

COOPERATIVE EXTENSION

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



the Cochise County Master Gardener

NEWSLETTER

VOL. 2, NO. 12

DECEMBER 1991

PLANT OF THE MONTH

Peter Whitman
Staff Writer



*Lagerstroemia
Indica*

Last month I wrote about the Chinese Pistache because of its brilliant fall colors, which even now should be in full blaze around the county. This month I will elaborate on another full color plant. The Crape Myrtle (*Lagerstroemia*) is not well known for its fall color, but can add bright red, orange, and yellows to the autumnal landscape.

The Crape Myrtle is often confused with the true myrtle (*Myrtus communis*). The true myrtle is a small bush with fine textured growth. It does very well in Cochise County. The Crape Myrtle is a large bush or small tree with larger leaves than the true myrtle. *Lagerstroemia* is actually a plant for all seasons. It is perhaps best known for its brightly colored crepelike flowers seen in the spring. They come in loud colors from white to pink and lavender. These blossoms are in long clusters. The myrtle is often pruned into a small tree so the flowers are at eye level which makes them more noticeable in the spring.

In the summer the myrtle is an attractive small tree or bush. It has many applications in a small garden with limited space. With pruning and some upkeep, the bare winter structure of the myrtle can be very appealing. The light-colored bark and small form can add to the winter landscape.

Not just any myrtle will do for our area. They have a problem with fungus. Therefore, it is best to use a variety with an Indian name, such as Catawba, Cherokee, Potomac, Seminole, and Powhatan. They are all resistant to mildew. There are also some new hybrids which are billed as very mildew resistant. They are Natchez, Tuscarora, and Moskogee.

The myrtles come in all sizes: standards, dwarfs, and even varieties which can be grown from seed in hanging pots or baskets. There is sure to be a place for one in your garden.

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Robert E. Call

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MARK YOUR CALENDAR

Barbara Shelor
Staff Writer

TUCSON BOTANICAL GARDENS (Call 602-326-9255 or 602-326-9686 for a recorded message):

Luminaria Nights-Dec. 7 & 8 (6-8 pm): Members free. Non-members fee is \$3.00; children under 12 free. **Yucca Pod/Pine Cone Wreathmaking Class-Dec. 7 & 14 (9 am-3 pm, 2 sessions):** Complete a basic wreath with yucca pods, pine cones, and other dried desert plants. Call 602-297-0954. Instructor: Ruth Hamilton. Fee: \$50; \$45 TBG members. **Terra Cotta Pot Decorating-Dec. 14 (10-11am):** Ages 8 & up. Adults welcome. Print your own designs on terra cotta pots with wet sponges. Instructor: Peg Romano. Fee: \$8; \$7 TBG members (must pre-register). **Exploring Spanish Language & Culture-Dec. 12-Feb 13 (9:30-11 am, 10 sessions):** Field trips and classroom discussions to introduce students to the customs, foods, and language of the Tucson hispanic culture. Instructor: Mary Ott. Fee \$40; \$35 TBG members. **Garden Adventures-Jan. 4 (10-11:30 am):** Ages 5-9. Adults welcome. A program to increase a child's awareness of nature. Instructor: Andy Small. Fee: \$6; \$5 TBG members.

BOYCE THOMPSON SOUTHWESTERN ARBORETUM (Call 602-689-2723 or 602-689-2811 for recorded information): **Choosing Plants for Winter Color in the Drought-Jan 26 (11 am repeated at 1 pm):** Kim Stone, Horticulture Specialist, addresses some of the possibilities for bright flowers and color in the winter garden. The **Two O'Clock Lecture Series** for January includes: "The Arboretum Through the Seasons," "Arboretum Wildlife," "Drought-tolerant Landscaping Plants," "The Cacti of Arizona," "Colorful Australian Plants for Arizona Gardens." Please contact the arboretum for dates, as these talks are repeated during the month.

DESERT NIGHTS AT TALIENIN WEST-A WEDNESDAY NIGHT PROGRAM SERIES (Call 602-860-2700 for more information and full program): **Biosphere II** with John Allen, co-founder of Biosphere II. *Dec 11 at 7:30 pm.* \$12; students & seniors \$10.

SOUTHEASTERN CHAPTER OF ARIZONA NATIVE PLANTS SOCIETY: The first public meeting of this new chapter is tentatively scheduled to meet on Wed., Jan. 22, 1992 at Oscar Yrun Community Center at 6:30 pm. Guest speaker will be Page Bakarich who will present a slide show entitled "Native Foods of the Chiricahua Apaches." Confirmation of this place and date will be in the next newsletter.

CONFERENCES:

EIGHTH ANNUAL CONFERENCE ON SOLID WASTE MANAGEMENT & MATERIALS POLICY: Jan. 29-31, 1992. Contact Elaine Launzel, 50 Glen St., Glen Cove, NY 11542 or call Tara Roberts, Conference Coordinator, at 518-455-3711. The conference price increases after Dec. 14, 1991.

FIRST ARIZONA LAND & PEOPLE CONFERENCE: February 27-29, 1992 at the Holiday Inn - Tucson. The U of A College of Agriculture presents this conference with the theme "Environmental Stewardship." The cooperative extension offices have conference brochures detailing the agenda, the theme, and the tentative program.

Staff:

Carolyn Gruenhagen
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Barbara Shelor
Peter Whitman

Articles to be published in next month's newsletter must be received at the Sierra Vista office by December 20.

BUDDY BUG

Elizabeth Riordon
Staff Writer

Probably the best known and enjoyed beneficial insect is the Ladybird Beetle, the ladybug. Its name originated in the Middle Ages when it was called the "Beetle of Our Lady" after being dedicated to the Virgin Mary.

There are many different kinds of ladybugs: yellow, orange, or black, often with a distinctive pattern of yellow black or orange spots. Some are solid in color. The most common is red with seven black spots.

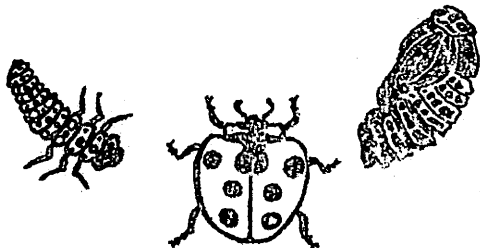
Birds are attracted to their bright colors, but soon learn to avoid the little beetles. Many ladybugs when attacked by birds turn over and excrete a foul-smelling liquid from their legs.

Ladybug eggs are laid on the undersides of leaves near aphids or other prey. The soft bodied, spiny, spotted larvae feed on the nearby insects. The larvae pass through four stages of growth and then pupate for about a week on the side of a pot or on plant stems. Mature ladybugs feast on aphids, soft scales, mealybugs, and spider mites. Each species has its particular preferred diet.

(One summer while at the beach in Delaware, we encountered thousands of ladybugs, the regular, it seemed, red and black kind, which were landing on the beach near the waterline. They inflicted painful bites, drawing blood, on the swimmers and sunbathers who were near the surf.)

The Mexican Bean Beetle and the Squash Beetle are also Ladybird Beetles. They are destructive insects which feed on ornamental plants and food crops. The Mexican Bean Beetle is yellowish-brown to copper colored and always has sixteen black dots.

During cold seasons ladybugs hibernate in large groups in hollow trees or under piles of vegetation. Masses of ladybugs are often seen wintering in the mountains near Sierra Vista.



Ladybugs are often gathered commercially from these seasonal swarms. After they are bought and released into a homeowner's garden, though, they simply fly away to swarm again and to lay their eggs far away from the purchaser's back yard. They can be useful, though, in screened greenhouses.

The best way to encourage the beneficial ladybug to live in your garden is to grow grains and pollen and nectar flowers, and to protect any egg clusters, larvae, or pupae that you may find. Local ladybugs can also be collected from fields. Also, of course, use only natural pest control methods and limit insecticide usage.



SOUTHWEST STYLE

Elizabeth Riordon
Staff Writer

Chili pepper lights, coyotes, and tiny pueblos are some of our favorite Arizona Christmas tree ornaments. This month our unique Christmas decorations will become familiar to those in the Eastern United States.

A 60 foot blue spruce from New Mexico has been chosen to be the National Christmas tree for 1991. It has been placed on the Elipse in Washington, D.C., and decorated with strings of chili pepper lights and 10,000 handmade Southwestern ornaments.

This year, for the first time, the National Christmas tree is a living tree. It was dug and transported with an intact 40 ton root ball. After the holidays the tree will be planted a few miles from the White House at the National Arboretum.

LIVING CHRISTMAS TREES

Elizabeth Riordon
Staff Writer

According to the memories of some longtime residents of Cochise County, before the time of the wood-burning smelter, pine trees were abundant on our mountains and foothills.

Choosing a live Christmas tree is one way to help replace those missing pines.

The trees which have the best chance of surviving when planted outside have been growing in a container all their lives. Pines which were recently harvested from a field will probably die within the year. They have lost many crucial roots.

Pot grown specimens will be firmly anchored in their pots and may have roots growing out the drainage holes. They will be in good soil, not clay, and will not need fertilizer for about a year.

Live trees should be kept indoors for only two weeks. A good way to water them during that time is to put ice cubes in the pot on top of the soil. You won't have any spills, and the tree will get a slow, deep watering.

The types of trees that make living Christmas trees are numerous. If you know where your tree will be planted, choose it with that particular microclimate and size of space in mind. Don't pass up cedars, junipers, or cypresses when you are looking for a tree. They may be unconventional, but may also be priced well, and I can tell you from experience make lovely Christmas trees.

Sierra Vista again this year is planning to pick up and plant in public areas the live trees donated to the city. If you would like your tree to help beautify our parks, fill out a pick-up request, and pay one dollar at the time that you buy the tree.

1992 State Master Gardener Tour: "Le Tour du Yuma" - January 17, 1992 - January 18, 1992

WHERE: The 1992 State Master Gardener Tour begins at Casa Grande at the Pinal County Extension office, where the Cochise, Pima, and Pinal Master Gardeners will meet up with those from Maricopa, Yavapai, and Coconino counties. Seems like there could be lots of people, and a time to renew many Master Gardener friendships and acquaintances.

ITINERARY: January 17 (Friday): The itinerary includes stops in Horn and Hyder, en route to Yuma from Casa Grande, to view "jojoba, grapes, citrus, deciduous tree crops, and possibly a fish farm," indicates Terry Mikel, Maricopa County extension agent. Then continue toward Yuma via I-8 from Dateland. Arrive Yuma in the evening. Overnight options include camping at the Yuma Mesa Citrus Experiment Station or staying at a motel of your choice (make reservations early!). Dinner is in Yuma at Chretien's. **January 18 (Saturday):** A tour of the Citrus Experiment Station and the "Peanut Patch", where they grow the obvious, as well as citrus. Depart Yuma and head for Gila Bend to dine at the Space Age Cafe'. Return to Casa Grande, bid farewell to old and new friends, and then drive back to Cochise County.

COSTS: Your own expenses for accommodations and meals. And "about \$20.00" extra for the tour.

DEADLINE: Let Rob Call know by January 7, 1992. Since the Sierra Vista Cooperative Extension office is closed in December and most of January, you can reach him at the Willcox office: 602-384-3594.

Merry Christmas



Happy New Year

WHAT'S BUGGING YOU?®

by T.J. Martin

WHITEFLIES IN YOUR GARDEN AND HOUSEPLANTS

COMMON NAMES: Whitefly

SCIENTIFIC NAME: Order "Homoptera", Family "Aleyrodidae" (Not really a "fly" or "moth" at all, actually related to the aphids.)

DESCRIPTION: **ADULTS** - Tiny (1/16 inch) moth-like insects with powdery white wings. **NYMPHS** - Tiny translucent, flat, legless, and oval-shaped. **EGGS** - Cone-shaped, pale yellow at first, turn to gray in about a week.

LIFE CYCLE: In typical greenhouse (or home) conditions, a whitefly life cycle takes about a month to complete. The adults feed on the undersides of foliage, mate, and lay their eggs there. The eggs incubate and then hatch the nymphal stage "crawlies" that move around feeding for a couple of days before settling down to one feeding site. Pupation occurs about two weeks later, and the new generation of adults hatch in about 10 days to start the cycle all over again.

HOST PLANTS: Almost all fruit and vegetable crops, especially eggplants, peppers, tomatoes, peppermints, and many other herbs.

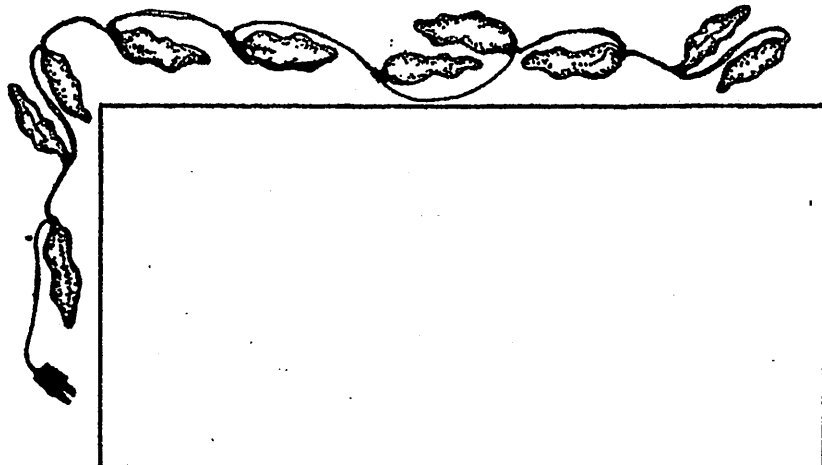
TIME OF YEAR: From spring thru fall. Moist, hot weather is ideal. The critical time for control is fall. The whitefly cannot overwinter outside in cold weather. Do not accidentally take them inside your home on ornamentals or herbs or neglect complete greenhouse cleanup for the winter. All it takes is a few overlooked weeds to provide a cozy home for next years' pest population.

WHAT TO LOOK FOR: Shake your plants, and if you see clouds of flying "plant dandruff" then you can be pretty sure you have whiteflies. **LOOK ON THE UNDERSIDE OF THE FOLIAGE, ESPECIALLY ON TENDER, YOUNG GROWTH!**

PROBLEMS AND DAMAGE: These tiny insects suck the very life juices out of their target plants causing yellowing foliage and leaf drop. Fungal diseases can move into the damaged areas and severe infestation can cause serious plant damage.

CULTURAL CONTROLS: **DOUBLE CHECK ANY NEWLY ACQUIRED PLANTS FOR INFESTATION BEFORE BRINGING THEM INTO YOUR HOME OR GARDEN. NURSERY PURCHASES ACCOUNT FOR THE MAJORITY OF NEW HOME/GARDEN WHITEFLY PROBLEMS!** Isolate all new plants for a couple of weeks if possible to give an "invisible" infestation time to show up. A good soap and water wash is a good idea if the plant can handle it. Use a dormant oil before buds open on fruit trees. Make sure all your crops are healthy and not under stress. Deficiencies of magnesium and phosphorus may make plants more vulnerable to this pest. Encourage good air circulation.

COMPANION PLANTING AND REPELLENTS: Rose geranium plants supposedly slow down the activity of this pest and rhubarb plantings are said to repel them. Garlic and onion plantings and sprays may also have some effect.



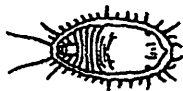
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TRAP PLANTS: Early plantings of host crops away from the main planting area. Destroy these plants and their pests **BEFORE** putting out your regular crop.

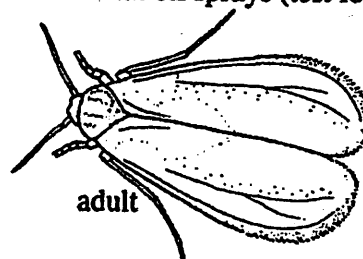
MECHANICAL CONTROLS: Yellow sticky traps, water sprays or soap-n-water baths.

NATURAL CONTROLS: Birds, Lacewings, Ladybird beetles (Ladybugs), *Encarcia formosa* (a tiny parasitic wasp), and Red or Yellow Aschersonia (fungal diseases).

BIOLOGICAL INSECTICIDES: Insecticidal soaps (Safer, etc.), horticultural oil sprays (test for plant damage first), Pyrethrum, Ryania, and tobacco teas and dusts.



nymph



adult

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