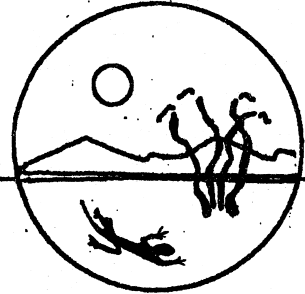


# High on the Desert

Cochise County Master Gardener

## Newsletter



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

### How does your garden grow?

Never thought I would stand in the rain and enjoy every minute of it. While I was in the U.S. Army stationed in the Pacific Northwest we used the metal food trays to catch the rain and our food floated. I really did not like rain or getting wet from it.

We who choose to live in Southeast Arizona get the feeling that we are sometimes forgotten by the great rain cloud in the sky. Moisture, it seems, is a thing of the past and our gardens, like ourselves, are badly in need of water.

Well, it's true. Watering is important. Over-watering will ruin what we hoped for and under-watering will ruin our crops. So, please use a water probe or a long-shafted screwdriver to see if the soil needs the precious liquid.

According to a Channel 13 TV weatherman, we will enjoy one of the best monsoon seasons ever this year. If you are like me, I hope that means rain! So many people talk the talk but few walk the walk. In the "old" days

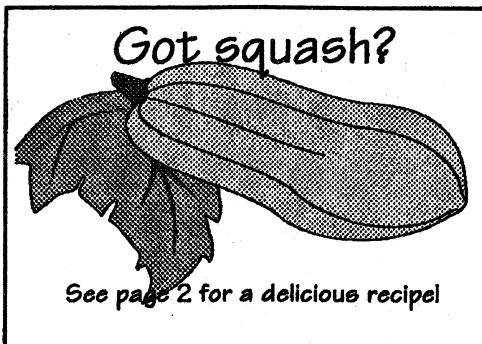
we always said put your money where your mouth is but money, real money, is a thing of the past.

Our plants should be producing and we have to find various ways of preparing the fresh produce. One good source of cookbooks is our local library. The books have to be returned in a couple of weeks but copy machines will help produce the recipes we want to save. The good thing about these books is that they are free to use. If you want more books about your garden, contact your librarian and they will use the inter-library loan service and secure them for your use.

You may also go to one of the bookstores and see what they have available.

Side-dress fertilizing, mulching, as well as making a dirt tank to hold water, might be in the offering, but it is up to you. The best thing about a garden, any garden, is enjoyment. When it becomes work, we aren't having fun any more. Have fun and enjoy—that is what gardening is all about. Don't lose sight of it.

*Barry R. Bishop*  
Master Gardener/Staff Writer



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# Cuttings 'N' Clippings

➤ Do you like to garden? I mean, do you REALLY like to garden? If so, then Nancy Beam might be the person you want to contact. She owns a 90' x 30' greenhouse on South Highway 92 that she would love to rent to you. It has water and electric and compost is available. Interested? Give her a call at 366-4005. (Serious inquiries only.)

➤ Kari Sethman is offering free horse manure-you haul. Call her at 378-1635.

➤ Leslie Clark has free red wiggler worms. Call her at 378-0556.

➤ The Low Desert Gardening and Landscaping Conference will be held at the historic Wigwam Resort, Litchfield Park, AZ on August 2 - 4. The theme this year is "Joy of Desert Gardening" and there will be sessions of interest to us living in the high desert. The Wigwam was built in 1918 as a private club. Today it is a distinguished Five Star property and is regarded as one of the top resorts in the Southwest. A demonstration cooking class utilizing unique Southwest ingredients in the Southwest kitchen will be held as a concurrent session with the Wigwam chefs. Information and a registration packet is available from:

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➤ Remember our local High Desert Gardening & Landscaping Conference is scheduled for February 13-15, 1997!

➤ Speaking of conferences, the 1996 Western Regional Master Gardener Foundation Advanced Training Conference will be held at the Tacoma (Washington) Sheraton Hotel and Convention Center October 20 - 23. For information/registration form, contact Joyce at the Sierra Vista Cooperative Extension office.

➤ The 1996 Master Gardener class held their graduation party/potluck on June 19 with nearly 60 people in attendance. Twenty-two new Master Gardener Trainees received their certificates and will begin working towards their Master Gardener badges. As you may have guessed, the food was wonderful. One of the favorite dishes was a squash casserole made by the wife of one of the new MG Trainees. Since many of us will begin harvesting lots of summer squash very soon we may want to try this easy and delicious recipe.

### Connie's Squash Casserole

Saute chopped onion, garlic, and carrot in small amount of olive oil to soften. Add sliced zucchini, sliced pattypan squash, a chopped green pepper, a chopped tomato and basil, tarragon, oregano, marjoram, salt & pepper to taste. Add a little water and steam until vegetables are tender. (Turkey, chicken, bacon or other meat may be added.) Top with parmesan cheese and sunflower seeds. Enjoy!

*"Do not think of it as a waste of time to cultivate a few flowers."*  
-The Old Farmer's Almanac, 1983

## ATTENTION MASTER GARDENERS!

The Cooperative Extension is revising its Master Gardener mailing list. If you wish to remain on the active list, please call Joyce at the Sierra Vista office (458-1104, Ext. 141) no later than August 1. This does not affect the Master Gardener Newsletter mailing list.



The next organizational meeting of the new Master Gardener "Club" (no name yet!) will be:

August 7  
5:00 pm  
Sierra Vista  
U of A Campus

Join us as we continue this exciting new chapter in the Cochise County Master Gardener Program!

## A Transplanted Gardener . . .

This month marks my one year anniversary writing for the MG Newsletter as the Transplanted Gardener. So I feel it's appropriate to end the series with the first topic I wrote about, which is near and dear to my heart, the species *Leucophyllum* (*Leuco* = white; *phyllum* = leafed), also known as cenizo, Texas ranger, Texas sage, and barometer bush. Texas rangers come in all sizes, colors, and are wonderful for xeriscape gardens. They are virtually free of diseases (except for Texas root rot) and pests (this year due to the drought the rabbits decided they were good eatin' and pruned my rangers - thank goodness they didn't shear them into "Texas ranger balls!"), most are hardy to 5 degrees F, and best of all require little or no maintenance once established. You may choose to prune, shear, or leave them au natural and they make great hedges, wind-blocks, screens, and specimen plants. My collection is planted in a circular "Texas ranger room" adjoining the hummingbird garden with a dining area in the center. When the summer rains come, the hot weather, moisture, and humidity triggers blooming (hence the common name barometer bush) and the Texas ranger room becomes a mass riot of color which is just spectacular. The flowers resemble snapdragon blooms and rangers are evergreen (they will drop their leaves in extreme drought) so they provide interesting contrasts of foliage color when not in bloom. Rangers are very tolerant of adverse conditions once established and adapt to these conditions by storing water in their leaves during the rains and during dry periods the leaves will become small and reflect the sunlight. I do not fertilize my rangers, mulch them well (3-4 inch layer of mesquite

chippings), have found that they do not like to be planted in wells (they are usually found growing on arid limestone hillsides so I have planted them in gentle slopes), prefer well-drained soils and full sun, and can be bought in 1 and 5 gallon containers. I've had best success with the 5 gallons. Now with all this said, you could be having great success with your 1 gallons planted in wells in the shade - that's the law of gardening! Plants don't read books and sometimes I think we shouldn't either!

### Texas rangers . . . near and dear to my heart.

Here is the gallery of *Leucophyllums*.

*L. frutescens* - 6' height x 8' spread. One of the largest rangers, the foliage is silver-gray, flowers are 1 inch and range in color from white, pinkish lavender, to purple. Cultivars include 'Green Cloud' with rosy colored flowers and 'White Cloud' with white flowers. 'Compactum' is a dwarf cultivar that matures to 4' high and wide. One of my gardening books also says there's a cultivar named 'Convent' with a loose growing habit, silver leaves and incandescent magenta blooms.

*L. candidum* - 2-3' height x 3' spread. Silver leaves, flowers are 1/2 inch long and violet. Includes cultivars 'Silver Cloud' with white-silver foliage and deep purple flowers and 'Thunder Cloud' has even deeper, more intense purple flowers and a more compact form.

*L. laevigatum* - 4' height x 5' spread. 'Chihuahuan-sage' is a loose growing ranger with small green leaves and 1/2 inch fragrant bluish-lavender flowers. This ranger is not dependent on humidity and heat to induce bloom.

*L. zygothymum* - 3' x 3'. Common names include 'Blue Rain sage' and 'Blue Ranger.' Leaves are thick,

silver-gray and has bell-shaped purple to light violet flowers. The flowers have a light, lavender fragrance. Mountain States nursery lists a cultivar 'Cimarron' with light gray cupped leaves with blue flowers.

*L. langmaniae* - 5' x 5'. (I previously listed this one under *L. frutescens*.) 'Rio Bravo' is its name and it has a dense, rounded growth, bright green foliage with lavender flowers. One gardening book gives it a common name of 'Monterey sage.' When in doubt know the Latin name! *L. pruinosum* - 6' x 6'. (I previously listed this one under *L. frutescens*.) 'Sierra Bouquet' and what a bouquet it has. Absolutely wonderful fragrance—be sure to plant it where you can smell it. Silver leaves with masses of deep purple flowers.

*L. revoltum* - 4' x 4'. 'Sierra Magic Mix.' Several clones are represented in this ranger so there is some variation in leaf and flower colors, resulting in a 'mixed bouquet' effect. Once during a blooming period I had 5 different shades of purple on this plant—just magnificent.

*L. minus* - 3' x 3'. 'Big Bend Silverleaf' is a small, dense shrub with 3/4 inch violet flowers and silver leaves. 'Rain Cloud' is a hybrid with a loose, upright growth habit, small silver foliage, and tiny pink flowers.

*L. frutescens x laevigatum* - Big Green Hybrid Ranger 'Verde Grande.' This is what the label said when I picked up this one from Desert Survivors. It appears it will be a large ranger and it hasn't bloomed yet so that means I'll have to do another annual report next year!

Next time you're at your favorite nursery head for the native section and check out a ranger—or two. Happy gardening and sweet dreams of rain.

Cheri Melton  
Master Gardener/Staff Writer



# The Virtual Gardener— Bees

The other evening as my wife and I sat on the patio enjoying the twilight, our quiet conversation was intruded by an increasingly loud buzzing. We looked up just in time to see a swarm of bees heading straight toward us and beat a hasty retreat into the safety of the house. Fortunately the bees passed on by and disappeared into the sunset. That experience and a recent article about Africanized bees in the *Arizona Daily Star* was the inspiration for a surfing expedition on the World Wide Web for more information about Africanized honey bees. The Africanized Honey Bee Home Page at the Department of Agricultural Communications, Texas A & M University

(<http://128.194.30.1/agcom/news/hc/ahb/ahbhome.htm>) provides several excellent articles on Africanized bees. Here is an edited summary of some of that information.

The Africanized honey bee, popularly known as the “killer bee,” has been migrating northward from South America since the 1950’s and has now moved into Southern Arizona. This insect looks just like a domestic honey bee, but it is not nearly as good-natured and will aggressively defend its home. The bee’s “killer” reputation is greatly exaggerated, but it does have some basis in fact. In isolated instances, people and animals have been stung to death. Here are a few MYTHS and FACTS about the Africanized honey bee that everyone should know.

**MYTH:** Africanized bees are more dangerous when they are swarming, that is, when they appear as a large cluster of insects searching for a new home.

**FACT:** Africanized bees do swarm more often than domestic bees, but

they are actually less dangerous at that time because they do not have a nest to protect. However, if you encounter a swarm, move away slowly and don’t bother the bees. If the swarm is near people or confined animals, contact authorities for removal.

**MYTH:** Africanized honey bees are “wild” bees and will not live in a manmade hive.

**FACT:** Africanized honey bees will live any place a domestic bee will live, including a manmade hive. But Africanized bees are less selective about nesting sites and will live in places domestic bees usually would not live, including:

- holes in the ground, water meter boxes, and drainage pipes.
- holes or cracks in building walls and holes in trees
- underneath mobile homes
- culverts or drainage pipes
- flower pots
- old tires
- bird houses
- barns or sheds
- woodpiles
- wooden spools sometimes used as playground equipment

**MYTH:** Africanized honey bees are larger than domestic bees and therefore easy to identify.

**FACT:** Africanized bees look like any other honey bee to the naked eye. Though they are slightly smaller than domestic bees, only scientists in specially equipped labs can identify the bees.

**MYTH:** Africanized honey bees are a purebred race of bees from Africa.

**FACT:** Africanized bees are actually crosses between African bees and European (domestic) bees. Unfortunately, the aggressiveness of the Afri-

can ancestors is a dominant trait in the offspring.

**MYTH:** Africanized bees are called “killer bees” because a single sting can kill you.

**FACT:** “Killer bee” is a misnomer popularized by Hollywood and the media. A single sting from an Africanized bee actually has slightly less venom than that of a domestic (European) honey bee. For most people, a single bee sting is painful, but not life-threatening. However, if you are allergic to honey bee stings (less than one person in 100 is), a single sting from either bee—Africanized or domestic—could cause a severe allergic reaction. If you are allergic, you should carry a bee sting kit.



**MYTH:** Africanized bees hunt people down and kill them.

**FACT:** Africanized bees do not seek out victims. If you go near their hive, however, the bees will defend it vigorously.

**MYTH:** By swatting them away from your face, you can prevent most bees from stinging you.

**FACT:** Swatting is probably the worst thing you can do if bees are attacking. When a bee’s body is crushed by swatting, it produces an odor that incites bees to attack in greater numbers. The best thing to do is to run away fast and seek cover in a house, car or tall brush or trees.

**MYTH:** Africanized bees fly faster than domestic bees, making it more difficult to escape by running.

**FACT:** All bees fly about 12 to 15 miles per hour. However, Africanized bees may chase a person farther than will a domestic bee. A domestic bee

may chase you for 50 yards, but an Africanized bee may chase you for 100 to 150 yards.

**MYTH:** Africanized bees are more dangerous because, unlike domestic bees, they can sting you repeatedly.

**FACT:** All honey bees can sting only once. A portion of the bee's abdomen remains with the stinger when she flies away, and she dies soon afterward. Knowing how to avoid honey bees, especially the extremely defensive Africanized honey bees, is the best defense.

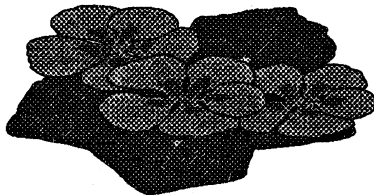
*Gary A. Gruenhagen  
Master Gardener*

## Smell Your Flowers and Eat Them, too!

Roses, pansies, nasturtiums and other flowers add wonderful color to your garden, but did you know you can eat some of these flowers, too? Some everyday foods we eat, such as artichoke and broccoli, are flower buds.

- ♦ Edible flowers frozen in ice cubes enliven cold beverages.
- ♦ Hibiscus flowers make marvelous teas.
- ♦ Flowers and leaves of nasturtium are good in salads.
- ♦ Many popular flowers such as foxglove, Carolina (yellow) jasmine, heavenly bamboo (nandina), ivy, iantana, lobelia, oleander, periwinkle, pittosporum, potato flowers and sweet pea are poisonous.
- ♦ When it comes to flower eating, organic growing is best.

If eating flowers is new to you, go at it slowly. Some people are allergic to flowers. However, even given all of the warnings, certain flowers make a tasty and colorful addition to the diet.



## The Agent's Observations

**QUESTION:** When should I plant native warm season grasses and how should I prepare the soil?

**ANSWER:** Warm season native grasses include but are not limited to the blue stems, buffaloes, grammas, Indian rices, lovegrasses, sideoats and wheatgrasses. Planting of most of these grasses should occur just before the monsoon rainy season begins in July. Seeding rates vary between different grass species. For example Buffalo grass is seeded at 3 to 4 pounds and blue grama grass is seeded at 1 to 2 pounds per 1,000 square feet. In most situations it is advisable to mix 2 or more compatible species together and sow them so there is more diversity in the planting.

For best germination and stand till the soil 4 to 6 inches deep (this is very necessary on new construction sites because of compacted soil), rake smooth, spread seed, and top dress with compost or composed manure. The dark compost will warm the soil and hold moisture which aids in germination.

Many of these warm season grasses make attractive landscape areas but are not suited to heavy traffic and play. However, breeding programs are currently developing turf type lawn grasses from native warm season grass species that will withstand traffic. Also, many of these grasses are more drought tolerant than the more traditional turf grass and

require less water than bermuda grass, but others require more.

**QUESTION:** Why are the melons and winter squash that I planted in May looking so poor? Some of the skin of the fruits are soft and yellowish while others are very brown and the skin is hard. What should I do to grow good melons and winter squash?

**ANSWER:** You have sunburned fruit. It is too late to apply sun-tanning lotion! I have found that it is best to plant melons, pumpkins, and winter squash after the first of July. The reason is that normally we will have some cloud cover and rain while the really hot weather of May and June is subsiding. Soil temperatures are warm enough so that seeds germinate rapidly. If you plant just after the last spring frost the plants will grow normally. However, the fruits will be produced too early and become sunburned because of the heat and poor leaf cover, which shades the fruit, during the month of June when compared to plants sown in July. We have a long enough growing season to mature these crops in September and October. Our normal first fall frost in Cochise County is in late October. Try planting melons, pumpkins, and winter squash now and you will have better results, I guarantee!

*Robert E. Call  
Extension Agent, Horticulture*

### JULY Reminders

- ✓ Keep the pests under control
- ✓ You can still plant something
- ✓ Keep watering!

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# **Stay Cool!**

**Here are just a few of the common heat disorders and their treatment.**

**1. SUNBURN:** Skin redness and pain, possible swelling, blisters, fever, headaches.

**FIRST AID:** Take a shower and using soap remove oils that may block pores preventing the body from cooling naturally.

**2. HEAT CRAMPS:** Painful spasms usually in the leg and abdominal muscles. Heavy sweating.

**FIRST AID:** Firm pressure on cramping muscles or gentle massage to relieve spasm. Give sips of water. If nausea occurs, discontinue.

**3. HEAT EXHAUSTION:** Heavy sweating, weakness, skin cold, pale and clammy. Weak pulse. Normal temperature possible. Fainting, vomiting.

**FIRST AID:** Get victim to lie down in a cool place. Loosen clothing. Apply cool, wet cloths. Fan or move victim to air-conditioned place. Give sips of water. If nausea occurs, discontinue. If vomiting occurs, seek immediate medical attention.

**4. HEAT STROKE:** High body temperature (106+). Hot, dry skin. Rapid, strong pulse. Possible unconsciousness. Victim will likely not sweat.

**FIRST AID:** Heat stroke is a severe medical emergency. Call 911 or emergency medical services or get the victim to a hospital immediately. Delay can be fatal. Move victim to a cooler environment. Try a cool bath or sponging to reduce body temperature. Use extreme caution. Remove clothing. Use fans/air conditioners. **DO NOT GIVE FLUIDS.**