Vegetable Varieties for Arizona)

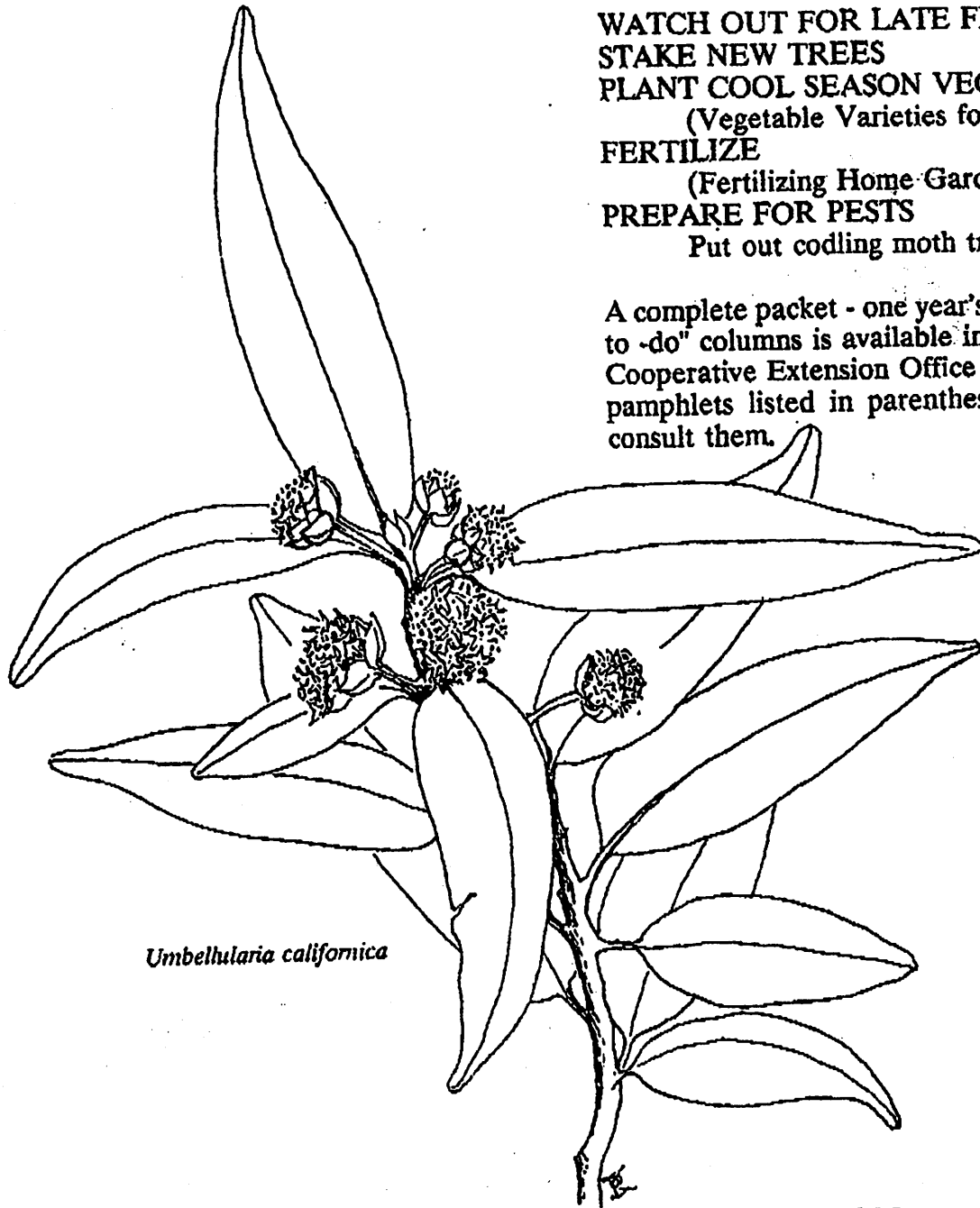
FERTILIZE

(Fertilizing Home Gardens in Arizona)

PREPARE FOR PESTS

Put out codling moth traps

A complete packet - one year's worth - of "What-to-do" columns is available in the Sierra Vista Cooperative Extension Office as well as the two pamphlets listed in parenthesis if you need to consult them.



*Umbelularia californica*

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**Staff:**

Jackie Dillon-Fast  
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T.J. Martin  
Peter Whitman

Articles to be published in next month's newsletter must be received at the Sierra Vista office by April 26.

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## HIGH DESERT GARDENER'S BOOKSHELF

Plants for a Dry Climate: How to select, grow and enjoy. By Mary Rose Duffield and Warren D. Jones. (Los Angeles, CA: HP Books, 1979?) Price: approximately \$13 (paperback) ISBN 0-89586-042-2

Southwestern Landscaping with Native Plants. By Judith Phillips. (Santa Fe, New Mexico: Museum of New Mexico Press, 1987) Price: approximately \$18 (paperback) ISBN 0-89013-166-X

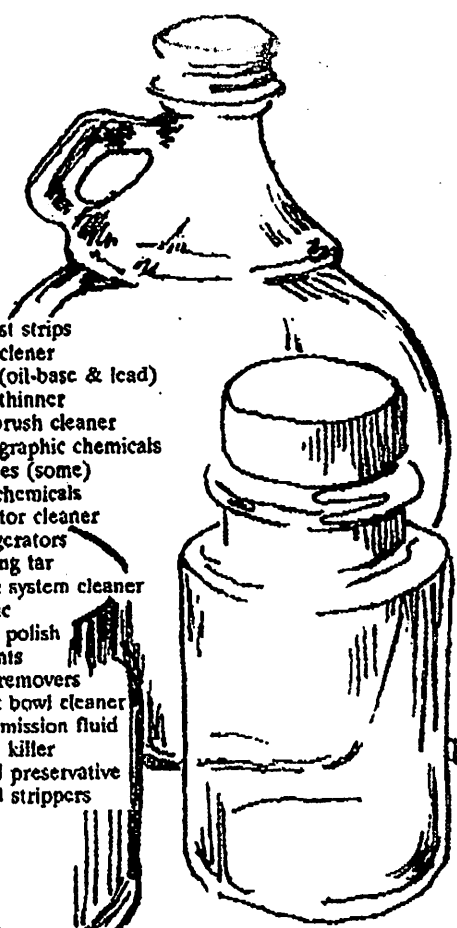
Together these two books offer plant descriptions that are more detailed than those found in the Sunset Western Garden Book, as well as color photographs and line drawings of specific plants. The two books are very similar in focus and design.

Phillips's book, Southwestern Landscaping with Native Plants contains only a handful of color photographs, using line drawings instead, but discusses landscape design and use of native plants in more detail than Duffield & Jones. Phillips also includes information on general as well as specific propagation techniques for native plants, recommended care, and notes on insect and disease susceptibility.

Duffield and Jones's book, Plants for a Dry Climate, contains full color photographs of mature plants, as well as information on landscape design, annual & perennial color charts, and general and specific discussions of plant problems. Many of the plants listed, however, will not survive in the high desert. Thus, even though they highlight 300 plants to Phillips 60, some of these plants are better suited to Phoenix, Tucson and Southern California. The color photos are handy, however, as are the notes on the disadvantages of each plant.

If you are having trouble deciding which book to purchase, consider whether you are looking for native landscape plants (Phillips) and if you prefer color photographs over line drawings (Duffield & Jones). Both books are highly recommended.

### TOXIC TRASH



Acids	No-pest strips
Ammonia	Oven cleaner
Antifreeze	Paint (oil-base & lead)
Arsenic	Paint thinner
Asbestos	Paintbrush cleaner
Asphalt tar	Photographic chemicals
Batteries	Polishes (some)
Brake fluid	Pool chemicals
Bug/rodent killer	Radiator cleaner
Chemistry sets	Refrigerators
Chlorine bleach	Roofing tar
Cleaning solvents	Septic system cleaner
Degreaser	Shellac
Drain cleaner	Silver polish
Dry-cleaner fluid	Solvents
Fertilizers w/ herbicides	Spot removers
Fire starters	Toilet bowl cleaner
Floor cleaners	Transmission fluid
Herbicides	Weed killer
Metal polish	Wood preservative
Motor oil	Wood strippers

### GARDENERS CLUB

The second meeting of the Sierra Vista Area Gardeners Club is scheduled for Thursday April 25 from 7 to 9 pm at the Mona Bishop Art Gallery, Sierra Vista Public Library. All interested gardeners are welcome. Call George Nasdahl (459-0159) for information.

### EARTH DAY CELEBRATIONS

Mark your calendars! At least three Cochise County communities are planning Earth Day celebrations. Bisbee has scheduled its activities for Sunday April 21, Sierra Vista and Sunsites for Saturday April 27 (Earth Day is Monday April 22). Master Gardeners, along with many other groups and volunteers, will be participating in each community's event. Watch your local paper for details and come join the fun!

## CUTTINGS 'N' CLIPPINGS

\* It appears Earth Day is having an effect on environmentalism. A company that sells recycled items, chemical free cleaners, and water and energy saving devices reports that their sales have jumped from \$125,000 three years ago to more than \$1 million last year. Another's sales jumped from \$80,000 in 1986 to a whopping estimated \$6 million this year! Think how much water and how many trees are being saved! Your actions are making a difference.

\* Can't keep your birdbath clean and filled with fresh water? How about filling it with soil and planting flowers in it instead.

\* A great fertilizer for your herb garden is manure tea. To make, simply soak 1 part manure to 2 parts water overnight. Strain and dilute with water until the color of tea.

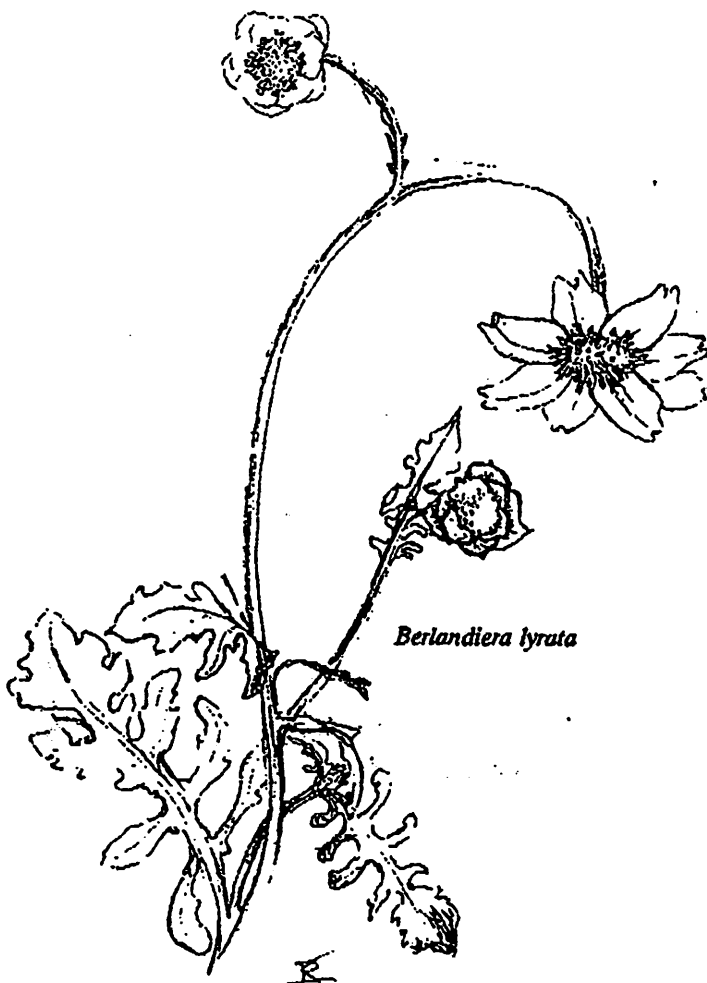
"All you need to grow thick, green grass is a crack in the sidewalk."



## THINGS THAT WORK

\* Do your seedlings droop and fall over just when they seem to be taking off. Try watering your seedlings with chamomile tea. Chamomile tea contains a natural fungicide that can control the damping off fungus that cause seedling wilt. Brew the tea at regular strength, cool to room temperature and use in place of regular water when watering seeds. Repeat as needed.

\* Having trouble with low germination of indoor seeds? Try bottom heat to warm soil and encourage germination. If you have an electric heating pad, place it under a plastic tray containing your seedpots. Most seeds like a soil temperature of 70 to 80 degrees to germinate so set the heating pad on the lowest setting and move it to the middle setting if needed. Remember, your temperature is around 98 degrees so the heating pad should not feel warm to you. If necessary, place a towel between the heating pad and the tray. Using this method (a lot cheaper than buying commercial seedling heating pads and less drafty than the top of a refrigerator) cucumber seeds germinated in less than three days and tomato in five.



*Berlandiera lyrata*

## ECOLOGICALLY-SANE PEST CONTROL (Part3)

### D. Encourage natural predators, parasites and pathogens.

1. Learn to identify the "good guys" that nature provides to help control the pests in your garden. Don't smash every egg case you find or destroy everything that crawls. Mother Nature may be doing a pretty good job of keeping your pest population under control. Buy or borrow a good reference book on insect identification and learn how to use it.

2. Learn the living requirements of these beneficial animals. Provide them with prey, alternate food sources, nesting and hiding places whenever possible. Many beneficials need pollen or nectar during part of their life cycle. To provide this (and thus encourage them to stay around) plant a variety of flowering plants and herbs in the area. Try to have at least one type of plant in bloom at all times. Commercial feeding supplements are available or you can make your own using various combinations of sugar, honey, yeast and water.

3. Provide initial or supplemental populations if nature hasn't already given you enough to do the job. Some of the "good guys" to look for include the following predators and parasites. (C) = Commercially available and (N) = Naturally occurring only.

a. Antlion - (N) (Myrmeleontidae) 1 to 1 1/2 inch long relative of the Lacewings. These insects look like small dark brown damselflies with clubbed antennae and finely veined wings. The adults prefer pollen and nectar or may not eat at all. The plump larvae (also called "Doodle Bugs") build cone-shaped pits in sandy soil to trap their prey. They will eat just about anything that walks on the ground and is small enough to fall into the pit.

b. Assassin Bug - (N) (Reduviidae) 1/2 to 1 3/8 inches in length. Adults are generally brown or black in color. Their strong forelegs are used to grasp and hold their prey. With a stout "beak" they suck the juices out of their victims, which are usually larvae and other soft-bodied insects. Prey include Aphids, caterpillars, Colorado Potato Beetles, Japanese Beetles, Leafhoppers, Mexican Bean Beetles, etc... Although generally harmless to humans and other larger animals, Assassin Bugs can deliver a painful stab in defense of unwanted handling. They may also cause an allergic reaction in especially susceptible persons. A close relative, the "Blood-sucking Conenose" (no, I'm NOT making this up!), feeds on the blood of mammals and is a vector of the debilitating and sometimes fatal, Chagas' Disease.

c. Birds - Many different species of birds will be happy to help you control your insect population. Especially in the spring and early summer when there are hungry young to feed, even normally seed-eating varieties will be looking for bugs. Landscape your area with a diversity of plants to help provide roosts and nesting areas. Keep pets indoors and curious children (and adults!) well hidden. Offer supplemental food when needed and housing and nesting materials if they are not readily available. Keeping water available in a garden pond or bird bath can almost guarantee that many feathered creatures will visit you on a regular basis.

d. Braconid Wasp - (N) (Braconidae) 1/16 to 3/16 inches (small!). The adults can be black, yellow or red in color. They may eat only nectar or drink the body fluids from their prey. The eggs are laid inside the pest or on the surface of the skin. The white, worm-like larvae hatch and burrow into the host's body where they feed upon their hosts from within, weakening and usually killing the pest. The larvae will then pupate (either inside the pest or after emergence) and start the cycle again when it

emerges as an adult. The white cocoons are commonly seen attached to the outside of caterpillars. Prey include Aphids, beetle larvae, Cabbageworms, Codling Moths, Gypsy Moths, Hornworms, and Tent Caterpillars.

e. Chalcid Wasp - (C) 1/40th of an inch - TINY! They lay their eggs in Whitefly larvae, the eggs hatch and the larvae kills its host as it develops. The adults look like flakes of pepper among the Whitefly population.

f. Domestic fowl - Chickens, ducks, geese etc...all do a pretty good job of cleaning pests out of your garden. Unfortunately, some fowl also enjoy eating certain crops so you will have to experiment and see which birds do the best job for you at the least "cost". As a side benefit, they may also provide you with droppings for fertilizer and eggs and/or meat for food. If you don't want a full-time flock, perhaps you can borrow or rent a few birds from a local farm. You may need to check local zoning ordinances.

g. Encarsia Formosa - (C) A tiny parasitic wasp used to effectively control whitefly populations in greenhouses.

h. Fireflies - (N) 1/4 to 3/4 inch. Nocturnal feeders, the adults and larvae eat mites, snails, slugs and miscellaneous insect larvae.

i. Ground Beetles - (N) 1 to 2 inches in length. Usually nocturnal, the adults and larvae feed upon caterpillars, Cutworms, snails, slugs and other soft-bodied insect larvae.

j. Ichneumon Wasp - (N) 1/8 to 3 inches in length and VERY skinny-looking. The adults lay their eggs inside the pest host where the larvae (and sometimes pupae) develop. The host is severely weakened during occupancy and dies when the predator emerges. The usually observed effect is a dry, brittle caterpillar with multiple oval pupal cases attached. They also attack spiders, borers, wood-boring larvae and various other insects.

k. Lacewings - (C) 1 inch long pale green or brown delicate-looking insects with lace-like wing veins. The adults prefer pollen and nectar, but the larvae are fierce looking creatures (appropriately called "aphid Lions") with voracious appetites. Common prey include Aphids, Corn Earworms, Leafhoppers, Mealybugs, Mites, Scales, Thrips and Whiteflies.

l. Ladybugs (Ladybird Beetles) - (C) 1/4 inch roundish-looking beetle. The adults and larvae both are very effective predators with each individual having the potential of devouring up to 5,000 pests in its life-span. The larvae live on the juices of their victims while the adults simply consume the entire creature. If the adults do not find a fair-sized population to feed upon, they are likely to look for a better deal elsewhere. So try to time their arrival with a high point in your pest population or seriously consider supplemental feeding so that they will at least stay around long enough to lay eggs. Ladybugs particularly like Aphids (for dinner that is!) but they will also eat Chinchbugs, Colorado Potato Beetles, Rootworms, Scales, Spider mites and weevils.

To be continued . . .

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